



## A Question of Trust

*Penny Vincenzi*

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***A Question Of Trust* is vintage Penny Vincenzi: rich with characters, life-changing decisions, glamour, love, desire and conflict.**

*1950s London.* Tom Knelston is charismatic, working class and driven by ambition, ideals and passion. He is a man to watch. His wife Alice shares his vision. It seems they are the perfect match.

Then out of the blue, Tom meets beautiful and unhappily married Diana Southcott, a fashion model. An exciting but dangerous affair is inevitable and potentially damaging to their careers. And when a child becomes ill, Tom is forced to make decisions about his principles, his reputation, his marriage, and most of all, his love for his child.

## A Question of Trust Details

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Author : Penny Vincenzi

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## From Reader Review A Question of Trust for online ebook

### Sam Still Reading says

I generally adore Penny Vincenzi's books. So I put her latest book, *A Question of Trust*, on the agenda to read over the New Year period when there are holidays and long nights to really enjoy it. This wasn't my favourite Vincenzi book unfortunately. It has all the ingredients for needed for a stellar read – complex characters, glamour and a historical setting (1940s-1950s) but it didn't quite gel for me. Perhaps my expectations were too high, but I think it was really because I wasn't particularly interested in the main characters. I didn't particularly like Tom or Diana and I eagerly awaited the stories of the supporting characters like Jillie and Ned.

The whole novel centres around Tom Knelston. It begins with his youth as the son of a postman, trying to break through England's class system. Tom joins the local branch of the Labour Party and there his future is set – in politics and meeting his wife Laura. Now at this point if you've read the blurb on the back, you will be asking if I've got Tom's wife's name correct. Don't I mean Alice? No, I don't. This is one of the points that I think got me off on the wrong foot with this book. After reading the blurb, I'm looking for Alice and a sick child but they simply don't appear until very late in the book. In a way, it kind of ruined the final drama because once it started, I realised that I already knew all about it. Also, I was looking out for Laura's demise rather than enjoying the time she and Tom had together. My advice is not to read the blurb. If you simply must have one, try this: "the life of Tom Knelston, wannabe Labour politician and his associates through World War II and 1950s Britain". Yes, it's boring, but it won't have you waiting endlessly for one part of the book.

Tom is an unusual character. He believes passionately in the Labour ideal, particularly the National Health Service. But outside of politics, he shows himself as a hypocrite several times over. He secretly lusts after the middle and upper class while decrying their wealth, but starts an affair with Diana. Diana is wealthy, famous and a fashion model. Yet for Tom, it's easy to put aside morals to start an affair with her. He tries to justify it as his wife Alice is continually tired after three children in quick succession (who played half a role in that, eh?). Yet when desperate times call for desperate measures, Tom wants everyone to uphold his politics. Perhaps I'm taking the stance of a modern female reader too far, but Tom – you are a tool. His lover Diana isn't much better, as she has a nasty, vindictive streak that fortunately stays mainly suppressed. Diana's always had what she wanted without effort and thinks turn nasty when she doesn't get them.

Fortunately, other characters in the novel are more pleasing. Alice was an interesting character, worn down far too early by children and housework. I was pleased when her courage reappeared late in the novel to defy Tom. Alice's best friend Jillie was a great character. A female surgeon who describes herself as hapless, Jillie is likeable and very capable. She's also a woman ahead of her time with a career and own life. Poor Jillie does get put through the emotional wringer, but for the reader that's quite useful because we get to see the lovely Ned. Ned is a paediatrician with modern ideas and what he believes is a dirty secret. He's gripped by insecurities but also determined to change the lives of his small patients. It would have been lovely if Jillie and Ned could have shoved Tom out of the spotlight more often.

As you might have guessed, this is a very character driven novel. A lot does happen over period of the book, but it's always for the characters. While this isn't my favourite Penny Vincenzi novel, it's still incredibly well written and an interesting read.

<http://samstillreading.wordpress.com>

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### **Helen Carolan says**

Another huge read from Penny, but as always it's like gorging on your favourite chocolates. Tom and Diana's paths briefly cross as teens. When they meet again some years later Diana is divorcing her husband and Tom is an aspiring labour m.p. When they embark on an affair, it has consequences for not just themselves, but everyone around them. Terrific read.

