



Flight of Dreams: A Novel

By Ariel Lawhon

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"At every page a guilty secret bobs up; at every page Lawhon keeps us guessing. Who will bring down the Hindenburg? And how?"

-- *New York Times Book Review*

On the evening of May 3rd, 1937, ninety-seven people board the Hindenburg for its final, doomed flight to Lakehurst, New Jersey. Among them are a frightened stewardess who is not what she seems; the steadfast navigator determined to win her heart; a naive cabin boy eager to earn a permanent spot on the world's largest airship; an impetuous journalist who has been blacklisted in her native Germany; and an enigmatic American businessman with a score to settle. Over the course of three hazy, champagne-soaked days their lies, fears, agendas, and hopes for the future are revealed.

Flight of Dreams is a fiercely intimate portrait of the real people on board the last flight of the Hindenburg. Behind them is the gathering storm in Europe and before them is looming disaster. But for the moment they float over the Atlantic, unaware of the inexorable, tragic fate that awaits them.

Brilliantly exploring one of the most enduring mysteries of the twentieth century, *Flight of Dreams* is that rare novel with spellbinding plotting that keeps you guessing till the last page and breathtaking emotional intensity that stays with you long after.

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Flight of Dreams: A Novel By Ariel Lawhon Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"The novel beautifully exploits the unique, excruciating kind of suspense in which the poor horrified reader knows from the start exactly what's going to happen. Well, maybe not exactly....Under Lawhon's revolving spotlight, we are introduced to a carousel of suspicious characters...so as the zeppelin cruises serenely through the clouds the earthbound reader ricochets from distrust to uncertainty to outright foreboding. At every page a guilty secret bobs up; at every page Lawhon keeps us guessing. Who will bring down the Hindenburg? And how?"

-- *New York Times Book Review*

"An enthralling nail-biter...Almost 80 years after the Hindenburg's fiery end in a New Jersey airfield, Lawhon reimagines the downing of the Nazi zeppelin...[E]verything points to the inevitable disaster – but you're still on the edge of your seat."

-- *People Magazine*

"Lawhon builds the narrative on facts — she uses real names and biographical details about those aboard the Hindenburg — then **props the story forward with the thrust of fiction**. This is a novel made all the more **readable** by weaving its way through a **riveting** historical event... *Flight of Dreams* may be viewed as a "Titanic" of the skies. Lawhon's novel, however, needs no such comparison. It has ample emotional fuel to sail on its own, even knowing its spectacular end."

-- *Associated Press*

"Lawhon **deftly braids together the complex threads** of her characters' stories, narrating via a **keenly observed** third-person voice. Her **taut prose and subtle plotting create a gripping narrative, rich with historical detail and spiked with plenty of surprises** even for those who know the Hindenburg's fate. Through her **vividly drawn characters**, Lawhon's story touches on grief, family loyalty, ambition, romance and complicated international politics. Like the spectators who observed the Hindenburg's fiery descent, **readers will find themselves unable to look away."**

-- *Shelf Awareness*

"Flight of Dreams melds historical fiction, a touch of romance and mystery to create **a tale that becomes more difficult to put down as the disaster draws near."**

-- *BookPage*

"Ariel Lawhon has real vision and the writing chops to back it up. She weaves the voices and lives of the Hindenburg's doomed--and surviving--passengers together in intricate fashion, linking them at startling intersections that bind them into a single, riveting tale. **It's a fascinating blend of love and murder, big dreams and betrayal, history and pure imagination--I could not put it down."**

-- *Sara Gruen, New York Times* bestselling author of *Water for Elephants* and *At the Water's Edge*

"Flight of Dreams enthralls, taking the reader on the doomed last flight of the Hindenburg with a story so vivid, **it is impossible to pull away.** Mystery, romance – it is all here, told in a mesmerizing tale."

-- *Kate Alcott, New York Times* bestselling author of *The Dressmaker*

"In *Flight of Dreams*, Ariel Lawhon masterfully **re-imagines the infamous Hindenburg tragedy in uniquely human terms**, and the result is **a spectacular page-turner** of class and distinction. **Intricately**

plotted and deftly characterized, this beautifully written novel is wonderfully satisfying - historical fiction at its best."

