



Book Review: Seven Year Switch

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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Seven Year Switch is one of seven novels written by Claire Cook who won the Grand Prize of the 2010 Beach Book Festival award.

In this book, the main character Jill Murray is a single parent who has been struggling to care for her ten-year old daughter. Seven years beforehand, her husband who is the father of the child, left them in the middle of the night with only a note. Jill was devastated and was forced into trying to financial support Anastasia and herself through work with a travel agency and presentation of cultural classes. Over the years, however, Jill and Anastasia develop a routine and survive in their man-free existence. They live a simple life with sacrifices but have some support from a neighbour who offers friendship as well as some home items left over from her interior decorating renovations.

Then two surprises occur. First of all, Jill is contracted to work with a man named Billy who owns a bicycle business and needs her help to expand into Japan. Their professional relationship soon becomes more personal as they plan together. Then Jill's husband, Seth, suddenly and without warning returns to their community and wants to re-enter their lives. Anastasia is thrilled with this but Jill is very hesitant as she doesn't want Anastasia or her to be hurt again.

Seth easily wins over his daughter with gifts, promises and his presence. In fact, the child has a desire for the three of them to form a family unit that lives together again. But Jill doesn't like the way that he buys the child things and makes plans with her without talking first as adults. Whatever Anastasia wants, her father gets for her.

For years, Jill has wanted to be able to travel as this was a passion from her past but, because of her responsibilities and lack of financial ability, was unable to do so. Then, an opportunity arises for her to go to Costa Rica through her travel job and she decides to leave Anastasia with Seth for the week that she will be away.

At first, Jill is extremely worried about leaving her daughter and uses both email and phone to calm her anxiety about this. Then, she begins to enjoy herself and realizes that one of the most important things that she can do is to learn to know herself and what she needs out of life. She starts to realize the fun that she had been missing and commits to enjoying every single moment of her holiday, knowing that she might not have another one in the near future.

The end of the book is a little surprising but is positive and makes total sense.

I really enjoy Claire Cook's writing and every word on 240 page novel is entertaining. Claire has developed characters that are easy to understand and enjoy. She mixes real life activities with interesting activities. This book offers a range of emotions and I often found myself laughing out loud.