



Billy Boyle

Like mysteries? Like to read about World War II? Then the Billy Boyle WWII Mystery Series may be your cup of tea!

Billy is from an immigrant family with Irish Republican leanings, and joins his father on the Boston police force, thus achieving a step up in the community. His father shepherds his progress along, sometimes pulling strings, and Billy soon becomes a rookie detective just when World War II breaks out. Realizing that Billy will soon be called into service, his family hopes he can perform his service in a police function, preferably in the United States, where he won't be directly aiding the English. Remembering that his mother is a distant relative of Mamie Eisenhower, they soon have him attached to Ike's staff office in Washington DC as a special investigator.

Part of the plan unravels as Ike becomes the commander of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, and relocates to London. "Uncle Ike," however, realizes that amidst the complex organizations and personalities he must manage there are many sensitive matters to be monitored, and creates a small group of investigators reporting directly to him, to which the young Lieutenant Boyle is attached.

This gets Billy into behind-the-scenes investigations that are the basis of a now-16 book series. Subjects range from the D Day invasion, ferreting out traitors in the

military and the resistance movement, handling sensitive diplomatic complexities, the Italian campaign, and even a side trip to the Pacific to investigate a young navy commander named Jack Kennedy who is charged with a murder.

Along the way he finds the love of his life, a bright and skilled English girl who becomes an accomplished spy behind German lines and ends up in a concentration camp. He also joins up with his series investigator partner, Lieutenant Piotr “Kaz” Kazimierz, an intelligent young Polish Baron who barely escapes his homeland with the family fortune, and fights his own demons. Several other colorful characters he works with appear in each book, including an older West Point Colonel who is his boss, and an intuitive and burly Sergeant “Big Mike,” who saves him on more than one occasion.

Throughout the series, personal drama and wartime events, some based on real life, are skillfully woven together by author James R. Benn, a former librarian who has garnered major mystery awards. One new book is produced each year, and at that point the prior year’s hardback is released in paperback. For the best experience, start with the first, *Billy Boyle*, and follow in order to the latest, *Road of Bones*. When each comes out, you’ll feel you’re joining up with old friends as they slog their way through the war.

If you recall reading some of the books by Joseph Altsheler about the Civil War and World War I, you may see some parallels in the use of youthful figures whose lives get embroiled in war. The series is published by SOHO Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

-- Jim Alexander