-- **Alex George, author of *A Good American***

"It's a sign of **an extremely talented writer** who can take a story that's been told before and tell it in a completely new imaginative way that is **so compelling and exciting.**"

-- **Charles Belfoure, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Paris Architect* and *House of Thieves***

"A magnificent, tour-de-force story, FLIGHT OF DREAMS will break your heart and satisfy every conspiracy theorist who's wondered what really happened to the Hindenburg. **Simply spectacular—I've never read anything like it.** Lawhon has written the book of the year. She's a writer to watch—now, and for many years to come."

-- **J.T. Ellison, *New York Times* bestselling author of *What Lies Behind***

"[A] **wonderfully suspenseful, heart-wrenching account...**[Lawhon's] vision for the journey and the cause of the explosion is **masterful and humanizes the event and its aftermath.** She has taken a story from history and re-imagined it into a **magnificent novel.**"

--***The Free Lance-Star***

"Historical fiction at its best.... Even knowing the ending doesn't diminish the suspense."

--***Acadian Lifestyle Magazine***

"For her second outing, Lawhon once again reimagines a front-page news event, **filling in the entertaining backstory with passion, secrets, and nail-biting suspense**, this time taking on the disastrous crash of the *Hindenburg* in 1937...Lawhon threads many stories together, connecting passengers and crew and **bringing behind-the-scenes depth and humanity to a great 20th-century tragedy**—even though we all know the *Hindenburg*'s fate."

--***Publishers Weekly***

"An Agatha Christie-style page-turner...Building on a dense scaffolding of biographical and historical fact, Lawhon invents personalities and relationships for key passengers, chooses from the extant theories about what caused the fire, and spins it all into **a web of airborne intrigue...**As the disaster inches closer with every chapter—each begins with a countdown in days, hours, and minutes—Lawhon evokes the airborne luxury of the ship—the meals, the cocktails, the smoking room, and the service—**in such detail that you end up feeling a little sad that the stately flight of the *Hindenberg* marked the end of passenger travel by airship forever.** A clever, dramatic presentation of a tragic historical event. **Suspenseful and fun.**"

--***Kirkus Reviews***

"The clever banter, elaborate plot twists, and period detail will be appreciated by lovers of historical fiction. Readers of Melanie Benjamin's *The Aviator's Wife* or Nancy Horan's *Under the Wide and Starry Sky* should find this entertaining."

--***Library Journal***

About the Author

Ariel Lawhon is the author of *The Wife, the Maid, and the Mistress* and cofounder of the popular Web site SheReads.org. She lives in the rolling hills outside Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, four sons, and black Lab—who is, thankfully, a girl.

The Stewardess

It's a bad idea, don't you think?" Emilie asks, as she stands inside the kitchen door, propping it open with her foot. "Striking a match in here? You could blow us all to oblivion."

Xaver Maier is young for a head chef, only twenty-five, but he wears the pressed white uniform—a double-breasted jacket and checkered pants—with an air of authority. The starched apron is tied smartly at his waist, the toque fitted snuggly to his head. He gives her that careless, arrogant smirk that she has begrudgingly grown fond of and puts the cigarette to his lips. He inhales so deeply that she can see his chest expand, and then blows the smoke out the open galley window into the warm May evening. "Ventilation, love, it's all about proper ventilation."

The way he says the word, the way he holds his mouth, is clearly suggestive of other things, and she dismisses him with a laugh. Xaver Maier is much younger than Emilie and a great deal too impressed with himself. "At the moment, love, it's about aspirin. I need two. And a glass of water if you can summon the effort."

The kitchen is small but well ordered, and Xaver's assistant chefs are busy chopping, boiling, and basting in preparation for dinner. He stands in the center of the melee like a colonel directing his troops, an eye on every small movement.

"Faking a headache?" he asks. "Poor Max. I thought you'd finally come around. We've been taking bets, you know."

"Don't," she says, flinging a drawer open and shuffling through the contents. She has made it perfectly clear that all discussion of Max is off limits. She will make up her mind when she is good and ready. "I went to the dentist yesterday, and the left side of my jaw feels like it's about to fall off." She leaves the drawer open and moves on to another.

"Usually when a woman tells me her jaw is sore I apologize."

Emilie opens a third drawer. Then a fourth. Slams it. "I had a tooth filled." She's impatient now. And irritated. "Aspirin? I know you keep it around here somewhere."