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### **Alexandra Fuller says**

I had preordered this book as I have loved others by this author but I found that this did not have the same appeal. It was really based on a society girl who became a model and a man who had strong socialist beliefs and wanted to see the introduction and continuation of the NHS. I found the whole book too "bitty" and was a bit disappointed at the suddenness of the ending.

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### **Sarah Davies says**

Normally I love Penny Vincenzi novels as you always have a fantastic saga to read.

This story starts in the late 1930's and runs through to the 1950's follow the lives of Tom who is from a working class background with a grammar school education and a love of the Labour party and the wish to become an MP and to help with the change of the country after World War 2 and the start of the NHS.

Also Diana the rich socialite in a loveless marriage who becomes a famous model.

Some of the other characters in the story such as Ned and Jillie are really interesting but the story did feel really lacking with detail and seemed to skip so much of their lives. Still an enjoyable read but not one of the stories that will keep you interested with each page turn.

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### **Amanda says**

Essential Vincenzi! So sad it is the last one.

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### **Vivien Wessels says**

Very well written with many characters but they are well developed and the thread of the story is clear. The progression of the story is well handled and she skilfully keeps up the action especially with chapters ending without resolution so that the reader is made to continue.

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## **June Lim says**

A splendid enchanting read with spans over 19 years with an interesting narration of the political and economic backdrop of Britain between 1930s-1955s. The description of the characters are so vividly brought to life that you find yourself totally absorbed with it. Such an enthralling story!

Will Tom achieved his dreams of being an MP? Will Diana find true love after her first failed marriage? Trust plays a vital role in friendship and relationship!

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## **Amanda says**

I have always been a fan of Penny Vincenzi's books and was highly honoured to receive a copy of this book in exchange for a review.

If it was any other author but Penny Vincenzi, seeing several pages of names that will appear in the book before I have started it would have intimidated me, but I knew from the beginning this was a story to sink my teeth into!!

Diane & Tom are worlds apart but at first sight there is an instant attraction that is never forgotten.

This book has everything I love, it is full of wonderful characters, has romance, glamour, betrayal, politics and much much more!!

Although it is a long story, I was fully immersed in this book and by the end of it felt like I was reading about people I knew as well as my family.

I am now Searching for any Penny Vincenzi books I haven't read yet, as I cannot believe this might be the last book I read of Penny's.

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## **Bev says**

Penny Vincenzi - how do I describe my relationship with her books? In one word - intense. In a phrase - "pleasure to my soul". And lastly in a sentence...I'm entranced by a world so different, where people are so fascinating and the plot is so surprising, that I just can't stop reading. It's like crack cocaine.

A Question of Trust has all the ingredients (as per Goodreads) - "vintage Penny Vincenzi: rich with characters, life-changing decisions, glamour, love, desire and conflict.

1950s London. Tom Knelston is charismatic, working class and driven by ambition, ideals and passion. He is a man to watch. His wife Alice shares his vision. It seems they are the perfect match.

Read my full review [here](#).

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## **SueBC says**

English author Penny Vincenzi is a master of the multi-character saga or, as Vogue called her, “the doyenne of the modern blockbuster”. I hadn’t read one of her books for a long while, but I used to like the way she provided a long, interesting read, while interweaving a large cast of characters over a great many years. I downloaded the 22 and a half hour audiobook of Vincenzi’s latest novel, *A Question of Trust*, narrated by experienced actor, Sandra Duncan.

Set in England, *A Question of Trust* begins in 1936 and carries through until 1955, with the final year encompassing many chapters. The story includes romances (both successful and failed), tragedy, and various dilemmas. We meet the upper-class girl whose only ambition is an engagement announcement in the society pages; the medical student (here named Edward or Ned Welles) trying to please his father and himself; the rebellious girl who wants to be a nurse; her best friend who is not sure she will make it as a doctor; the less-privileged but intelligent boy with career and political ambitions; and the equally political and strong-minded young teacher. These characters start out quite separate but, of course, their lives gradually overlap, while we see them through the war years, the ups and downs of the labour party, the beginnings of the National Health Service, the workings of the modelling industry, and the struggles of homosexuals in those times.

