



Uprooted: A Canadian War Story

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Lynn Reid Banks was evacuated as a child to Canada during the Second World War and at times this story, based on that experience, does read like a memoir rather than a story. It tells of Lindy who with her mother and cousin Cameron is sent to Canada in 1940 to stay with a family a relative has found for them in Saskatchewan. At first Gordon and his wife Luti are the perfect hosts, and they have to be very generous, as at first husbands and fathers left behind in England are not allowed to send any money to support their families who have been taken in by Canadian hosts. But increasingly Gordon, who has a drink problem and tries to get Lindy's mother to drink with him, makes life very difficult and after an incident at a party the family leave and stay with another English family in the city. By this time their menfolk are allowed to send money so life improves greatly, and much of the difficulties pass over Lindy's head. Cameron however has found it hard to settle and wants to return to fight the Germans, and after hearing of his parents' divorce he runs away and tries to get across the Atlantic from Montreal on a ship. Fortunately he comes to his senses and returns. The last few years of their evacuee life is glossed over so the ending is rather unsatisfactory.

This story would appeal to 10-year-olds and upwards, but the passages describing the loneliness of Lindy's mother and her unhappiness at her husband's unsatisfactory and infrequent letters, and her obvious attraction to Hank the handsome Navy captain the family met on the long train journey from Montreal belong perhaps in the memoir this book could well be. Gordon's attempt at a pass at Lindy's mother also sits uneasily with the rest of the story, which describes well the difficulties of adjustment to a new country and a new way of life, and the welcome Canadians gave to the evacuee families. There is a glimpse of the wish of some Americans to join in the war when Lindy and Cameron visit an English family near New York.

Lynne Reid Banks has lost none of her storytelling power and with a little editing this would have been a very good novel indeed. It bears comparison with Canadian writer Kit Pearson's trilogy **Guests at War** the first volume of which **The Sky is Falling** was published in 1989, and tells a similar story. Lindy comes across as a girl who loves her family, misses her father, but is not unaware of the fun and novelty of Canadian life. Cameron's unhappiness and his desire to be part of life back at home is credible, especially after the shock of the news of his parents' divorce, something which must have happened to some young evacuees. The descriptions of the time the family spent in the wilderness at the lake, and their fun in the snow, show today's young readers that there was much to enjoy for those evacuated, although many were not accompanied by their mothers. At least Lindy had her mother with her, and Cameron his aunt.

It is touching that Lynne Reid Banks has chosen to end her story with the words of the Canadian National anthem ?O Canada?, and will remind readers of the debt owed to Canada for helping families during the Second World War.

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