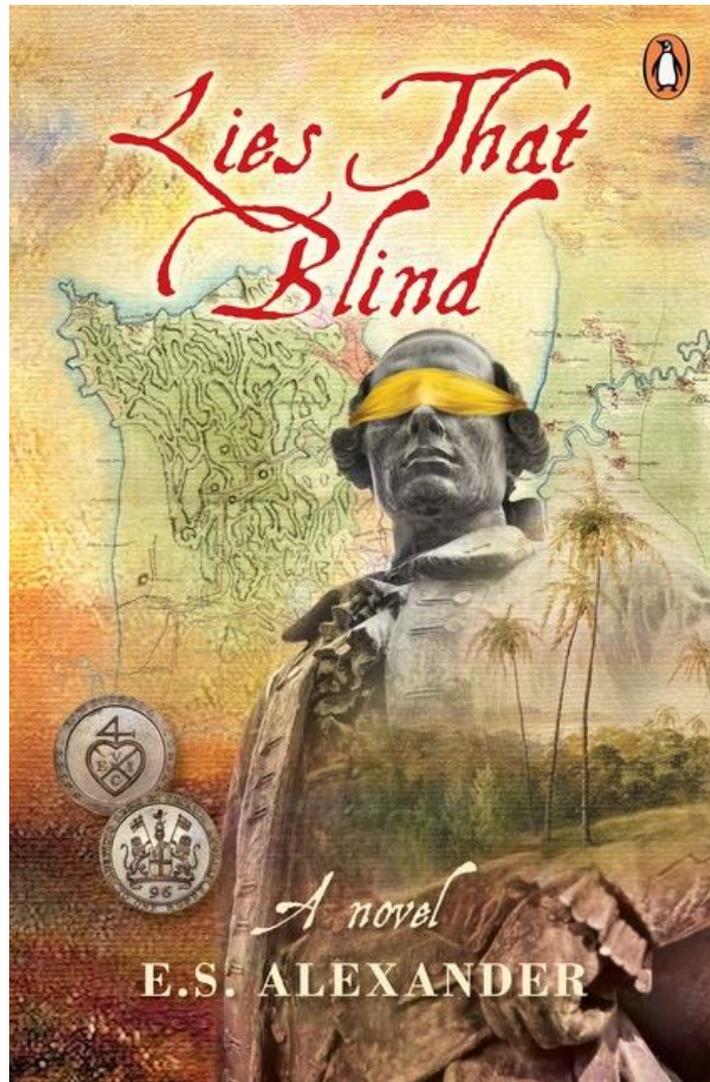




Penguin  
Random House  
SEA

**PENGUIN PUBLISHES THRILLING FICTION TO SHED LIGHT ON THE  
MARGINALISED HISTORY OF PENANG, MALAYA**



*Lies that Blind: A Novel of Late 18th Century Penang*

by E.S. Alexander

**A young man desperate to prove himself becomes enmeshed in the web of deceit woven by an ambitious adventurer whose double-dealing imperils the island's inhabitants.**

Author of over 20 non-fiction books, E. S. Alexander writes her very first historic fiction from Penang. Offering a fresh new perspective, the novel shines light on an acquisition by the East India Company that has been marginalized by history. The novel carefully weaves fictional and non-fictional characters, including Jan Pieterszoon Coen, Lord Charles Cornwallis, and Sultan Abdullah Mukarran Shah of Queda, all deeply researched and carefully positioned, and defining the Malay character and how centuries of abuse have shaped the culture.

Malaya, 1788: Aspiring journalist Jim Lloyd jeopardises his future in ways he never could have imagined. He risks his wealthy father's wrath to ride the coat-tails of Captain Francis Light, an adventurer governing the East India Company's new trading settlement on Penang. Once arrived on the island, Jim-as Light's assistant-hopes that chronicling his employer's achievements will propel them both to enduring fame. But the naïve young man soon discovers that years of deception and double-dealing have strained relations between Light and Penang's legal owner, Sultan Abdullah of Queda, almost to the point of war. Tensions mount: Pirate activity escalates, traders complain about Light's monopolies, and inhabitants threaten to flee, fearing a battle the fledgling settlement cannot hope to win against the Malays. Jim realises that a shared obsession with renown has brought him and Light perilously close to infamy: a fate the younger man, at least, fears more than death. Yet Jim will not leave Penang because of his dedication to Light's young son, William, and his perplexing attraction to a mercurial Dutchman. He must stay and confront his own misguided ambitions as well as help save the legacy of a man he has come to despise.

