



## Forbidden Places

*Penny Vincenzi*

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Forbidden Places is about love and marriage, families and secrets, and about wartime and what it does to every accepted social value. It is a story of three woman and one family.

One is married and widowed within five years. She is free to start again. Or is she? The second has a perfect husband she thinks she loves. He becomes a grotesque parody of what he once was. Is that love real? The third becomes trapped in a nightmare marriage. Can the war free her?

## Forbidden Places Details

Date : Published November 6th 2006 by Headline Review (first published November 13th 1995)

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Author : Penny Vincenzi

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# From Reader Review Forbidden Places for online ebook

## Elyse Rudin says

Story takes place right before and during WWII in a city outside of London. It centers around a woman who marries above her station and how she copes with being an outsider. The war really doesn't enter into the story other than as a back drop. The main characters are women and their relationships with each other and their significant others. This was not my favorite Penny V. book but it was a light and enjoyable read. She keeps the pace moving and I loved escaping into her world. The characters are well developed and I felt like a voyeur looking in on their lives.

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## Heather says

Liked it, couldn't put it down but pretty predictable. Also, overuse of the word "lovely"

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## Susan says

I'm a great supporter of Ms Vincenzi. She may not be about to be awarded the Pulitzer, but she is, IMHO, the queen of the beach read.

It is true that her writing is formulaic with storylines following a tried and tested formula where several stories intertwine and overlap, frequently over a long period of time. Her characters are more fantastical than fictional and she writes exclusively about wealthy people doing glamorous things, usually with a sprinkling of the humble-turned-feisty poor, either tugging their forelocks or effortlessly infiltrating the glamorous set with their natural grace, charm and savoir-faire. She relies heavily on fortuitous happenstance - but then so does Dickens - so we can't really complain about that! She also likes her cast, usually a significant number of characters, to be outrageously beautiful / handsome and to prove irresistible to each other, thereby ensuring they all fall conveniently and irrevocably in love with each other. I could go on, but I'm guessing you've got the picture!

In Forbidden Places, we find Florence, Grace and Clarissa, three women of a certain age, old friends, meeting for their annual lunch at (of course) The Ritz Hotel. They're all still beautiful. They all still have "long, shapely legs", and they all still have "long, graceful neck(s)" - an achievement for a woman in her 70s, given that the rest of us have necks that are starting to look - well just a bit scraggy! We move quickly from the 1995 reunion back in time to 1938, and the story continues through and just beyond the war years.

Forbidden Places is the story of the life and loves of three women through an extraordinary period of 20th century history. There are no surprises in this book, indeed compared to some of her others it's pretty pedestrian, and yet somehow she keeps you turning the pages - an estimable talent.

There will be a goodly number of you who just can't stomach this sort of light literature - and that's fine - but if you sometimes like to bury yourself in something completely escapist, that's not going to stretch you, but will keep you reading, Penny's the lady for you. Unbeatable stuff for a duvet-day in the winter, or a beach day in the summer!

Three stars, because this is a long way from her best, but still a good easy read. If you're a Vincenzi novice start with the Spoils of War Trilogy - especially the first two volumes.

Happy reading!!

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## Cj W says

Taking place in the World War II time frame, this is the story of women whose men go to fight in the war, and their own contribution, often at the extreme displeasure of their husbands, in the war efforts through service in military outposts and items of the like.

The romance in the story is a main factor. Each of the main 3 ladies in the book has some form of love issues with their husbands or significant others, and it all works out in the end, but the way it gets there is very interesting.

Husbands get killed, husbands and/or significant others come back from the dead, mothers get killed, and stories are brought out that are horrific in nature, and let one in on the terrible actions of soldiers, and the NEED for those terrible actions to arise.

This also is a piece of the Kindertransport trains. It doesn't name that in specific, but it has the stories of two little boys who were taken on trains with hundreds of other children, out of London when it was being bombed and was too dangerous for them to stay.

My thoughts:

This was fairly well written. It was slow in some pieces but, unfortunately I am finding that about a lot of books lately.