He follows behind her, shoving the drawers shut. "Enough of that. You're as bad as the verdammt Gestapo."

"What?" She looks up.

Xaver reaches behind her head and lifts the door to a high, shallow cabinet attached to the ceiling. He pulls out a bottle of aspirin but doesn't hand it over. "I'm glad to hear you don't know everything that happens aboard this airship." He taps the bottle against the heel of his hand, making the pills inside rattle around with sharp little pings. "There's still the chance of keeping secrets."

"You can't keep secrets from me." She holds out her hand, palm up. "Two aspirin and a glass of water. What Gestapo?"

Xaver counts them out as though he's paying a debt. "They came because of the bomb threats. Fifteen of them in their verfickte gray uniforms."

“When?” She takes a glass from the drying board above the sink and fills it with tepid water. Emilie swallows her pills in one wild gulp.

“Yesterday. They searched the entire ship. Took almost three hours. I had to take the security officers down the lower keel walkway to the storage areas. The bastards opened every tin of caviar, every wheel of aged Camembert, and don’t think they didn’t sample everything they could find. Looking for explosives, they said. I was out half the night trying to find replacements. And,” he pauses to take a long, calming drag on his cigarette, “you can be certain that frog-faced distributor in the Bockenheim district didn’t take kindly to being woken at midnight to fill an order for goose liver pâté.”

She has heard of the bomb threats of course; they all have. Security measures have been tightened. Her bags were checked before she was allowed on the airfield that afternoon. But it seems so ridiculous, so impossible. Yet this is life in the new Germany, they say. A trigger-happy government. Suspicious of everyone, regardless of citizenship. No, not citizenship, she corrects herself, race.

Emilie looks out the galley windows at the empty tarmac. “Did you know they aren’t letting anyone come for the send-off? All the passengers are waiting at a hotel in the city to be shuttled over by bus. No fanfare this time.”

“Should be a fun flight.”

“That,” she says with a grin, “will have to wait until the return trip. We’re fully booked. All those royalty-smitten Americans traveling over for King George’s coronation.”

“I’d take a smitten American. Preferably one from California. Blondine.”

Emilie rolls her eyes as he whistles and forms an hourglass figure with his hands.

“Schwein,” she says, but she leans forward and gives him a kiss on the cheek anyway. “Thank you for the aspirin.”

The kitchen smells of yeast and garlic and the clean, tangy scent of fresh melons. Emilie is hungry, but it will be some time before she gets the chance to eat. She is lamenting her inadequate early lunch when a low, good-humored voice speaks from the doorway.

“So that’s all it takes to get a kiss from Fräulein Imhof?”

Max.

Emilie doesn’t have to turn around to identify the voice. She is embarrassed that he has found her like this, flirting—albeit innocently—with the ship’s resident lothario.

“I worked hard for that kiss. You should do so well,” Xaver defends himself.

“I should like the opportunity to try.”

The matter-of-fact way he says it unnerves her. Max looks dapper in his pressed navy-blue uniform. His hair is as dark and shiny as his shoes. The gray eyes do not look away. He waits patiently, as ever, for her to respond. How does he do that? she wonders. Max sees the bewilderment on her face, and a smile tugs at one

corner of his mouth, hinting at a dimple, but he wrestles it into submission and turns to Xaver.

“Commander Pruss wants to know tonight’s dinner menu. He will be dining with several of the American passengers and hopes the food will provide sufficient distraction.”

Xaver bristles. “Commander Pruss will no longer notice his companions when my meal arrives. We will dine on poached salmon with a creamy spice sauce, château potatoes, green beans à la princesse, iced California melon, freshly baked French rolls, and a variety of cakes, all washed down with Turkish coffee and a sparkling 1928 Feist Brut.” He says this, chin lifted, the stiff notes of dignity in his voice, as though citing the provenance of a painting and then squints at Max. “Should I write that down? I don’t want him being told I’m cooking fish and vegetables for dinner.”

Max repeats the details verbatim, and Xaver gives a begrudging nod of approval.

“Now out of my kitchen. Both of you. I have work to do. Dinner is at ten sharp.” He shuffles them into the keel corridor then closes the door. Xaver might be an opportunist—he would gladly take a real kiss from Emilie if she were to offer one—but he knows of her budding affection, and he’s more than willing to make room for it to bloom further.

