



## The Decision

*Penny Vincenzi*

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## **The Decision Penny Vincenzi**

**1960s fashion, affairs and heartbreak feature in THE DECISION from No 1 bestselling novelist Penny Vincenzi 'Teeming with memorable characters' Woman & Home**

Set against a vibrant sixties backdrop, this is the story of two bright young things: Eliza, an ex-deb making a splash in the world of fashion, and Matt, a working-class boy carving out a serious name for himself in property. Their story begins with a love affair, closely followed by a marriage, followed by a baby. But whilst their relationship is at first fuelled by passion, it's not of the enduring kind, and soon what started out with such promise descends into a harrowing divorce case and an epic custody battle. With everything at stake for both Eliza and Matt, and neither party willing to give up their little girl without a fight, it's high drama in the courts. Let battle begin...

## **The Decision Details**

Date : Published (first published September 1st 2011)

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Author : Penny Vincenzi

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## From Reader Review The Decision for online ebook

### Noelle says

"And how had that happened, that her marriage, her really rather amazing marriage, entered into with such happiness and love and hope, had become Shaw v. Shaw . . ." Funny, this "amazing marriage" must have been from a different novel because I sure as hell didn't see Eliza and Matt's marriage as "amazing." Emotionally abusive, yes. Parents playing off one another to raise a young girl who is inevitably going to turn out to be a horribly spoiled, self-centered brat, yes. I missed the intense passion that was supposed to be present in the marriage too. A few hasty love scenes, nothing overly special, does not a passionate marriage make.

So, I couldn't stand Matt. Or his whiny, manipulative daughter. But the supporting characters were fascinating - especially Scarlett. I'd love to read a book her in fact - she didn't change who she was for the man she loved. And he didn't ask her to. The scene with her facing down her future mom-in-law was one of the best in the book. I also loved Vincenzi's way of starting off a section without immediately divulging which characters were involved, so you thought you were reading about so-and-so . . . but you (or maybe it was just me!) turned out to be incorrect more often than not.

My final thoughts. . . the back of the novel says Eliza falls for Matt Snow, yet in the pages of the book he's Matt Shaw. Perhaps she would've had better luck with Mr. Snow? ;)

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### Kate says

I loved this book and all the complexity it delivered. Its set in an era where wives are little more than babysitters, and the girl (I read this book quite some time ago, forgot her name) wants to break stereotypes and hold a high-profile job in a field where no one is irreplaceable-and does so, well, until she meets her husband, Matt, who confines her to the house of duties of taking care of their child. Push comes to shove, and they file for divorce.

This book infuriated me because I am a self-proclaimed feminist, and it portrayed the nondescript housewife back then. I'm so glad things have changed. Matt is belligerent and one-dimensional, refusing to see the girl's perspective. He belittles her and her duties, and attempts to portray himself as the one doing all the work. Really, all he makes himself look like what he is-selfish and stubborn.

For that reason, I present this book with only 3 stars. That being said, Penny Vincenzi painted a rich and multidimensional backstory: however, I wish she had just deleted Matt.

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### Allison says

Really, I wanted to give this one star, but since I like Vincenzi so much normally, I bumped it up. What a disappointment! After waiting and waiting for her new book, I could not believe the drivel I was reading. The 2 main characters, Matt and Eliza, were both so unsympathetic. His character enraged me; he was such a misogynistic asshole. And Eliza completely let him treat her like utter crap. For someone who was working so high up in the fashion world before her marriage, this was a pretty big character change and I found it hard to swallow. I know it was partially because of the times they lived in, but it didn't leave much

room for caring about either of them. the supporting characters were flat, and rather uninteresting. They didn't really add much to the story at all.

Hopefully the next book will be back up to the author's normal standards!

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### **Patty says**

More Than You Know

By

Penny Vincenzi

What's it all about?

Matt and Eliza and their long long road to unhappiness...their story is the heart of this book but there are many other key characters and their stories that intertwine with Matt and Eliza's.

What are my thoughts?

My thoughts are everywhere...so many characters and so much to think about while so much is going on!!!

I loved every word of this lovely long English novel. It was my perfect cup of English tea although most of the characters were coffee drinkers...with some pints and some bottles of champagne tossed in.