I will say, that at the last several chapters I found myself very unable to put the book down, wanting to know who was going to end up with whom and how the romances were to play out.

It's also a very good look into the traditional English roles of marriage in that time frame, that are still sometimes prevalent today.

Women whose only sole purpose is to entertain her husbands every whim, and is too busy with social standpoint to be able to do anything outside of dinner parties and making sure the house is spotless.

I found it difficult to not get a little irritated at my own husband while reading this book.

He is absolutely NOT like the husbands in this book, but reading it, and also other stories of this nature, I just cannot believe that women would put up with the men as they have in those times. It's so great that I wasn't born into, or put into, a situation where I had to be completely submissive to my husbands every whim and desire and thought. I'd be dead before I got out my fist sentence!

- CJ

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## **Maxine Purdy says**

This was a book I found hard to put down- a real romp of a story with tremendous characters and a few unexpected twists and turns. Readers are drawn towards Grace, have sympathy with her but, occasionally, will want to leap into the story and give her a good talking too-she is very much a wife of her times (1940s).

I can't remember having read Penny Vincenzi before but I'll be back for more.

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## **Tara Chevestt says**

I feel awful cause I received this from the publisher, but I hated these women. The book didn't work for me because of it..

See full review:

<http://wwwbookbabe.blogspot.com/2010/...>

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## **Lorraine says**

The title of this book sounds like it would be something of a Harlequin Romance with lots of lust and seduction. I suppose it contained a bit of that but this was just a good, engrossing novel. Taking place in England during the war, it is the story of three women and their struggle and survival during the war. While some might say it wasn't much struggle, since they all come from or married into privilege, it does portray well what life might have been like for women of their class during the era.

Grace finds it difficult to find her own voice with a demanding husband and overbearing mother-in-law. Florence's husband is abusive in a time where women don't talk and complain of such things. She tries to find the courage to make a different life for herself. Clarissa is the social butterfly, beautiful, charming without a care in the world. She is faced with a tragedy that forces her to prove she is more than a pretty face.

Not friends at first, these women learn to depend and gain strength from each other as they discover independence and confidence during difficult times. Through this they find out the meaning of genuine friendship.

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## **penelopewanders says**

This is not a hardcover copy, but a paperback, but as that's the picture on the book I thought I'd take this edition anyway. I was very pleasantly surprised by this. I have to confess that I wasn't expecting much, and certainly not a book set in wartime England. It's a bit dire at times and it's nice how the bad guys seem to die, but it made for a very entertaining holiday read, which kept me awake far later than I should have been.

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## **Shifra says**

I loved this book. Could not stop. Many of us who are fans of Penny's wonderful books find the term....guilty pleasure...as a perfect way of describing the experience. She writes well as she weaves the web around three strong female characters faced with tough challenges beginning in 1938 in England, in a small area a couple of hours outside of London. She successfully kept me wondering what would happen next. Bravo. Hope she keeps writing.

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### **Jacqueline says**

definitely one of penny vinceris better books,i thought this one was really enjoyable,i found the characters believable and not too clear cut,for instance although i felt sorry for grace she also really annoyed me in the way that she judged everyone so quickly...

this book has actually made me want to go out and read more books set around world war two because i found the setting so fascinating!

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### **Dianne says**

#### **BLURB**

Vincenzi's latest sprawling saga is set in the WWII-era English countryside and revolves around the ordeals of three young women. Virginal Grace Marchant is just 19 when she meets Charles Bennett, the wealthy, remote man who becomes her husband. Though Grace feels a kinship with Charles' father, she's put off by his cold mother and haughty sister, Florence. Florence is married to Robert, whose apparently genial nature masks the cruelty with which he treats his wife. Unaware of Robert's abusive ways, Grace is shocked and disgusted when she discovers Florence is seeking comfort in the arms of another man. Grace is also thrown when she learns Florence's best friend, the glamorous and newly married Clarissa, was once engaged to Charles, and she's perturbed that neither Clarissa nor Charles will reveal to her why their engagement ended. Vincenzi does an admirable job of evoking the bustle and fears of wartime England, and providing plenty of juicy plot twists and turns to keep readers hooked. --Kristine Huntley

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### **Ria says**

A wonderful sweeping epic set before and during the war. The story centres on the lives and loves of Clarissa, Florence and Grace.