Max leans against the wall. His smile is tentative, testing. “Hello, Emilie. I’ve missed you.”

She’s certain the chef is on the other side listening. She can smell cigarette smoke drifting through the crack around the door. He would like nothing better than to dish out a portion of gossip with the evening meal. And Emilie would love to tell Max that she has missed him as well in the months since their last passenger flight. She would love to tell him that she has very much looked forward to today. But she doesn’t want to give Xaver the satisfaction. The moment passes into awkward silence.

“Listen .??.” Max reaches out his hand to brush one finger against her cheek when the air horn sounds with a thunderous bellow from the control car below them. The tension is broken and they shift away from each other. He shoves his hands in his pockets and stares at the ceiling. “That is such a hateful noise.”

Emilie tugs at the cuff of her blouse, pulling it over the base of her thumb. She doesn’t look at Max. “We’re about to start boarding passengers.”

“I really must see if they can do something about that. A whistle, maybe?”

“I should get out there and greet them.”

“Emilie—”

But she’s already backing away, coward that she is, on her way down the corridor to the gangway stairs.

The Journalist

Gertrud Adelt has no patience for fools. In her opinion, Americans fit the description almost categorically. The one sitting across from her now is drunk, leaning precariously into the aisle and singing out of tune. He shouts the words to some bawdy drinking song as if he were dancing on a bar instead of sitting in a bus filled with exhausted passengers. His voice is bombastic, loud and abrasive, and mein Gott, please make him stop,

she thinks. She turns her pretty mouth to her husband's ear and quietly asks, "Can't you do something?"

Leonhard looks at his watch, then up at the heavily listing American. "He's been drinking since three o'clock. I'd say he's managing quite well, all things considered."

"He's obnoxious."

"He's happy to be leaving Deutschland. There's no crime in that." The look he gives her is tinged with understanding. Who wouldn't want to leave this country? Anyone but the two of them, most likely. As it stands, the thought makes her ache. Their son, little more than a year old, is in the care of Gertrud's mother at the insistence of a senior SS officer. Blackmail by way of separation. Return as promised, or else. In recent months, the Gestapo has grown adept at making sure that valued citizens do not defect.

The Adelts have spent the better part of their day waiting in the lobby of Frankfurt's Hof Hotel. Waiting for lunch. Waiting for a telegram from Leonhard's publisher. Waiting for the government to change their minds and revoke permission for the trip altogether. At four o'clock the buses arrived to shuttle them to the Rhein-Main Flughafen airfield. But then they waited while their luggage was searched and their papers checked and double-checked and triple-checked. The first indication that Gertrud was ready to snap came when her bag was weighed.

"I'm sorry, Frau Adelt," the customs officer informed her. "Your bag is fifteen kilos over the twenty-kilo limit. You will have to pay a fine of five marks for every extra kilo."

Gertrud looked around the bar, eyeing each of the men waiting to board the buses. She sniffed and rose to her full height. "Then it's a good thing I weigh twenty kilos less than the average passenger."

The customs officer was not amused, and Leonhard handed over the seventy-five marks before Gertrud could further complicate the process. By the time they were finally allowed on the bus and took their seats, she was exhausted and entirely without coping skills to deal with fellow passengers.

Now, the long muscles along her spine feel ready to snap. They are tight and aching, strained by her rigid posture over the last few hours. The American's voice grinds against her skull like mortar against pestle. The back of her eyes hurt. Gertrud fights the irrational urge to reach across the aisle and strike his face. She tucks her hands between her knees instead.

Something outside the window catches the American's attention and he drifts into silence. Gertrud sighs, squeezes her eyes shut, and leans her head against Leonhard's shoulder. The bus rumbles along steadily for a few moments, vibrations coming up through the floor and into their feet. They are jostled by the occasional pothole—the broad paved streets of Frankfurt have fallen into disrepair, but fixing them hardly seems a priority to anyone. They soon pass a sign with a white arrow directing them to the airfield. The bus veers to the left, and an excited murmur runs through the passengers. Somewhere, behind them, a child cheers. Gertrud feels a twinge of anger that some other child is allowed to make the voyage while hers is forced to stay behind. The American, however, is energized by their near arrival and belts out the second verse of his drinking song. He leans toward her, eyes crossed, chuckling, and she recoils from his sour breath.

