

The Lion's Den

Norma Cook

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The Lion's Den is more than just a steamy romance novel, it is dangerous, inventive, and provocative.

With dramatic twists and turns, Norma Cook's *The Lion's Den* is a fast-paced and thrilling tale of romance and warfare that stretches from dangerous politics in the Middle East to the wild landscapes of eastern Canada.

Photojournalist Della has barely escaped the same fate as her longtime partner, Aaron: becoming a POW in Afghanistan. She takes a job in eastern Canada shooting caribou for a wildlife magazine; there, she meets the rugged and outdoorsy Brad, who introduces her to the world of wildlife conservation. Just as she is trying to move on from the horrors she experienced in the Middle East, her past makes a brutal reappearance, and she is forced to deal with the consequences of her previous life.

What stands out most is the well-developed plot. While the characters may be traveling from place to place within a chapter, the story line never falters. Each new revelation, while surprising, feels purposeful. The characters all have clear motivations to which they remain true throughout the novel, even if the conflicts they are presented with could deter them. The strength of the story and its characters is reflected in the strength and solidity of the writing itself.

The story moves quickly, and while this makes for an exciting read, occasionally the fast pace feels unrealistic. Considering the amount of care that has been put into research to make sure the story and its events feel as truthful as possible, any err in feasible timing feels jarring. For instance, Brad has only known Della one day when he puts forward a substantial sum of money and helps assemble a team of mercenaries to find and rescue Della's missing partner.

Della, on the surface, seems like a very adventurous and self-sufficient woman. She is comfortable hiking and rustically camping in the Canadian wilderness on her own, yet at crucial moments, she always seems to rely on men to rescue her. This is one way in which Della's character development is restricted and lacks ingenuity.

The Lion's Den is more than just a steamy romance novel—it is also dangerous, inventive, and provocative. The story covers an impressive amount of ground, not only geographically but also politically and socially. This novel is perfect for anyone looking for a quick, entertaining read that is not lacking in substance.

RENATE CHILDS (January 30, 2017)

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