Sandra Duncan does a great job performing the work, rather than just narrating, and her characters are well-differentiated, whether male or female, upper-society or working-class, English or American (although the latter is not a perfect accent). She even does one line as a passable Churchill! I would be happy to listen to other narrations by Duncan in the future.

The story itself is very slow going for the first third of the book, as we are introduced to the various characters. I found myself really not caring, as nothing much really happened to these people I was not very invested in. I almost abandoned it, but figured that, at the price I paid (even though on a gift card), I really should persevere. In the end I was glad I did, as the story does pick up and the characters become people whose fate you want to know, particularly as they interact with each other more and more. Not everyone is always nice or acting with the highest ethics, and yet Vincenzi makes them all believable and worthy of happiness, for all of their faults. In my opinion, the ending, in particular, is really masterfully done, with all of the loose ends nicely coming together.

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## **Amanda says**

I have always been a fan of Penny Vincenzi’s books and was highly honoured to receive a copy of this book in exchange for a review.

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## **Lou Grimm says**

What a strangely compelling story - or is it a series of interwoven stories?

It was not written in a style I would expect for a look into the hearts and souls of people living their lives, falling in love, and going through tragedies, because it was so detached. I never once felt I was *there*. Instead, I was an on-looker, like a bird flitting from flower to flower. And somehow, this made it even more real.

Vincenzi takes me to each 'flower' and gives me a glimpse of their lives right there and then. Sometimes a major drama is unfolding, other times I've only just missed it and experience the aftermath instead, before she takes me to the next character.

She also makes a game out of each chapter opening - who are we dealing with now? Try and guess by the events or the setting because they're the only clues you're going to get. One whole (very short) chapter never named a soul (and it was the most moving chapter of all). Usually I'd complain about being pulled out of the story to figure things out, but this time that whole flitting flower to flower thing meant I was never there in the first place. It honestly made this a mildly voyeuristic experience.

But while Vincenzi's characters felt like fond memories of old acquaintances, giving me that 'I wonder what they're doing now' sensation, they were also *real*. I loved Tom. Then I hated him. Then I forgave him, laughed at him, and decided he just wasn't the nicest flower in the bush. I was glad I can walk away from him. And it was all because he was more *human* than character. He wasn't all good, he wasn't all bad. He held stupid ideals to his heart and stood on useless principles. He meant well.

I should also lay acclaim at the feet of the historic side of this story - especially the medical aspect. Sometimes that history was its own drawcard: I mean, really - did doctors actually used to put a cervical stitch in place for placenta praevia?! (Oh. Wait a minute. I just looked that up. We actually still do that. See what I mean? The things you can learn by reading fiction.)

The most moving part for me, the flower that made the entire flight of fantasy so rich and rewarding, was the children. I don't do spoilers, and there are a lot of children in this story, but you'll know which ones I mean when you read it. Right near the end, their very last mention. That undid me and I cried as though a whole Hollywood orchestra told me to.

This is well worth the read, and I'm glad I savoured it, took my time with it, and made the joy last a whole 10

days.

*I received a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.*

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### **Geraldine Presley says**

Penny Vincenzi is one of my favourite authors and I have read everything she has written. Her stories are always long and have many interesting characters. The stories are often political, but the main story is the most important.

One main character grows up in a poor family, but goes to a better school than his siblings and becomes politically inclined. Two other main characters are a woman doctor and her friend, a nurse who is not treated well by her husband. Another main character is a rich woman who takes what she wants.

The story happens over many years and it tells what happens in these people's lives over time.

I did not like the ending, but do read the book. You will find it well worth the time.

All her books are fascinating!

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### **Hilary Mortz says**

I've always enjoyed Penny Vincenzi and her upper class, posh bonk-busting family sagas – and 'A Question of Trust' delivered all of that in bucket loads and much more besides.

