



The Care and Management of Lies: A Novel of the Great War

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The *New York Times* bestselling author of the Maisie Dobbs series turns her prodigious talents to this World War I standalone novel, a lyrical drama of love struggling to survive in a damaged, fractured world.

By July 1914, the ties between Kezia Merchant and Thea Brissenden, friends since girlhood, have become strained—by Thea’s passionate embrace of women’s suffrage, and by the imminent marriage of Kezia to Thea’s brother, Tom, who runs the family farm. When Kezia and Tom wed just a month before war is declared between Britain and Germany, Thea’s gift to Kezia is a book on household management—a veiled criticism of the bride’s prosaic life to come. Yet when Tom enlists to fight for his country and Thea is drawn reluctantly onto the battlefield, the farm becomes Kezia’s responsibility. Each must find a way to endure the ensuing cataclysm and turmoil.

As Tom marches to the front lines, and Kezia battles to keep her ordered life from unraveling, they hide their despair in letters and cards filled with stories woven to bring comfort. Even Tom’s fellow soldiers in the trenches enter and find solace in the dream world of Kezia’s mouth-watering, albeit imaginary meals. But will well-intended lies and self-deception be of use when they come face to face with the enemy?

Published to coincide with the centennial of the Great War, *The Care and Management of Lies* paints a poignant picture of love and friendship strained by the pain of separation and the brutal chaos of battle. Ultimately, it raises profound questions about conflict, belief, and love that echo in our own time.

The Care and Management of Lies: A Novel of the Great War Details

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From Reader Review The Care and Management of Lies: A Novel of the Great War for online ebook

Shirley Schwartz says

This book was totally astonishing. What I found the most remarkable is that Ms. Winspear covers the human side of World War I better than any other fiction book I've read that has been set during the Great War. Ms. Winspear wrote this book to commemorate the 100 anniversary of the beginning of this terrible war. The setting is a farm in Kent and of course in France where the fighting was occurring. The time is 1914 and 1915. The book is all about Kezia Marchant who becomes Kezia Brissendon when she marries Tom Brissendon in early 1914. Kezia is a parson's daughter and well educated for the times. She is a school teacher when she marries Tom, a farmer in Kent. Kezia gives up her London life to become a farmer's wife. She has not got much experience in cooking, keeping house or farming for that matter, but her love for Tom encourages to embrace her new life with both arms. Kezia and Tom are deeply in love, but then Tom decides to join the army at the very beginning of the war (August 1914). At the time everyone thought it would be all over by Christmas. Kezia is left to manage the farm and the house on her own. She is only a few months married, but her optimism and the letters that she and Tom send to each other help her cope. The letters that Tom and Kezia exchange are the main things that drive the plot along in this surprising book. As we know, there was so much misinformation and outright lies divulged about the war and what it was actually like for the soldiers in the trenches, that people at home in England never really understood the enormity of the war and the huge toll it took on lives on both sides. This is apparent in Tom and Kezia's letters as neither one tells the other one what is actually going on with them. Neither one wants to worry the other one. Ms. Winspear introduces the real story of what happened in the trenches in between these wonderful warm letters and it is done in such an understated way, that it makes the war even more vile than what we the readers have thought it was. World War I was a despicable war with no redeeming qualities and nothing is solved by it as is made apparent when World War II began only 21 years after the end of WWI. The book raises a good many questions about patriotism, war-time sacrifices, and the damage done to human lives and psyche both at home and in the trenches. This is a remarkable book. It is both very dark and very warm at the same time.

Roselyn says

I was all set to love this book. I'm a big fan of the Maisie Dobbs series, but this just didn't capture me. I kept waiting for that moment when I really sink into the story...and it never happened. The relationship between Kezia and Thea was never really developed--I thought that was left hanging. So I was disappointed as I finished this book that I have been looking forward to reading, and I hated the ending.

Lori says

Unfortunately, just as the 'Maisie Dobbs' series fizzled out at about book # 4, this departure, also centered around WWI, does the same. No doubt Winspear is a talented writer, but it may be time to explore new territory. I am not entirely sure what I'm to get from this other than WWI was horrific and tore people's lives apart. The characters are not really developed: Kezia and Tom marry and create an almost pastoral, bucolic, existence on the family farm while Thea/Dorrit scrambles from one cause to the other without much reason other than to avoid the police or because she's bored. Details of the battlefield are graphic--be prepared--and

the end? Well, it just ENDS. I kept thinking 'what the...?' Is this a set up for another book? A new series? All in all, I felt like I was treading the same, tired, overdone, territory Winspear (and others) have done countless times before. IF, however, you are a new reader of Winspear--this might not be a bad introduction.

