

"Every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other" – Charles Dickens

Author Vera Jane Cook's '*Pharaoh's Star*' tells the story of a city bred couple who purchases their second home in New Kingston in upstate New York and soon realizes that life in the mountains isn't as peaceful as they imagined. *Nick Dowling* is a man without a past and although he has made up stories to convince his wife *Jenna*, he is still searching for answers to fill the gaping holes in his childhood memories. Haunted by violent dreams and strange visions, *Nick* seeks an explanation in the paranormal while *Jenna* is convinced that he is hiding something from her. The closure they seek also puts immense pressure on their marital life as they desperately try and make sense of it all.

*Pharaoh's Star* has a skillfully written story that is dark and powerful and filled with wonderful imagery about the environment in which it's set. At the same time it also has an emotional depth to it accentuated by the fine writing centered on *Nick's* and *Jenna's* relationship. It has a small cast and although the main action is limited to a couple of cast members, all of them primary and secondary characters have been presented as both real and relatable people. And at no stage do their actions suggest that they are on the pages of a fictional book and they often behave like how normal people caught in their situation would act. The valid and almost logical explanations put forward by the two opposing camps divided into *Nick, Sam & Laurie* and *Jenna & Sally* ensure that you as a reader will find it hard to believe one side over the other.

The location of the story's setting lends itself beautifully to the air of mystery surrounding these pages. The tall dark trees lining the long & winding lonely roads and the sparsely populated town all contribute to the eerie and mysterious mood. The preciseness in the writing ensures that you get caught up in this claustrophobic struggle along with the characters. There are so many questions you will find asking yourself as you go along this ride, all the while wondering what is real and what is not. There is this teasing quality to the narrative where every now and then it brings up a scene or a scenario where you think the mystery will be finally revealed but then the author masterfully defers it and makes you patiently sit through till the very end.

*Pharaoh's Star* is a well written book with a great story line. It's wonderful mix of suspense and action will keep the reader on their toes throughout. And if you like to read suspense filled books with an ending you cannot predict, then this is the perfect book for you.

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