Grace is trapped in a loveless marriage to Charles Bennett and struggles to keep her life together when Charles is called up but with the enforced separation she evaluates her life and how she can cope surprisingly well on her own, add to that the evacuees she takes in to help the war effort and the temptation of the childrens father who comes to visit when he has to inform his sons their mother and grandmother has been killed in a bomb blast and for whom she feels an instant attraction but can this relationship go anywhere due to the grief Ben feels over the loss of his wife and the uncertainty of war and the looming spectre of Charles fighting abroad for the war effort.

Clarissa could essentially though of the wrong period be called one of "the bright young things" she has a capacity and vivacity to live life to the fullest and experiences anything that comes her way including any sexual encounters though she is married and very much in love with the film star looking Jack who ends up being badly burned in a plane accident.

Can their outwardly happy go lucky marriage survive knowing their love for beauty transcends other considerations?

Then there is the unhappy Florence who yet again outwardly has a very marriage under the surface there are dark forces at work.

Robert her husband is in secret abusive, mentally and physically to the point of him knocking her down the stairs while carrying his child.

Due to the misery and emotional stress she embarks on an affair and becomes pregnant but will the dates tally enough to be able to convince Robert that the child is his?

Behind all their personal problems and traumas they are all fighting their own separate wars and coping the best way they can and though all are of different class and only brought into each other's spheres by Grace's marriage to Charles and from different social backgrounds through adversity they all end up becoming to some degree friends and allies for life.

A great read I could not put down as the characters and situations were believable and engaging. A pretty true to life record of life during war time and the emotions and live in the moment attitude of the time.

Well worth anyone reading who is into period novels.

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## **Moppet says**

Forbidden Places opens with a prologue set in 1995 (the year the book was first published) in the Palm Court of the Ritz Hotel in London. This is as good an introduction to Vincenzi as any. She writes glitzy blockbusters about the wealthy, the powerful and the posh. (She does shoehorn in some working-class or lower-middle characters, but they never ring as true). This particular juicy saga follows Grace, Florence and Clarissa through the Second World War in the Home Counties. All three women find ways to serve their country while negotiating enough romantic ups and downs to sink a destroyer.

Vincenzi has, in spades, the read-on factor. The only other author I can think of who is so good at keeping the pages turning is Sally Beauman. Like Beauman, Vincenzi creates vivid characters, keeps the pot boiling and has a genius for missing out the boring bits. But again like Beauman, she does sometimes resort to very unsubtle methods of creating suspense. The prologue is a good example: it does little more than establish that all three women have secrets they have kept since the war and have no intention of revealing. There's no return to 1995 at the end of the book, and the story really starts on page 15, in 1938, with Grace about to meet her future husband, Charles.

Grace Marchant is the beautifully-spoken daughter of a bank manager. Charles Bennett is the beautifully-spoken son of a solicitor. It may be difficult for non-Brits to discern why Charles and his family think themselves a cut above Grace and hers. They are both undeniably middle-class. But the fact is that the Marchants live in a small house with only daily staff, while the Bennetts have a large house with live-in servants, and Grace went to a local girls' school instead of boarding-school, as Charles's sister Florence did. The Bennetts' snobbery irritated me throughout the whole book, and I was longing for some member of the aristocracy to come along and patronise them, but it didn't happen.

Anyway, Grace marries Charles, more fool her, and while she flutters round like the second Mrs de Winter, her sister-in-law Florence, outwardly brash and self-confident, is secretly struggling with a difficult marital situation of her own. Their blonde, bubbly friend, Clarissa Compton Brown, gushes over everyone and everything, when she isn't having long lyrical orgasms with her husband. Grace thinks at one point that she is "unable to contemplate another hour of Clarissa's sparkling" and there were times when I felt the same way. Even the Wrens (who my WAAF great aunt described as "a toffee-nosed lot") find Clarissa a bit much. In

fact, I didn't really warm to any of the women. Grace was too much of a doormat, Florence was too much of a bitch and Clarissa was too much of a toffee-nosed slut. Also, some of the action seemed contrived (a heavily pregnant woman thinks it's a good idea to have a day out in London during the Blitz? Really?).