Annette says

I'm a huge historical fiction fan, and there seems to be a dearth of books about World War I, so when I saw *The Care and Management of Lies*, written by a well-known author, I couldn't pass it up. For the most part, I really enjoyed the book

Kezia and Thea are best friends. Well, at least they were all through school. But now Kezia is going to marry Tom, Thea's brother, and move to the family farm to become a farm wife. Thea is enjoying her job as a teacher in London, so the girls have grown apart.

It is surprising how well Kezia takes to farm life. She is a society girl, and knows nothing about cooking or running a household. But she works hard and she and Tom have a great relationship. Shortly after they are married, World War I breaks out, and Tom enlists. Kezia must now run the entire farm, with the help of a few men who for various reasons can't fight in the war.

Thea, always a suffragette, is now protesting the war, and when she is in danger of being arrested for sedition, she has a change of heart and joins a medical team and runs an ambulance transporting wounded from the front lines to the hospital.

The Care and Management of Lies does a good job of describing life in the trenches for the soldiers, as well as the changes in the lives of those left behind in England. Not a lot happens, but Kezia is a wonderful character, and I enjoyed reading the letters she wrote to Tom, and seeing her become such a strong woman. Ultimately, *The Care and Management of Lies* is a book about surviving a world turned upside down and holding true to what is important.

Winspear writes very beautifully, and *The Care and Management of Lies* will be enjoyed by those who want to know more about life during the war. The characters are memorable and while the book is heartbreaking, it's also heartwarming.

Anne Slater says

I finished this book 7 minutes ago and really want to talk to someone about it. So I choose... YOU!

C&M of L moves quite differently to the Maisie Dobbs books. Winspear really pulled it off-- this is a brilliant book that did not come out of the Maisie Dobbs corner of her mind, even though the settings are the same: rural England, World War I. The particular settings rarely change: the farm, London, the battlefield.

Long ago I came to the conclusion that life and literature are about communication, pure and simple, and that's what *The Care and Management of Lies* is about.

The primary relationships/communications explored are those of Kezia ('keez-yuh') and her school friend

Thea, and Kezia's husband Tom and the sergeant who chooses him, in the field of training and then battle, as whipping boy.

The lies of the title are several, the least surprising being the lies that field officers tell when in condolence letters they tell dead men's parents that "you son died instantly and felt no pain." The most surprising lies are contained in the letters that Kezia writes to Tom. Their effect on his morale and that of his companions is charming with the sweetness that only deep love can concoct.

This novel moves quietly, gently, honestly. There is no brutishness that does not serve a purpose, and it has a major but very constrained place in the story. The zinger of *The Care and Management of Lies* is that it feels like real life. No betrayals of marriage vows; honest self-doubt, hard work, hunger, and sadness woven gently into the fabric. I may have to read it again tomorrow.

Jennifer says

Disclaimer - I received this from the First Reads Giveaway. Additionally, I do not summarize the plot - that is at the top of the page.

If there was only one thing I was allowed to rave about *_The Care and Management of Lies_* it would be how much I came to care about the characters. At a critical point of the novel, I even broke my readers code - no reading ahead! - but my break was over and I couldn't leave the character hanging!

Please read this novel: the emotions the characters put you through are genuine. At the conclusion of this book, I had 'a book hangover'; I could not pick up another book as I was still thinking about this one. I still do catch myself thinking about it in random parts of my day.

Lesia says

Jacqueline Winspear's Maisie Dobbs mysteries often deal with the repercussions of the Great War, World War I, on the people of England. But, according to the author's note in *The Care and Management of Lies*, the seeds for this novel were planted long before she became an author. Here is a powerful story of The Great War, the story of four innocent people from Kent caught up in a nightmare that was unexpected. And, Winspear said this novel began when she found a dogeared copy of *The Woman's Book*, a book about household management covering topics including cooking, children, business, and dress. Published in 1911, on the eve of the war, Winspear could only imagine the life of the woman that owned it. So, she gave that woman her great-grandmother's name, Kezia, and set out to tell her story.