I loved the story, which is centered round the post-war Labour Party and the birth of the National Health Service, I loved the period atmosphere, I loved all the characters – they were warm, glamorous and believable.

An absolute treat and a fabulous read.

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### **Sandy \*The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice\* says**

EXCERPT: 'I should never have married him,' said Diana sadly. 'It was very wrong of me.'

Tom looked at her sharply. 'Why do you say that?'

'Because I didn't love him,' said Diana. '....And should I go to Paris, do you think? It really would cheer me up.'

'Absolutely not,' said Tom, sounding as stern as he could. 'You'd wipe out any goodwill at a stroke.'

She sighed, then managed a watery smile.

'All right. I'll do my best. But I can't promise anything. You've no idea what it's like living with someone who hates you. Or at best dislikes and mistrusts you. That hurts. Oh, Tom, dear friend Tom, I know you've got to go, but thank you so much for coming and listening to me, and advising me. Just talking to you has



made me feel better. I just hope I can do the same for you one day. Contrary to what you might think, I'm very good at keeping secrets. Go on, home to Alice the angel and I'll hope to see you very soon.'

She was very tall, hardly had to reach up to kiss him, but she did, a long, gentle kiss on the lips. It was confusing, that kiss, albeit not in the least carnal. Tom said good luck, and half stumbled out the front door and down into the perfectly groomed Padster Mews, where he stood for a while, taking deep breaths and steadying himself.

She was danger, was Diana Southcott. He was more aware of it with every meeting. He started to run, hoping for three things. That Alice wouldn't be too cross with him; that he had no lingering whiff of Diana's heady, heavy perfume about him; and that she would not go to Paris.

**ABOUT THIS BOOK:** A Question Of Trust is vintage Penny Vincenzi: rich with characters, life-changing decisions, glamour, love, desire and conflict.

1950s London. Tom Knelston is charismatic, working class and driven by ambition, ideals and passion. He is a man to watch. His wife Alice shares his vision. It seems they are the perfect match.

Then out of the blue, Tom meets beautiful and unhappily married Diana Southcott, a fashion model. An exciting but dangerous affair is inevitable and potentially damaging to their careers. And when a child becomes ill, Tom is forced to make decisions about his principles, his reputation, his marriage, and most of all, his love for his child.

**MY THOUGHTS:** I read the final chapter of this book with tears trickling down my face. When I finished, I sat with it clutched to my chest like I was hugging an old friend before parting for who knows how long. Vincenzi has this effect on me every time. This time was even more poignant, with A Question of Trust being the last book she published before her death.

Vincenzi has a vast cast of characters, she even lists and explains their role in the book, but they are never hard to keep track of. I know the extract I chose may read like a particularly nauseating soap opera. But it's not. It is warm, touching, rich and heart-breaking. It is full of glamour, and struggles, both personal and professional. No one can write like Vincenzi.

So, no more sweeping sagas. No more characters who feel like family and friends by the time I reach the end of the book. I will just have to go back to her first book and read them all over again.

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**THE AUTHOR:** Her family, Headline and her agent Clare Alexander are sad to announce the death of their beloved Penny Vincenzi who died peacefully on February 25th.

At the launch of her 19th book, A Question of Trust, last year, Penny said: "If nobody buys it, it will be my last book; otherwise, no, I don't want it to be my last book ... I still love writing and the whole process." And at the time of her death Penny was several chapters into a new book. We would urge those who haven't discovered all of her books yet to explore the backlist, and we look forward to publishing A Question of Trust in paperback this year.

Penny Vincenzi, who died in 2018, was one of the UK's best-loved and most popular authors. Since her first book, Old Sins, was first published in 1989, she went on to write sixteen more bestselling novels and two

collections of stories. She began her career as a junior secretary for Vogue magazine and went on to work at The Daily Mirror, Tatler, and later as a Fashion and Beauty Editor on magazines such as Woman's Own, Nova and Honey, before becoming a Deputy Editor of Options and Contributing Editor of Cosmopolitan. 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).

DISCLOSURE: I own my copy of A Question of Trust by Penny Vincenzi, published by Headline Publishing Group. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

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