

*Mrs. Lincoln's Sisters* by Jennifer Chiaverini

*In May 1875, Elizabeth Todd Edwards reels from news that her younger sister Mary, former First Lady and widow of President Abraham Lincoln, has attempted suicide.*

*Mary's shocking act followed legal proceedings arranged by her eldest and only surviving son that declared her legally insane. Although they have long been estranged, Elizabeth knows Mary's tenuous mental health has deteriorated through decades of trauma and loss. Yet is her suicide attempt truly the impulse of a deranged mind, or the desperate act of a sane woman terrified to be committed to an asylum? And—if her sisters can put past grievances aside—is their love powerful enough to save her?*

Chiaverini revisits the life of Mary Todd Lincoln, one of her favorite topics in recent years in this historical fiction novel. (Previous Chiaverini books include *Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker* and *Mrs. Lincoln's Rival*)

In a chapter by chapter method, working between Mary Todd Lincoln's youth to the days following the death of President Lincoln, Mary's four sisters, Elizabeth, Frances, Ann and Emilie all share their memories and points of view about their sister Mary. While each had a different relationship with her, all agree she played an important role in time of desperation for the United States. Born to a prominent family in Lexington Kentucky Mary and her sisters were separated by the Civil War, as well as by their loyalty to their spouses. As tragedy and death affect each sister, Chiaverini expands the concepts behind how each sister reacts to Mary's odd behavior.

I found myself overwhelmed at times with the family interaction and names, but I enjoyed looking back at this time in history and recognizing the pain and conflict the civil war created for many families.