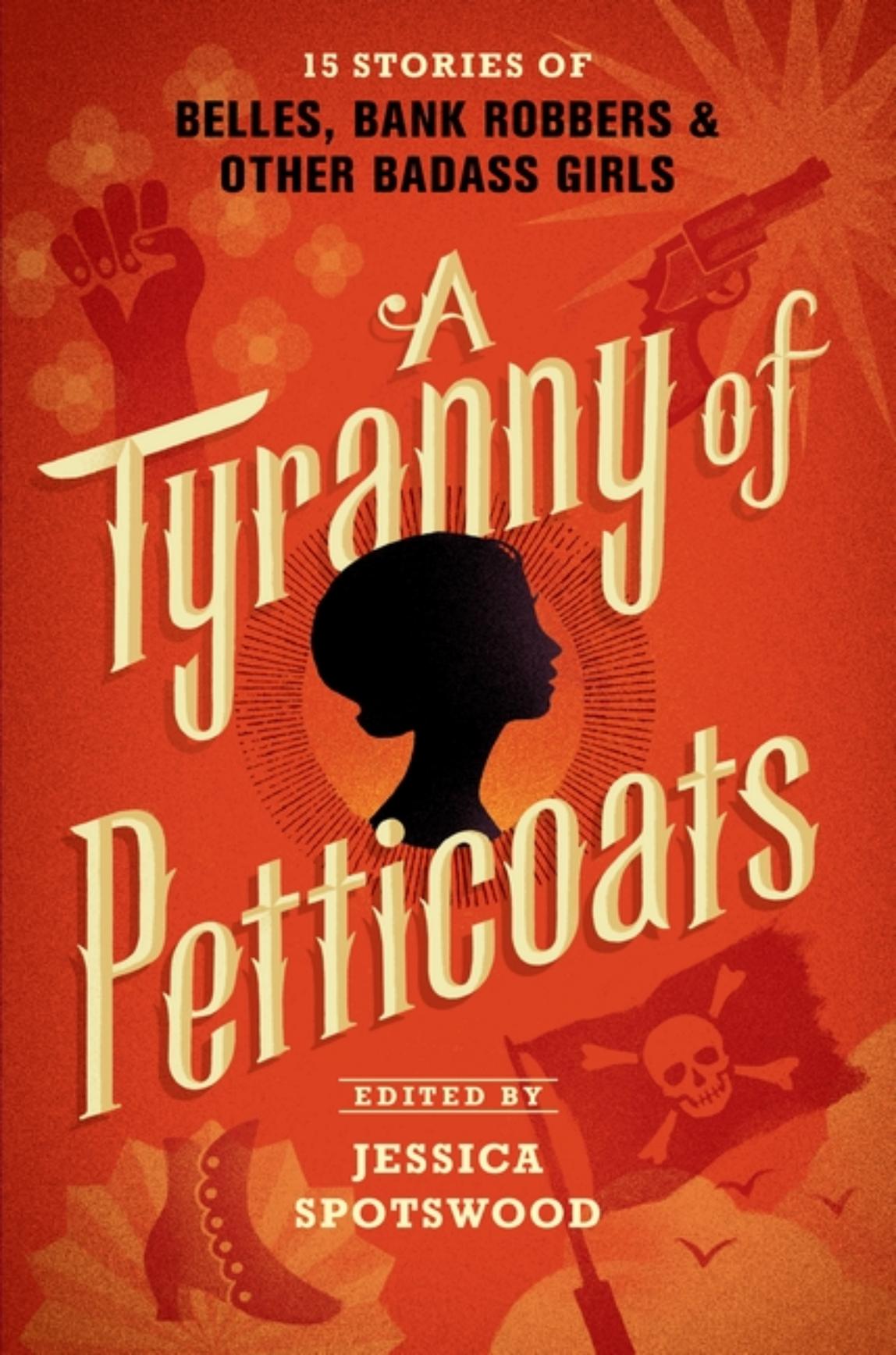


15 STORIES OF
BELLES, BANK ROBBERS &
OTHER BADASS GIRLS



A
Tyranny of
Petticoats

EDITED BY

JESSICA
SPOTSWOOD

Introduction

I grew up right outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, site of perhaps the most decisive battle in the Civil War. My family and I picnicked on the battlefield and went for hikes there, pausing to read the historical placards. Later, in high school, my friends would play their guitars and we'd watch the sunset at Devil's Den and try to take pictures of ghosts in Triangular Field. History wasn't just a collection of dates I memorized from textbooks; it was tactile and ever present.

When I was twelve, I read *Gone with the Wind* and fell in love with historical fiction. As an adult I can see the many ways in which the novel is problematic, but at twelve I was utterly enchanted by Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler. My grandparents took me on a trip to Louisiana that summer, and we toured plantation museums and walked the streets of New Orleans. I came home and began writing a series of thinly veiled *Gone with the Wind* knockoffs about headstrong Southern girls, all set in Louisiana instead of Georgia. Those novels live in my closet at my parents' house—deservedly so, because they're terrible. But I still love reading and writing historical fiction. My first trilogy, the Cahill Witch Chronicles, is set in an alternate version of 1890s New England.

One of the reasons I sought out historical fiction rather than reading straight-up history, the way my Civil War–buff father did, was because I wanted to read about girls. But their stories were mostly missing from textbooks and historical sites. Despite their many important contributions, women—especially queer women, women of color, and women with disabilities—have too often been erased from history.

While on a writing retreat with my friends Andrea Cremer, Marie Lu, and Beth Revis, I mentioned that another friend had suggested I edit an anthology. I loved the idea of creating a collection of YA historical fiction; I couldn't imagine any theme that would intrigue me more.

"You should do it," my friends said. "We'd all write stories for you."

How could I say no, with three terrifically talented *New York Times* best-selling authors on board? I am forever grateful for their encouragement and enthusiasm.