In June 1914, when Kezia Marchant prepared to marry her best friend's brother, Tom Brissenden, she never dreamt of what was coming. "The country was in the early weeks of a summer that would become

memorable for its warmth, and despite worries farther afield, there was a sense of being cocooned in Englishness." But, no one really knew what to expect in the near future. Not, Thea Brissenden, who was passionately supporting women's suffrage, nor Tom, who had taken over the family farm, nor Edmund Hawkes, whose family owned much of the land neighboring the Brissenden farm. All four, in their late twenties, if they even thought of war in June, thought it would be over quickly. They were caught up in their own lives, passions and dreams.

Kezia was a little hurt when Thea gave her a copy of *The Woman's Book*, insinuating that Kezia was leaving behind her life as an educated woman, a teacher, to become a farm wife. But, Kezia would not be the only one leaving behind the life she knew. In fact, she became the one to keep the farm going, the dreams of home burning, as the other three left for war. And, all four managed to lie about their situations, trying to keep hope alive.

With the anniversary of World War I in August, there will be many books published about the war. But, Jacqueline Winspear has always grasped the brutality of war, and the effect on the people at home in England. Her Maisie Dobbs books never romanticized the aftereffects of war. In *The Care and Management of Lies*, her characters come to life as they try to put a positive spin on life in order to appear brave. But, it's those very stories that show how tragic and terrible the war was, both on the battlefield and at home. Kezia Brizzenden represents so many women who courageously took on roles they were unprepared for. If you're looking for a novel that tells the truth, the emotional truth of war, reach for *The Care and Management of Lies*.

Celeste says

I love Jacqueline Winspear's Maisie Dobbs series, but was disappointed in this effort.

It's well-researched and gives one a clear feeling of what it was really like for the English before and during World War I. It is beautifully written, with some absolutely poignant and profound moments, and insightful nuances. But a compelling story needs to take you somewhere; at the end, one should feel that there was a reason for being on this journey. When I finished this book, I just felt deflated. While I'm not a person who insists on a happy ending, I felt the denouement of this story was a bit hollow and dissatisfying.

Connie says

The Care and Management of Lies shows the comfort of love and friendship during the dark days of World War I. Best friends Thea Brissenden and Kezia Marchant were scholarship students, and later taught together, at a private school. Kezia, the daughter of a vicar, married Thea's brother Tom to become a farmer's wife. Thea went in a different direction, becoming very passionate about the women's suffrage movement and other causes.

Tom enlisted when World War I started, leaving Kezia to manage the farm in Kent with just a few men who were physically unable to become soldiers. It was a big challenge for a town girl, but soon Kezia was out in the fields plowing, planting crops to feed the troops. Thea became an ambulance driver, transporting injured soldiers from the French battlefields.

There are vivid descriptions of trench warfare and the terrible carnage where Tom is stationed in France. Kezia, an inventive cook, makes a special effort to send baked goods to Tom and Thea, which they share with friends. Tom also reads them parts of Kezia's letters where she writes about the delicious "imaginary dinners" she is preparing for him. There is so much warmth and love baked into her cakes and her "pretend dinners," a piece of home sent to the battlefield. Tom responds with loving, upbeat letters, although he is living in constant danger in the muddy trenches with death all around him. The title, *The Care and Management of Lies*, refers partly to the way Kezia and Tom put a happy, positive spin to their letters so they would not worry their loved ones. The families of deceased soldiers always received letters from the commanding officers that their family member had fought courageously and had died instantly without any pain, which is a comfort to the family but often a lie.

The book starts off very slowly, introducing the reader to the characters, setting the scene, and including lots of historical details. It picks up pace as it gets into World War I with the spotlight on Kezia and Tom. Many chapters begin with a quote from "The Women's Book" about household management, published in 1911, which was the inspiration for the author to write this novel. The military chapters start with quotes from the "Field Service Pocket Book" of 1914. Kezia was such an endearing character that I was hoping that Jacqueline Winspear might consider writing a sequel.

Elizabeth says

Sadly disappointing from an author who can do better.

The main problem in this one is the plotting, or lack thereof. I could tell she had a plot point at which she was aiming, but she seemed to struggle with the setup until about halfway through the book. The beginning was deathly boring and not terribly illuminating as to anyone's character. Once things finally got going, it was pleasant to get to know the three main characters, and the little window into farm life circa 1914 rural England was quite sweet. I very much enjoyed the cooking parts; garden geek that I am, it made me think about my house garden in a climate that is similar to England's.

