

***Canary Girls* by Jennifer Chiaverini**

Chiaverini is masterful at taking you to a different place and time and keeping it all quite believable and interesting. This historical fiction novel weaves together the stories of four of the women who answered England's call during WWI and became "munitionettes" working grueling shifts and handling dangerous explosives with little protection. Two former housemaids, April and Marjorie, find better hours and higher pay, as well as more respect and status than they've ever been granted. Lucy is the wife of an Olympic gold medalist who has volunteered as a soldier in the Footballers' Battalion, and she also wants to do her bit.

All are soon part of another team as well, the arsenal ladies football club, the Thornshire Canaries. There are several serious, unexplained illnesses that the workers suffer from, including a common symptom, a bright yellow hue of their skin, which earns them and their club the nickname "canary girls." The reports of these maladies troubles Helen, the wife of the boss. She joins the arsenal administration as an advocate for the women workers.

The war grinds on, and more of the workers become too ill to play football or even to do their work in the arsenal. Yet the football pitch is one place where all of them come together, as the situation and the war effort dim class distinctions. On the team, they can all be as one, determined to play as well and as far as they can in the competition.

This was a very interesting read and made me care about each of the young women. It opens Dyet another aspect of WWI that was new to me. Highly recommended!