

Excellent Women (VMC) (Virago Modern Classics)

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Mildred Lathbury is one of those 'excellent women' who are often taken for granted. She is a godsend, 'capable of dealing with most of the stock situations or even the great moments of life - birth, marriage, death, the successful jumble sale, the garden fete spoilt by bad weather'. As such, she often gets herself embroiled in other people's lives - especially those of her glamorous new neighbours, the Napiers, whose marriage seems to be on the rocks. One cannot take sides in these matters, though it is tricky, especially as Mildred, teetering on the edge of spinsterhood, has a soft spot for dashing young Rockingham Napier.

An unqualifiedly great novel from the writer most likely to be compared to Jane Austen, this is a very funny, perfectly written book that can rival any other in its ability to capture the essence of its characters on the page. Mildred Lathbury, the narrator of Pym's excellent book is a never-married woman in her 30s--which in 1950s England makes her a nearly-confirmed spinster. Hers is a pretty unexciting life, centered around her small church, and part-time job. But Mildred is far more perceptive and witty than even she seems to think, and when Helena and Rockingham Napier move into the flat below her, there seems to be a chance for her life to take a new direction. Barbara Pym (1913 - 1980) was an English novelist whose comedy-of-manners novels of village life looked deeply at the relationships between men and women. Her *Quartet in Autumn* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

Other Books

A Suspension of Mercy. By the bestselling author of *The Talented Mr Ripley*, *Carol and Strangers on a Train* 'Highsmith's novels are peerlessly disturbing . . . bad dreams that keep us thrashing for the rest of the night' *New Yorker* Sydney Bartleby has killed his wife. At least, he has thought about it, compulsively, repeatedly, plotting schemes, designing escapes, forging alibis. Of course he has; he's a thriller writer. He even knows how to dispose of her body. But when Alicia takes a long, unannounced holiday, Sydney descends into the treacherous world of his own fantasy. A masterpiece of noir fantasy in which Highsmith revels in eliciting the unsettling psychological forces that lurk beneath the surface of everyday life.

BY THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE TALENTED MR RIPLEY, CAROL AND STRANGERS ON A TRAIN 'Bears Highsmith's unique, unsurpassed mixture of unsettling psychological insights' THE TIMES 'The original, the best, the gloriously twisted Queen of ..."