Inspired by true events, *Lies That Bind* is a story featuring historical character Francis Light (1740-1794) who, in an effort to defy his mortality, was seemingly willing to put the lives and livelihoods of a thousand souls on Penang at risk.

### **Praise for the book**

'*Lies That Bind* transported me to another time and place, like any good historical novel should, but it also gripped me with intrigue, wonderfully flawed characters, and masterful storytelling.

E. S. Alexander has pulled off a visual and dramatic powerhouse that pulls you in and never lets you go until it's had its complete way with you. But, isn't that what every reader wants from a memorable story?'

**- Jeff Lyons, Author of *Anatomy of a Premise Line and Rapid Story Development*, screenwriter, and film/TV story consultant, USA**

'As the author to *Access to Asia: Your Multicultural Business Guide*, I find it refreshing that a European author, E.S. Alexander, has completed such a vast amount of research about Malay culture in the late 18th century. As a self-proclaimed nerd, I am duly impressed that she even drilled down to reading an important book entitled *The Hikayat Abdullah*, written by Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, a Malacca-born Munshi of Singapore, first published in 1849, as part of her research. Having lived in Penang for several years, E.S. Alexander has shown a deeper sense of place than someone writing purely from their imagination or desk research. As an interculturalist who studies power distance, I was intrigued by the inclusion of Malay 'peribahasa' or proverbs, as well as insights into how sultans and chiefs wielded power over the 'rakyat' or general populace during that point in history. It is a pleasure to read a historical novel that looks beyond the 'usual suspects' of Tudor England or the Revolutionary War period, one that brings to life a story inspired by true, chronicled events and will expose Western readers to a fascinating time and place: Malaya in the 18th century.'

**- Sharon Schweitzer JD, Cross-cultural consultant, *Access to Culture*, and award-winning author**

‘Liz (E.S.) Alexander has successfully transported us back to an important and interesting period in the history of Malaya with great fervour and personal perspectives. As a student of this history in the ‘70s myself, I find the story that Liz weaves around the main characters, Light and Lloyd, which we learnt from the history books, provides an intimate and personal dimension to otherwise faceless men during a colourful period of adventure and discovery. Reading this book is truly an enjoyable experience.’

**- Datuk Mohd Yusoff Sulaiman, President & CEO, Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology**

### **About the author**

Elizabeth Smith Alexander was born in St. Andrews, Scotland in 1954, although her family moved to England a few years later. Her earliest memories include producing a newspaper with the John Bull printing set she was given one Christmas. She wrote and directed her first play, Osiris, at age 16, performed to an audience of parents, teachers, and pupils by the Lower Fifth Drama Society at her school in Bolton, Lancashire. Early on in her writing career, Liz wrote several short stories featuring 'The Dover Street Sleuth', Dixon Hawke for a D.C. Thomson newspaper in Scotland. Several of her (undoubtedly cringe-worthy) teenage poems were published in An Anthology of Verse.

Liz combined several decades as a freelance journalist writing for UK magazines and newspapers ranging from British Airway's Business Life and the Daily Mail, to Marie Claire and Supply Chain Management magazine, with a brief stint as a presenter/reporter for various radio stations and television channels, including the BBC. In 2001 she moved to the United States where she earned her master's degree and Ph.D. in educational psychology from The University of Texas at Austin.

She has written and co-authored 17 internationally published, award-winning non-fiction books that have been translated into more than 20 languages.

In 2017, Liz relocated to Malaysia. She lives in Tanjung Bungah, Pulau Pinang where she was inspired to embark on one of the few forms of writing left for her to tackle: the novel.

**We are inviting media queries for extracts and reviews and interview requests**

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### **About Penguin Random House SEA**

Penguin Random House SEA was established in 2018 to discover and publish local and international voices across English-language adult and children's fiction and nonfiction formats for Singapore and Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Brunei, and Myanmar. As part of Penguin Random House, the world's largest trade book publisher, the newly established company is also dedicated to its mission of nourishing a universal passion for reading by connecting authors and their writing with readers. Headquartered in Singapore, Penguin Random House SEA will bring

the spotlight on local authors from the region and simultaneously open the Southeast Asian market to diverse international titles. In its first year of operations, the publishing house is bringing stories from across the region and publishing authors such as children's writer Eva Wong from Singapore, Malaysian novelist Tunku Halim, award winning author and journalist from Philippines Criselda Yabes, Indonesian poet, essayist, and award-winning novelist and food writer Lakshmi Pamuntjak and author and journalist Akshita Nanda from Singapore, to name a few.

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