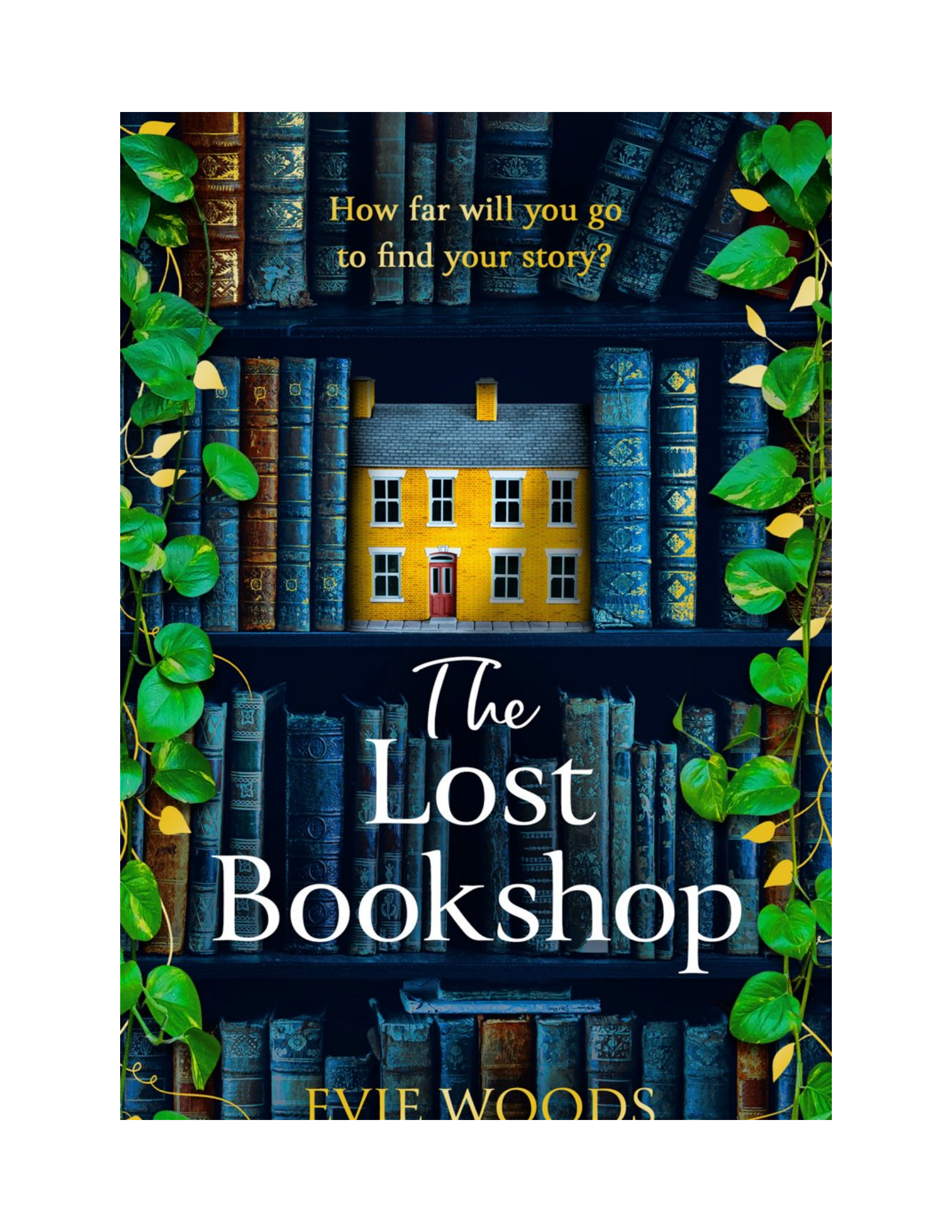
The background of the entire cover is a dark, rich blue bookshelf filled with numerous old, leather-bound books. The spines of the books are decorated with intricate gold and blue patterns. In the center of the middle shelf, a cutout of a two-story yellow brick house with a red door and white window frames is visible. Green ivy-like vines with heart-shaped leaves are climbing up the left and right sides of the bookshelf, framing the central elements.

How far will you go
to find your story?

The
Lost
Bookshop

EVIE WOODS

The background of the entire image is a dark wooden bookshelf filled with numerous old, leather-bound books. The spines of the books are decorated with intricate gold patterns. A green vine with heart-shaped leaves and some yellowing leaves is draped over the left and right sides of the bookshelf. In the center of the second shelf from the top, a small, two-story yellow brick house with a red door and white window frames is cut out and placed on the shelf. The house has a grey roof and two chimneys.

How far will you go
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Bookshop

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THE LOST BOOKSHOP

EVIE WOODS



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To all the book lovers

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Prologue

The rainy streets of Dublin on a cold winter's day were no place for a young boy to dawdle, unless that very same boy had his nose pressed up against the window of the most fascinating bookshop. Lights twinkled inside and the colourful covers called to him, promising stories of adventure and escape. The window was packed with novelties and trinkets; miniature hot-air balloons almost reached the ceiling, while music boxes with mechanical birds and carousels twirled and chimed within. The lady inside spotted him and waved him in. He shook his head and blushed slightly.

'I'll be late for school,' he mouthed through the glass.

She nodded and smiled. She seemed friendly enough.

'Just for a minute,' he said, having fought the urge to go inside for all of three seconds.

'A minute it is.' She was behind the counter, taking more books out of a big cardboard box. She glanced over at his untucked shirt, his mop of hair that had managed to evade a comb for quite some time and mismatched socks. She smiled to herself. Opaline's Bookshop was a magnet for little boys and girls. 'What class are you in?'

'Third class in St Ignatius,' he replied, craning his neck to look up at the wooden airplanes suspended mid-flight from the vaulted ceiling.

'And do you like it?'

He scoffed at the thought.

She left him leafing through an old book of magic tricks, but it wasn't long until he approached her desk and began looking at the stationery.

'You can help if you like. I'm sending out invitations to a book launch.'

He shrugged and began mimicking the way she folded the letters and stuffed them into the envelopes with a little too much enthusiasm. He wrinkled his nose with the effort, changing the constellation of freckles that spread out to his cheeks.

'What does Opaline mean?' he asked, pronouncing it with far too many syllables.

'Opaline is a name.'

'Is it your name?'

'No, I'm Martha.'

She could tell that he wasn't satisfied with that as an explanation.

'I can tell you a story about her, if you like? She didn't like school very much either. Or rules.'

'Or doing what she's told?' he suggested.

'Oh, she especially didn't like that.' Martha smiled conspiratorially. 'Here, you finish jamming those letters into envelopes and I'll make us some tea. A good story always begins with tea.'