"You need more of a theme than historical fiction," my agent said. And I realized that what I really wanted was to edit an anthology of stories about clever, interesting American girls throughout history, written by clever, interesting (though not necessarily all American) women.

Some of the authors I approached are dear friends and critique partners. Others I haven't yet had the chance to meet but have long admired their work. Some of our contributors—Katherine Longshore, Kekla Magoon, Robin Talley, and Elizabeth Wein—are known for bringing real history—of the doomed wives of Henry VIII, the Black Panthers, 1950s Virginia during school desegregation, or female pilots during World War II—richly to life. Others—Marie Lu, Marissa Meyer, and Beth Revis—are trying their hands at historical fiction for the first time.

It's been such a joy to work with all of them.

When I asked them to come up with premises, I suggested that we think diversely in terms of geography, historical eras, and our heroines' races, sexualities, religions, and opinions on all manner of things. America is a melting pot. I hoped our fifteen stories could, in some small way, reflect that reality.

And so our heroines are monsters and pirates and screenwriters and schoolteachers. They are brave and scared, uncertain and sure. They are white and Chinese American and black and Native American. They dress as boys if that's what's needed to get the job done, whether it's robbing banks to feed their families or sinking a Spanish ship off the coast of the Carolinas. They kiss girls or boys or no one at all because they've got more important things on their minds, like catching spies. They debate marriage proposals, murder, and politics with equal aplomb. They are mediums and assassins, heiresses and hobos, bartenders and bank robbers. Their friends are faithless, their heroines die—perhaps some die themselves—but they carry on because there is a spark inside them that refuses to be extinguished. They are naive and world-weary, optimistic and sad, beautiful and terrible.

Most of all, I hope you will find them interesting.

From corsets to cutlasses and petticoats to pistols, we want to bring American history to life—from the viewpoints of strong, clever, resourceful American girls.

Thank you so much for reading.

JESSICA SPOTSWOOD

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