Leonhard grabs her wrist just as she's about to lash out. "No," he says. "Be good." Her husband is twenty-two years older than she is, but time has not dulled his strength one iota. He puts two broad hands around her waist and lifts her up and over his lap. Leonhard deposits her neatly by the window, his body a wall between her and the American.

Gertrud offers a wry smile. "Good? You know that being good isn't part of my skill set."

"Now is not the time to talk about your many attributes, Liebchen. Humor me this once. Please?"

She can still hear the American, but she can no longer see him, and this is a great mercy. She gives Leonhard's hand a squeeze of gratitude, then leans her forehead against the cool glass of the window. She tries not to think of Egon and his chubby, dimpled fists. His bright blue eyes. The soft brown hair that is just starting to coil above his ears. Gertrud thinks instead of the career she has worked so hard to build and how it lies in rubble behind her. Her press card having been revoked by Hitler's ministry of propaganda. Troublemaker, that's what they have branded her. In reality she has simply been a question asker. She is a good journalist. But she has never been a good rule follower. Or a good girl for that matter, despite Leonhard's admonition. Yet, even now, she cannot bring herself to regret the choices she has made this year.

A few minutes later the bus slows and turns onto the airfield. A great hangar looms in front of them, taller, wider, longer than any structure she has ever seen. And moored just outside is the D-LZ129 Hindenburg, almost sixteen stories tall and over eight hundred feet long. From their vantage point, Gertrud can barely make out the airship's name written aft of the bow in a blood-red Gothic font, and farther back, the massive tail fins emblazoned with their fifty-foot swastikas. The irony is not lost on her. They will make this trip, but only under a watchful Nazi eye.

"Mein Gott," Leonhard whispers, placing one large, calloused hand on her knee.

The zeppelin floats several feet off the ground, moored on either side by thick, corded landing lines. The only parts of the actual structure that touch the ground are the landing wheels and a set of retractable gangway ladders that lead up and into the passenger decks. They will board there, directly into the behemoth's swollen silver belly. Gertrud stops herself from cracking jokes about Jonah and his infamous whale, but she does feel very much as though she's about to be swallowed whole.

The ground crew scurries around preparing to cast off while the flight crew stands in a long, neat line near the gangway waiting to greet them. The American chooses this moment to finish his drinking song with one last, raucous burst.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Esta Banks:

A lot of people always spent their particular free time to vacation or even go to the outside with them family or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent they free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity this is look different you can read a book. It is really fun for you. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent the whole day to reading a reserve. The book Flight of Dreams: A Novel it doesn't matter what good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space to deliver this book you can buy often the e-book. You can m0ore simply to read this book out of your smart phone. The price is not to cover but this book features high quality.

Shawn Proctor:

Reading a book to get new life style in this yr; every people loves to read a book. When you go through a book you can get a great deal of benefit. When you read books, you can improve your knowledge, mainly because book has a lot of information onto it. The information that you will get depend on what forms of book that you have read. If you would like get information about your study, you can read education books, but if you want to entertain yourself read a fiction books, this kind of us novel, comics, and also soon. The Flight of Dreams: A Novel offer you a new experience in looking at a book.

Barbara Norwood:

In this era globalization it is important to someone to obtain information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The health of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of sources to get information example: internet, classifieds, book, and soon. You can see that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. Typically the book that recommended to you personally is Flight of Dreams: A Novel this publication consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This particular book was represented so why is the world has grown up. The terminology styles that writer use for explain it is easy to understand. The particular writer made some research when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book appropriate all of you.

Randy Caldera:

This Flight of Dreams: A Novel is brand-new way for you who has interest to look for some information since it relief your hunger of knowledge. Getting deeper you upon it getting knowledge more you know or you who still having little digest in reading this Flight of Dreams: A Novel can be the light food for yourself because the information inside this specific book is easy to get by means of anyone. These books develop itself in the form that is reachable by anyone, yep I mean in the e-book web form. People who think that in reserve form make them feel sleepy even dizzy this reserve is the answer. So there isn't any in reading a book especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for anyone. So , don't miss the idea! Just read this e-book sort for your better life as well as knowledge.

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