



Book Review: Forbidden Places

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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In 1995, Penny Vincenzi, published her 507 page novel but every word is as fresh today as when it was written. The fact, that the story is set in wartime England and the author skillfully sets the scene by providing accurate historical context.

The main characters are three women who are each caught in a number of relationships between the years of 1938 and 1995. Some of them are very pleasant and others are difficult. Each of them is married but the demands of war place strains on them. The fact that the men are away for long periods of time, the economy has left them without many of the things that they were used to having, and everyone lives in fear because of the fighting, all lead to situations where the woman must make choices that they would otherwise never be faced with.

Each of them must consider ways to survive when there is so little to live on. Careers, that might have been out of the question in peaceful times are adopted. Forgiving others and learning to work together becomes a common theme.

Grace Bennett begins her marriage with thankfulness and hope. Trying to live with her husband and his strong opinions, however, is hard for her. When he goes off to war and continues to tell her how to live from a distance and she is left to deal with his difficult relatives, she often feels trapped and regretful.

Florence, the sister-in-law, often comes across as a snob who looks down on Grace. Behind the facade, however, are secrets that she doesn't really want to share with anyone - until she is forced to do so!

Clarissa, the beautiful and charming, ex-girlfriend of Grace's husband, seems to be so unlike Grace and it is hard to understand how one man could choose such different women to share his life with.

Throughout the pages of "Forbidden Places" we experience the full range of emotions from the characters. At times they experience joy and love while at other times they suffer from depression and fear. Their interaction with each other includes periods of jealousy, lack of trust, and even hate mixed with times of understanding, respect and mutual support.

I liked the story but have to admit that at times I was frustrated by the fact that there were almost too many twists and turns in the plot. Grace, for example, seemed to always be going through a "loves me, loves me not" situation and couldn't seem to make up her mind about how or with whom she wanted to live.

Overall, however, I looked forward to the times when I could immerse myself into the storyline and actually found myself cheering or talking out loud to the characters about what they should do. With Grace it was usually "For heaven sake, make up your mind and go with it!"

If you've never read Penny Vincenzi, you will likely be surprised by the depth of the characters and the amount of detail she puts into creating a rich setting for them. If you have read her, you will already know that this book will offer you an interesting place in which to invest some of your reading hours.