The book takes place in the 60's where women were expected to stay home and have babies...Eliza loves her career in fashion and does not want to give it up for any reason. However...she gets pregnant and gives up her life to be a good wife and mother. She does not marry the kind of person she is expected to marry but rather a sort of working class self made bloke/man. Matt is deliriously in love with Eliza but is narrow minded and imposes his will on her throughout their marriage. She acquiesces because she wants to please him and keep the peace. Of course this takes its toll on their marriage.

There are other stories in this book that involve characters known or related to Matt and Eliza. All of them are absorbing and fascinating. Eliza's parents and their quest to keep the incredibly lovely yet rundown family home, Matt's sister Scarlett and her relationships, Jeremy...the man Eliza was supposed to marry and many many more characters that only contribute beautifully to the immensity and plots within this novel.

Even Emmie...Matt and Eliza's daughter...is a strong willed complex character and later becomes what Matt and Eliza will fight for in a nail biting court trial.

The book is fierce...it regales stories of fashion shoots and fashion shows and a budding industry. It made me scream at Matt's recklessness and stupidity about a woman's role in a marriage...Eliza, too, can be the sort of victim you love to hate...there were quite a few characters of this ilk within the pages of this book!!!

I loved this book...it is a long leisurely reading experience with tons of lovely twists and turns.

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### **Samantha says**

I have read several of Penny Vincenzi books and am yet to be disappointed by them. When I first read the back of her new one, I didn't know if I could read it as I wasn't sure of the fighting over the child element, I am a bit sensitive about things like that. I need not have worried. As usual with Penny Vincenzi, she tells you the story of the characters involved and very usually goes right back to the beginning of where that relationship started which was the case here. In my opinion she is one of the best writers because her characters become almost real to you, after reading her books I often catch myself wondering how they are, forgetting that they are fictional characters in a book and not people I have heard about or met. It doesn't seem to matter what emotional subject she tackles, her stories of how different people's relationships cope with it are compelling. She also keeps you turning page after page which is good because her books are normally over 800 pages long. Don't let this put you off though, you just get more brilliant writing for the same price as a smaller book!

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### **Christina says**

This is one of those times that if there was a 1/2 star option, I would give this book 3 1/2 stars. And, quite frankly, it would depend at what point in the book I was asked to rate it. I have read one other Vincenzi book, and loved it. This one took a lot longer to get into, and even then, there were several points when I really did consider giving up on it, which is quite rare for me. The main issue that I kept coming back to was that frankly, I couldn't stand either of the main characters, Matt and Eliza. He was just a sexist, arrogant wanker, as the British would say, and she was just an idiot for getting involved with him (their kid is a brat too, adding more evidence to my claim that authors of adult books have absolutely no idea how to write realistic children). The supporting characters save this book, and their story lines are frankly more enjoyable than the main plot. And lastly, though I won't give any spoilers, the decision in the custody case is completely ridiculous, and would never happen in any courtroom. I'll probably still read another Vincenzi book, since I did enjoy the other one so much, but I wouldn't recommend this one.

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### **Nada says**

Review first published on my blog: <http://memoriesfrombooks.blogspot.com...>

More Than You Know is a saga of a family and the people who surround them. It is set in 1960s London in the world of high fashion and real estate. It is the story of Eliza, a woman from the "upper" class of London, and Matt, a working-class man making his own way in the world. It is the story of how they come together, the family they create, and how that family falls apart and comes together.

More Than You Know is also the story of societal class lines and the struggle to find your own identity in the world regardless of those lines and where you come from. Being told where you "belong" or thinking where you belong, yet striving for something different. Eliza sets out to not follow the expected debutant path but to create her own identity in the fashion industry. Matt sets out to reinvent himself away from his working-class roots into the life of a real estate tycoon.

Surrounding them are varied characters who also walk this path in some way. Some do it with success and grace; some less so. All these stories are told in the context of Matt and Eliza's relationship - through meeting, courtship, marriage, parenthood, divorce, and beyond.

More Than You Know was an okay book. The story is told in almost 600 pages. The first quarter of the book seemed to be introducing the characters and setting up the main plot line of Matt and Eliza. It got a little long. Some of the characters were interesting, and some of the side stories were interesting. However, there are a lot of them! Overall, not a bad book but not a great book either.

