ReadingGroupGuides
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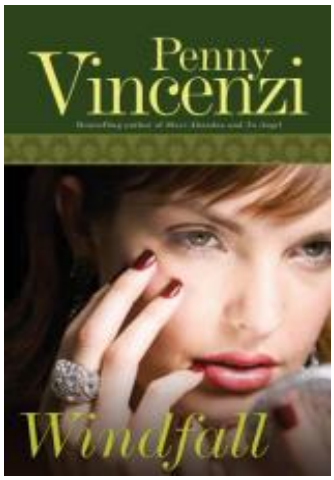
Windfall

by Penny Vincenzi



About the Book

Cassia Tallow has been married to the town doctor for seven years when she mysteriously inherits an enormous fortune from her godmother, whom was believed to have died penniless. A responsible housewife and mother, Cassia is at first determined to be sensible, to stay happy and in control --- but suddenly, for the first time in her life, she is able to do exactly as she likes. The money gives her confidence, and her husband can only look on resentfully as she resumes her medical career, sheds some of her domestic burdens, wings with the jet set, and re-forms old relationships --- one of them of a most dangerous kind. Along the way, Cassia realizes that something seems not quite right about the money left to her and she seeks answers, both about the money and the rest of her life. Too soon the windfall, part benign influence, part brutal force, is an absolutely powerful entity all of its own --- one that Cassia cannot resist.

Windfall is full of the signatures that make Vincenzi?s novels irresistible to devoted fans and newcomers alike: a sharp eye for detail, an assortment of loveable and despicable characters, and a titillating, suspenseful plot. Referred to as ?the doyenne of the modern blockbuster? (*Glamour*), Vincenzi never fails her readers, with her artfully written tales of larger-than-life characters, drama, suspense, thrills, sex, jewels, gorgeous homes and clothes, and lush descriptions of the lives of the rich and privileged of English aristocracy. This mesmerizing story of one woman?s very complicated inheritance is no exception.

Discussion Guide

1. How did Cassia?s newly acquired wealth play a role in her seemingly newfound resentment toward Edward? Were her feelings new or did the money simply bring to the surface emotions she had suppressed for years?

2. After Edward first announced to his parents that he and Cassia, unbeknownst to her, were engaged, should she have prolonged her trip in order to express her feelings, concerns, and doubts about their relationship? Or do you think it was her duty to stand by and support him in his endeavors?

3. What is your reaction to Cecily and Benedict remaining married even after he opens up to her about his homosexuality? Why was it so important to Cecily and Benedict to appear as a happily married couple, even after they both knew that it would not work out? What would their alternatives have been? What is the reaction that most of the characters have toward homosexuality? Is it much different than today?

4. What role did wealth and status play in this book?

5. When Edward decided to take on an assistant without consulting or discussing the issue with his wife, did Cassia have a right to be angry after all of the things she had taken upon herself to experience and enjoy? Why?

6. Why did Edward feel that he was right in demanding that Cassia move to Scotland with him in order to return to medical school? Why was Cassia right in defying his wishes?

7. How were unwed pregnant women treated in the book?

8. How did Cassia?s unhappiness in her own life play a role in her work at the clinics? How did the stress of an unfulfilled life and an unhappy marriage make her more sympathetic toward the women she treated?

9. Social failure was, to many in the book, absolutely unacceptable. Which characters do you think sacrificed the most, and in what way, for the sake of their reputations?

10. What significance did Cassia?s decision to skip her Friday morning ritual with her children in order to tour a hospital for her own benefit have? Was this the start of a dangerous trend?

11. Each of the three leading ladies (Cassia, Cecily, and Edwina) made life-changing discoveries about themselves or their lives. In what ways were they the same? In what ways did they differ?

12. Despite the time period in which **Windfall** is set, what statement do you think Vincenzi was trying to make about feminism?

13. Why do you think Vincenzi decided to foreshadow Cassia?s story with that of the King?s? What impact does this have on the rest of the story?

14. How did the two incidents involving blackmail differ (first with Benedict and his former lover and second with Rollo Gresham and Harry)? Which, if either, seemed more acceptable and why?

15. Why did Cassia blame Harry for the misfortunes that befell her after receiving her inheritance? Why was she right or wrong in her conviction?

16. How did Cassia?s stubbornness at the end of the book make you feel? Was she protecting herself from making another life-altering decision that might upset her for the rest of her life? Or was she simply being difficult?

17. How did Cassia?s relationship with Edward change throughout the book? Did it get better or worse over time?

Author Bio

Penny Vincenzi was one of the UK's best-loved and most popular authors. She wrote 17 novels, including the #1 bestsellers THE BEST OF TIMES and AN ABSOLUTE SCANDAL, and two short story collections

Her first "proper" job was at the Harrods Library, aged 16, after which she went to secretarial college. She joined the *Mirror* and later became a journalist, writing for *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and *Cosmopolitan* amongst many others, before turning to fiction. Several years later, over seven million copies of Penny's books have been sold worldwide and she is universally held to be the 'doyenne of the modern blockbuster' (*Glamour*).

Penny passed away on February 25, 2018 at the age of 78.

Critical Praise

"Penny is the doyenne of the modern blockbuster."

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