

WASP Sting

Lee A. Sweetapple

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WASP Sting is an easygoing story about the planes of WWII and the bravery of the pilots who flew them.

With a shifty balance of romantic tension and authentic military flight knowledge, Lee A. Sweetapple's *WASP Sting* is a technically heavy but pleasant historical novel. Attention given to details of military protocol, flight maneuvers, and the intrigue surrounding the protagonist's mission makes the novel an homage to the role Women Airforce Service Pilots played during World War II.

Trudy Andrich is a WASP assigned to fly a secret mission with Major Rod Jackson. Trudy is tough and can hold her own with the men, though her character maintains femininity and grace. She is often described with predictable terms, though, including "pretty" and "beautiful," with "golden blond hair" and "sky-blue eyes."

Major Jackson is painted as a typical male chauvinist who underestimates Trudy, but who still must rely on her and learn to trust her. Their personal histories are explored through stereotypical banter and a few brief comments about their lives before the war.

Despite their distaste for each other, together Major Jackson and Trudy must travel behind enemy lines to transport a professor working with classified information back into Allied territory. The professor's work, it seems, could impact the outcome of the war.

The sense of danger of the mission is built up through descriptions of the modifications to planes, the near misses both pilots have with malfunctioning equipment, and the urgent secret briefings they receive from international military figures.

The depth of technical expertise and authenticity in describing instrument panels, challenges with weaponry, and fuel loads is the novel's real driving force. Conversations with military officials, playing the respect for rank and office against the knowledge and ego of Major Jackson in particular, have more realism than those involving Trudy.

The relationship between Trudy and Major Jackson feels hastily executed and disingenuous, weighing down an otherwise fascinating look at the talent and humility of women pilots during the era. A lack of variation with sentence structures also cause the story to lag.

Excessive details about inconsequential acts, from filling a plate with food to moving from a car to a building, do not forward the development of characters or plot. Nearly clinical descriptions of the surroundings and mundane actions sustain a militaristic atmosphere but make it difficult to engage in the story. Short chapters make for a comfortable rhythm of tension and resolution, though.

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SARA BUDZIK (April 28, 2017)

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