\*\*\*Reviewed for LibraryThing Early Reviewers program\*\*\*

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### **Jaylia3 says**

Posh fashion editor Eliza Clark defies beginning to crumble class barriers by falling hard for working class, self-made property developer Matt Shaw in the trendy London of the swinging 60s and early 70s. It's a passionate relationship that ends in divorce and a fearsome custody battle—this isn't a spoiler because the book opens on the day before the judge's decision in 1971, then hops back to 1958 when Eliza, in mid-curtsey to the Queen, decides it's time to rid herself of her virginity. Eliza is in the last batch of debutants to be presented at court, and in her the old traditions of pomp, country homes, and privilege collide, often knottily, with stylishly bold new ways of thinking and living.

Weaving in several plot streams and thickly populated with characters that range from glamorously rich to loo-on-the-next-floor poor, More Than You Know could be hard to navigate without the helpful Cast of Characters list at the beginning of the book. Author Penny Vincenzi is very good about giving redeeming characteristics, good intentions and sympathy-inducing back stories to even the most infuriating characters, and the many charming characters are not free from weaknesses and flaws. This book is an indulgent pleasure, a little history of mod era England mixed with generous spoonfuls of sugar and cream.

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### **Sam Still Reading says**

I really like Penny Vincenzi's books – you know that you are guaranteed an interesting plot, well written characters and an element of surprise. The Decision is no exception. It is slightly unusual in that you know what will happen to the main characters Eliza and Matt ultimately – it's no secret that they will get divorced. But it is an interesting reflection on what leads to a marriage and then its downfall. All but the epilogue is revealed by the blurb on the back cover. Is it still worth reading? Of course.

Like Vincenzi's other books, The Decision is quite weighty (and the large format paperback was still cheaper than the ebook). It is a tome to carry around, so I'd suggest that the ebook may be easier for portability (and anonymity if that's what you'd prefer). The story is very engaging, and as always, there is a lot of skill involved in creating the supporting characters – they are all memorable from the horrid Juliet to Jenny, the biscuit-wielding receptionist. Each has their quirks which makes such a long list of characters (thoughtfully summarised at the beginning of the book) unique and unforgettable.

Surprisingly, much of the book focuses on the earlier, happier days of Matt and Eliza – how they met, their romance and early marriage. Emmie, their daughter, is thoroughly precocious (to illustrate, she gets lost and is found trying on shoes in a department store!) but lovable. It's easy to see how Matt and Eliza both want custody of her. The divorce itself is fraught with tension and I found it hard to decide which team to 'bat for' – Matt or Eliza? Both had obvious faults to their claim for custody (even in 1960s London, adultery was still

frowned upon). I found the ultimate decision a little strange and perhaps a bit each way, even though it's probably a logical conclusion. The ending tied up a little too neatly for my tastes, but it also ensures the reader knows exactly what happens to each character.

Although this book is set in 1950s-70s London predominantly, there is not too much use made of the setting. *The Swinging Sixties* gets a glimpse, but the plot could be set anywhere, anytime. This is not a criticism, just a comment.

This is still a lovely, warming read, leaving you satisfied with some brain stimulation. It's easy to imagine the characters and the settings – Penny Vincenzi does these types of characters (generally middle to upper class British) so well.

<http://samstillreading.wordpress.com>

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### **Susan Johnson says**

This book is an extremely readable novel. Set in the 1960's it is the story of a marriage which founders under the weight of its own passion. The backdrop is swinging London with lavish references to the social and fashion world. Names, from designer Mary Quant, model Jean Shrimpton and photographer David Bailey are dropped.

Eliza comes from the upper class of deb's and royal presentations but scorns suitable marriage prospects and longs to be involved and write about the fashion world. Her husband, Matt, rises from the lower classes to be a successful property developer in the booming economy of 60's London. The marriage, at first a love match, is not welcomed by either family. It falters under the pressure of their conflicting ambitions.

The resolution of the legal conflict over the custody of their young daughter and the futures of the newly divorced couple may disappoint some, but follows quite logically the situation the protagonists have found themselves. It's an entirely entertaining read.