The ending came abruptly though not as a surprise. I feel a little like she's setting herself up for a series. At this point I'd say go back to Maisie Dobbs!

Cathy Cole says

When I first learned that this was not the latest book in Winspear's Maisie Dobbs series, I did feel a moment of disappointment. I've grown to love Maisie, and I look forward to seeing how her life changes; however, this book-- written to coincide with the centenary of World War I-- is about one of my favorite time periods, and I wasn't about to ignore it. I'm glad I didn't.

This elegiac and slow-moving narrative was inspired by a book Winspear found in a London book stall. The battered book on household management was inscribed to a bride on the occasion of her wedding in July 1914, and Winspear couldn't help but wonder about the changes that young woman's life underwent in the succeeding years. In *The Care and Management of Lies*, we see the hardworking, honorable and compassionate Tom enlisting after several of his farm workers do. (The war was going to be over by Christmas after all.) Kezia, a vicar's daughter totally unused to the workings of a prosperous farm, is left to carry on with the help of a couple of the old and disabled and a variety of workers brought in to make do. Thea reluctantly finds herself learning how to repair ambulances and driving them back and forth to the front

lines. Each, in his or her own way, depends on letters and care packages from the others to help them cope with the seemingly overwhelming difficulties and horrors of what they must do.

Kezia, the only one of the three left behind, finds herself the primary caregiver to the other two. Her letters to Tom become eagerly awaited items by Tom's entire outfit. In them, she describes in detail the meals she has lovingly prepared for her husband, and while Tom reads them aloud to his mates, each one is comforted by the memories these words from home evoke. Kezia sends care packages containing food and small items that Tom and Thea need, and her words bring love and respite. None of the three tell the truth of what they are facing. All three want to shield the others with loving lies and omissions.

As I said at the beginning, this book is slow moving, and it's not about Maisie, but there's gold to be found in the pages. If you love food, you're going to love Kezia's descriptions of the meals she prepares-- they can make your mouth water. There's quite a bit about those meals, but I didn't find it repetitive. Kezia uses those descriptions to care for those she loves in the only way she can, and as you read about her life on the farm, it's easy to see that, in the writing of them, she's taking herself away from reality for a while, too.

Winspear brings the reality of war in the trenches and living with men from all levels of society to life in all its smells, pettiness, filth, horror, and heroism. The relationships between Tom and the other soldiers show so much of the human condition. By book's end I realized that I had just read about the trial by fire of a generation who would go on to "keep calm and carry on" twenty years down the road. This is a lyrical and sobering book indeed.

Tara Chevrestt says

I found this story very, very dull. I could not get into, nor grow to care for the characters. It pontificates, telling us the same thing over and over, in just different words. She loves Tom. She loves Tom. She has never cooked before, never worked a farm. This person's great grandfather had a gambling problem. Thea is growing away from Kezia.

I get it; I do. I got it the first time it was mentioned.

What I don't get is all the cooking and how in the world it ties into the war. I grew terribly bored with Kezia's cooking and what ingredients she was using and how long she cooked the fish.

I feel like something was there but I could not see it. I just know that halfway through the book, I declared, "Let's get on with it already!!! I don't care what you make for his high tea or dinner!"

Just wasn't for me. I will say, however, I was intrigued with how everyone in different parts of the country reacted to the idea of war. There's the country folk who think it won't touch them, the pacifists and their protests, the young men who sign up thinking it's an adventure, and the poor who just want three square meals a day.

Carly Thompson says

Historical Fiction about WWI. The tone of this book was odd and slightly off. The beginning of the novel

(before WWI commences) was pastoral and had an old fashioned feel. Kezia is engaged to marry Tom, the brother of her best friend from school, Thea. Tom owns and works a farm in Kent and Kezia is the daughter of a Anglican minister so there will be some adjustment to helping her husband run a farm. Thea is slightly jealous of the distance that has grown between her and Kezia. Kezia is taking a traditional path in life by becoming a wife, while Thea works as a teacher in London and is involved with the suffrage movement. There were lots of lovely descriptions of the countryside, farm life, and most importantly food.

After the war breaks out, Tom enlists and Kezia is left to run the farm alone in his absence. She writes him loving letters about all the delicious food she is cooking for him (which is all imagined since shortages have been created due to the war). Tom reads the descriptions of food to his fellow soldiers and they all look forward to Kezia's next meal. Thea becomes an ambulance driver in France and Tom's officer is the large landowner who lived near him in Kent. There is a subplot about a sergeant who hates Tom and makes his life miserable.

