Acknowledgements

In the acknowledgements, the author extends profound gratitude to the many individuals, organizations, and communities that contributed to the development of this book. Bringing this story to life required extensive research, guidance, and creative insight, and it would not have been possible without the generosity of those who shared their knowledge and experiences. The author recognizes that writing is never a solitary act—it is a collaborative process shaped by the voices, encouragement, and expertise of others. This book, deeply rooted in history and human experience, is the result of the collective efforts of many, and their contributions deserve recognition.

A special thank you is extended to Barbara Napier and the wonderful community at Snug Hollow in Irvine, Kentucky. Their kindness, hospitality, and deep knowledge of the region helped shape the novel's sense of place, providing an authentic backdrop for the horseback librarians' journey. Olivia Knuckles, in particular, played an important role in offering insights and personal stories that enriched the characters and brought the narrative to life. The time spent in these rural landscapes offered a firsthand look at the enduring spirit and resilience of the people who once traversed these remote areas, delivering books and knowledge to those who needed them most.

The author also acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Whisper Valley Trails, where practical experiences on horseback contributed to a more accurate depiction of the rugged terrain and challenges faced by the librarians. Understanding the physical demands of navigating the Cumberland Mountains on horseback was essential in ensuring that every journey in the book felt vivid and realistic. The opportunity to experience these conditions firsthand helped reinforce the importance of these women's work, making their perseverance and dedication even more inspiring.

Deep appreciation is given to the editorial teams at Penguin Michael Joseph in the UK, Pamela Dorman Books in the US, and Rowohlt in Germany. Their belief in this book and its themes made its publication possible, and their guidance helped refine the narrative into its final form. A heartfelt thank you is also extended to Monumental Pictures, whose enthusiasm and vision have played a crucial role in bringing this story beyond the pages, making it accessible to even more audiences through visual storytelling.

The Kentucky Tourist Board and the residents of Lee and Estill Counties also deserve recognition for their generosity in sharing their history and knowledge. Their insights into the cultural and historical backdrop of the region were invaluable in shaping the setting of the novel. The people of these communities have preserved the memory of the past through their stories, ensuring that the legacy of the horseback librarians and their contributions are never forgotten. Their willingness to engage with this project made it all the more meaningful, allowing the author to paint a more complete picture of life in rural Kentucky during the Great Depression.

Beyond professional collaborations, the author expresses sincere appreciation for the friends who offered support, laughter, and encouragement throughout the writing process. Writing can be an isolating endeavor, but the kindness of those who provided companionship, listened to ideas, and offered motivation made the journey far more fulfilling. These personal connections served as a reminder of the importance of community, both in storytelling and in life.

Finally, the deepest gratitude is reserved for the author's family—Jim Moyes, Lizzie, Brian Sanders, Charles, Saskia, Harry, and Lockie—who provided unwavering encouragement and support. Their patience, love, and belief in the project were instrumental in seeing it through to completion. Writing a book requires immense dedication and focus, and their understanding and kindness allowed the author the space to fully engage with the creative process.

This book is not simply a product of one person's effort but a shared achievement built on the contributions of many. The author is immensely grateful for the people who played a role in shaping this novel, whether through historical knowledge, professional guidance, or personal support. Their involvement has left an indelible mark on the work, and this acknowledgment serves as a tribute to their generosity, passion, and shared commitment to keeping important stories alive.