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### **Jennifer Veurink says**

First of all, I won this in a goodreads giveaway - so THANK YOU!!! This was my first Vincenzi book and I have to say I was disappointed! I found none of the characters very likeable so I didn't really care much about what happened. And I basically already knew what was going to happen because of the back cover!!! A note to the publishers: YOU TOLD US EVERYTHING THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN ON THE BACK OF THE COVER!!! Only the last 50 pages were left to wonder about (and this was a 500+ page book ya'll) I never wondered who Eliza was going to marry because you already told me. I never wondered if Matt and Eliza were going to make it through this marriage because you already told me. I never wondered if Eliza was going to lose her 2nd baby because you already told me. I never wondered if Eliza would lose their family home because you already told me Matt would own half of it eventually. Also, you call Matt Shaw, Matt Snow on the back of the cover - yeah, for reals, you did that....do you have an editor??? Also, the book was just too long it could have been a lot shorter and the characters needed a bit of morality in them to be more believable - I didn't even like the little girl! There was one part devoted to explaining how a marriage falls apart slowly which was beautiful writing - I thought it was very deep, true and beautiful. I'm not sure if I will read another Vincenzi book.

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### **Jaime says**

I love Penny Vincenzi, though I can't tell you exactly why.

Part of it is the rich world she delivers. I know little about London in the 1960s, or about fashion magazines, or about real estate, but I was immediately drawn into Eliza and Matt's lives. I enjoyed reading about how they flit in and out of each others' lives before they marry. I also liked seeing the social changes happening in the world during that time period.

A larger part of it is the dialogue. Vincenzi relies heavily upon dialogue to tell her story, with some sections having no exposition at all. It can get confusing at times — there were a few sections where it took a paragraph or two before I was certain who was speaking — but her dialogue is so natural and effortless that I couldn't summon a care.

As for the characters, there are definitely a lot. Not only are there Eliza and Matt and their respective families, but several friends, acquaintances, and coworkers. Each of them works to show a different aspect of the story; no one is superfluous. I liked both Eliza and Matt, and could see each of their points of view, but I definitely thought Matt was a bit too boorish. I understand that Vincenzi was trying to root him solidly in out-dated mid-century views, but sometimes his bull-headedness was a bit overdone. But I guess it balances out when you consider how ridiculously helpless Eliza is at times. You can see why they were attracted to each other, but you can also see that it was doomed from the start.

That all may sound like I really have a beef with the book, but I definitely did not. I loved this, from beginning to end. It was an absolute joy to read. It made me think, and it made me feel, and I'm not sure what more you can ask for.

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### **Sylvie says**

This is a legacy book where we start following the characters straight out of school and follow them for a decade or so as they meet romantic partners and those relationships end or lead to marriage, kids and divorce.

I found this a tough read, not that the content was difficult, but there were a lot of characters to keep straight and it was slow going compared to many of the books I read.

This is not a book full of sex, in fact, the sex scenes that did happen were very tame and gentle so if you are looking for scorching words, this is not the book for you.

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### **Sandie says**

This book has been languishing on my TBR shelf for a few months now. I have picked it up started it and then stopped and picked up something else to read. Well I finally broke down and decided to stop

procrastinating and read MORE THAN YOU KNOW by Penny Vincenzi. Now I know why it took me so long to read this tome. The story is akin to a rehash of an old Jeffrey Archer or Danielle Steel plot from their halcyon days in the 1970's and 80's. Both Archer and Steel's writing formulas were fairly consistent, often involving rich families facing a crisis, threatened by elements such as financial mismanagement, infidelity, fraud, class warfare, child custody and any number of other factors. Other storylines explored by this pair involved working class men and women overcoming insurmountable odds to rise to the pinnacle of success in their chosen fields.

Penny Vincente has drawn on these proven, but time worn, scenarios and added a couple of her own in the story of Eliza and Matt, the mismatched uncommunicative couple whose marriage has been strained to the breaking point. Set in London beginning in the 1950's and moving forward 20 years in time the story is populated by an extensive ensemble of supporting players with a narrative embracing subjects like abortion, drug use, women in the workforce, child custody and unrequited love.

For readers who have enjoyed the writings of Sidney Sheldon or the aforementioned Jeffrey Archer and Danielle Steel, this tale of a woman from old money and a man with a chip on his shoulder the size of the rock of Gibraltar is a book you will find entertaining, if not original. 2 1/2 STARS

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### **Amanda Milburn says**

Also called 'the decision', this book disgusted me. I normally really enjoy Penny Vincenzi but this was beyond the pale. The entire book seemed to condone an incredibly abusive man and made for very uncomfortable reading. I would not recommend.

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