Having said all that, though, I really did enjoy the book. It's a soap opera set against some of the most dramatic moments of the last century. I can recommend it to anyone who wants to lose themselves for a day or two in a world of shell-pink satin nightgowns, air-raid sirens and cut-glass accents. Not my favourite Vincenzi – that would be *Wicked Pleasures* or *An Outrageous Affair* – but a solid four stars.

I won a copy of *Forbidden Places* in a giveaway (thanks to Overlook Press and Tara at Book Babe).

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### **Jayne Burnett says**

Another great read by Penny Vincenzi and perfect for reading in the sunshine.

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### **Charley Girl says**

Another great book by Penny Vincenzi! I love her stories, her characters, her writing! The first book I read of hers was *The Best of Times* and I couldn't get over the book and she keeps doing it every time, every book!

Grace is the main character followed by Clarissa and Florence. Three very different women who we get to follow through their marriages, heartaches and WWII. Grace is young and prudish but wants to be like and do the right thing. She marries Charles who is well, a man that likes to control the situations and doesn't think much of Grace's wants and thoughts.

Clarissa is the carefree beautiful woman that seems to be able to charm everyone and is happy all of the time. She is married to handsome and just as happy Jack. You just know something has to go wrong.

Florence is abrupt, a bit cold and Charles' sister. Everyone loves her husband Robert who is the charmer. Why is she not happy?

I'm not going to give anything away but I really liked these characters. Highly recommend.

I just noticed a line on Penny Vincenzi's profile that she has passed in February. Rest in peace Ms. Vincenzi.

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### **Bookreaderljh says**

This was a looooong book with a varied cast of characters - set in England during WWII. Though a lot of the plot points were transparent and you could see them coming a mile away - still there were enough twists at times to keep me reading. This is definitely a soap opera type story about one family (and their friends) and the class system within England at that time and the ravages of war (but not so much). Most characters, unfortunately, in one way or the other were really rather unlikable and morals were lacking - even in the main heroine Grace. Hard to know if this was a true picture of the times but it made for nice light summer reading. Certain characters deserved to die in the war (and pointedly did so) but this really was more of a



novel of survival and growth and connections (family or romantic) during a watershed moment in history. Even though most of my book club weren't greatly enamored with this book - it certainly made for very lively discussion. I think I felt most for the children in this story who had to put up with a lot of these adults - luckily there were some that the children brought out their better side.

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### **Karen says**

3.5 stars. One of my all time favorite authors who passed away this last February. I've read almost all of her many books and have enjoyed them all. This book shares the drama of 3 friends before, during and after WWII. Good read.

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### **R. Honey says**

An absolutely wonderful read!

I think this book would have gotten far more deserved recognition as the wonderful saga that it is if the title was not so darn bodice ripping sounding. And why the Vogue cover of Dior's 'New Lolk' from 1947 when the book covers 1938 to 1946?????

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### **Barbra says**

Good saga-type novel. Really enjoyed it.

Back Cover Blurb:

Grace Marchant marries Charles Bennett at the beginning of the second world war, and loses him before she has really begun to know him - or even herself. In the five years while he is away, she makes her own life, on her own terms, and finds a new love, overwhelming and exciting in a way that her relationship with her husband never was. The return of Grace's husband, not dead at all, but very much alive, not only presents her with the most agonising of dilemmas, but brings to light many things which would have been much better left in the dark.....

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### **Rachel says**

I really enjoyed this large dose of candy floss. I like Vincenzi's way of writing about several characters and following them through a period of time. I used to read quite a few of her books in the 90s but don't think I have since. This was comfy and cosy reading.

I will say that there were an awful lot of peaks and troughs, soaring and loudly triumphant!

Also, if all the things that Grace, and the other characters, never forgot for the rest of their life were added up it would turn out to be quite a considerable number of things!

This would be a perfect beach holiday book.

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