The initial tone of the novel was gentle and reminiscent of feel good novels of small town English life from early in 20th century. When the war breaks out, the tone shifts but not entirely. There are still lovely descriptions of food and stalwart British people but there is also violence and despair and a tragic ending. I am not sure who the audience for this book is. Readers who like foodie fiction and gentler stories probably won't like the sections set in the trenches of WWI and readers who want a story about WWI will find the beginning slow to get through. There is no mystery element to attract fans of Winspear's Maisie Dobbs novels. I think the food element was the strongest element of the story and was more memorable than the trench warfare scenes which are similar to other novels that I have read. This was a strange little book. I like reading about WWI but I don't know that I would recommend this book for that aspect. Interesting but not fully successful.

Pamela says

This was a giveaway book so thanks to Goodreads and Allison and Busby.

A beautifully written but deceptive book. It begins by wrapping you up in warmth like a cosy dressing gown, but gradually the effects of war strip this away. This creates a sense of sadness and loss, the realisation that things will never be the same again. Jacqueline Winspear skilfully shows the changes brought by the Great War, not just to those fighting, but to those left behind as well.

The novel follows the fortunes of Kezia, her husband Tom, and her best friend Thea (Tom's sister) in the pre-war period and into the first year of WWI. These are likeable, believable characters that you come to care about. I did find Kezia just a bit too saintly and sunny, everyone loves her and admires her, and she is capable of rising to every challenge. This was a bit irritating initially, but as she faces real hardships trying to run the farm while Tom is at the front, her resilience and optimism are tested, and she becomes more sympathetic as a character. Thea was more nuanced, basically a good person but struggling to find her place in the world, and I found myself really involved in her story.

The narrative moves gently but steadily along. The horrors of war are not glossed over, but this book does not dwell on them, it shows how these events affect ordinary people, changing their ideas and thoughts. The use of food and recipes is a clever device to connect Kezia and Tom during their separation, and a fascinating glimpse of life at that time.

I loved this book and would recommend it as a gentle and intelligent read to anyone who enjoys fiction from this period.

Anne says

Jacqueline Winspear got the inspiration for this novel when she stumbled across a woman's household management book; *The Woman's Book - Contains Everything a Woman Ought to Know* which was edited by Florence B Jack and first published in London in 1911. The book not only covered household management, but also had comprehensive sections on cookery, children, home doctor, business, dress, society, careers, and citizenship.

Set just before, and during the First World War; *The Care and Management of Lies* is a haunting, yet very engaging story that tells of life both behind the trenches and back at home in rural Kent.

Kezia and Thea became best friends when they were both scholarship girls. They formed a bond, sharing new experiences together and considered themselves to be sisters. As they grew up, they grew apart - with Thea risking her liberty by taking part in anti-war demonstrations, whilst Kezia fell in love with Thea's brother Tom. Kezia and Tom married and Kezia was determined that she would be the best farmer's wife in Kent. Throwing herself into an almost alien way of life; cooking, helping on the farm, Kezia thrived and Tom wondered how he had been so fortunate to find this practical, passionate woman.

When war is declared, both Tom and Thea join up and find themselves on the frontline. Tom's sense of duty forced him to follow the village men into the Army, whilst Thea took the opportunity to distance herself from the increasingly violent protests that her friends were becoming involved with.

Kezia is left to run the farm herself, with just the help of a couple of elderly and unfit men. Turning to the Woman's Book that Thea gave her when she married, she started to create wonderfully delicious dinners for her absent husband. Cooking the meals, and then describing them in fine detail in letters to Tom made Kezia feel as though she was doing something for the war effort. Whilst Tom cheered the hungry, cold and scared soldiers by reading out the descriptions of these succulent treats.

The Care and Management of Lies is an unusual story, giving a different aspect to this dreadful and ferocious war. Jacqueline Winspear has vividly portrayed life behind the frontline and at home, creating wonderfully lifelike characters who the reader can really relate to. I felt as though I too had travelled their journey, and admit to more than a couple of sniffs and sobs along the way.

This is the first time that I have read anything by Jacqueline Winspear and I was very impressed by the strength of feeling that her writing inspires. I will most certainly read more of her books.
