



Constance Squires

"A gripping, magical, swiftly compelling read. You're going to love this book."
—Rilla Askew, award-winning author of *The Mercy Seat* and *Harpying*

Along the Watchtower

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A powerful, coming-of-age debut novel from a bright new literary voice.

Set against the closing years of the Cold War, Constance Squires's debut novel introduces the family of Army Major Collins, as told through the eyes of Lucinda Collins-the vibrant, headstrong eldest daughter.

In spare, heart-wrenchingly beautiful prose, Squires offers us a rare glimpse into the experiences and sacrifices of an American military family-a powerful story that reveals what it really means to fight for the things we believe in and to defend the ones we love.

Along the Watchtower Details

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From Reader Review Along the Watchtower for online ebook

Dave says

I'm a sucker for books about teens growing up in the 1980's...

Lucinda is living in West Germany on a military base with her family. (Her dad is an Army Major)

The story starts in 1983 and ends in around 1990.

The chapters do flow with a 'story', but also could be read apart, on their own, almost like short stories.

It was a nice peek into the world of the "Army Brat"....And the 1980's backdrop is used well.

Chantal Mchale says

I fell in love with Lucinda, the struggling but determined Lucinda. Very realistic description of this young teenager girl loving her parents but rebelling against rules, the army rules, her father's rules, her mother's rules, but very clear about her own rules.

Tina Louise says

I enjoyed making a play list using the music mentioned in the text, but beyond that there is a lot of military brat feelings in here I can relate to.

Jan says

Set against the closing years of the Cold War, Constance Squires's debut novel introduces the family of Army Major Collins, as told through the eyes of Lucinda Collins-the vibrant and rebellious eldest daughter.

Her father, reminiscent of Robert Duvall's character in The Great Santini, is a no-nonsense, self absorbed career military man who can at times be rather unfeeling about his kids. Lucinda is most like him and rebels against his authority. But her relationship with her mother also suffers, as Lucinda tries to be a messenger/intermediary. She learns that the only person upon whom she can rely is herself.

I loved the characters and details of this novel--a young soldier who supplies Lucinda with music tapes, a Nazi ghost that haunts her school, a neighbor who suffers from Vietnam PTSD. This is a compelling, albeit somber, story that centers on relationships, family and finding independence.

Jennifer says

Quite beautiful. Couldn't quite put my finger on what it was all about till the last chapter and then it just made me almost double-over in tears. For anyone who has "daddy issues", this could be for you.

Jo says

If you've ever wondered what it's REALLY like for kids in a military family, pick up this book, told from the POV of a 13 year old military brat in the 1970s. Watchtower captured it very well. Military brats have it hard, leaving their friends and being forced to put down roots somewhere new every few years. They learn to rely on siblings and parents. But what happens when the parents aren't reliable?

This isn't a feel good story, in fact, I found it kind of bleak. Yet that too was realistic. I do come from a military family.

The ending lacked something; the main character wimped out in a pivotal moment when she should have confronted. Other than that, good story that definitely held my interest.

Jo Oehrlein says

Winner 2012 Oklahoma Book Award for Fiction

Ends in Oklahoma, but most of the story occurs in Germany. The MC is an army brat in a family where the parents don't necessarily get along. As she grows up, she survives moves, losing friends, her parents' divorce, an emotionally explosive mom, and a dad who is unavailable. She eventually learns to deal with her parents as they are and her life as it is.

Jenny Lynn says

A very good and fast read. I really liked Lucinda and most of her family...though I wanted to punch her dad for most of the book (he reminded me of my own dad), but that just means that Squires presented us with very realistic and rounded-out characters that produced a visceral reaction in at least one reader. I also got very fed up with her mom towards the end of the book. But overall I really liked Lucinda's story, and I especially loved the role that music played in the story and in her life. The only real gripe I have is with the ending; I understood it, but I would've liked a little more resolution on some issues. Otherwise, a fascinating read that I'm very glad my library picked as their bookclub read for this summer.

Inky says

I was halfway through this book last year when I started allowing myself to get distracted by so many other things. So I abandoned it completely. It wasn't until yesterday, though, that I've decided to pick it up again and continue where I left off. I was reminded of my great love for this book-reading it hungrily from the moment I purchased it-and then I came to love it even more as I neared the end.

This is a lovely book; so beautifully written. It's one of my favorites now, and I will definitely recommend this novel to my family and closest friends.

Marian M. says

Great story from Army Brat perspective

Lucinda Collins is a rock n roll fan, and her father, U.S. Army Major Collins, makes sure she has all the history of rock greats by connecting her with Nately, a G.I. Under his command who supplies her with tapes of all the greatest rock artists, from early rockabilly through punk. Lucinda grows up in the world of the Army, moving frequently to different bases while she watches her parents' marriage fall apart. Set during the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, *Along the Watchtower* is a gritty coming-of-age story, with Lucinda as a female Holden Caulfield.

Cara says

This is the story of an army brat growing up. It starts with her at age 13. Her family has just arrived in Germany, and her dad hasn't set anything up (base housing, food, etc.) for their arrival, so her mom is freaking out. She goes to find him and meets Syd, a very cool boy who unfortunately is moving away in two months, so she walls him out to avoid caring about him and getting hurt.

This was interesting to me because I lived the transient military life throughout my childhood, too. A lot of the experiences were the same. What a hard life! It didn't seem that hard at the time, but clearly it was.

For the main character, it's even worse than I had it because her dad is a big self-absorbed jerk. If you can rely on anything as a military brat, it's your family, and she didn't even have that. If she needed help or support, he was usually ready with "Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger!" or "Are you strong, or are you weak?" Not being able to rely on him arguably did make her stronger, but I'm not sure it was worth it.

An enjoyable book but way too short for air travel. Even though I saved this and didn't read it until I got on the plane, I was done before PDX-DFW was over. Thank goodness for Kindle!

Nicole says

I really really loved this book. Give me growing up coming of age esque story with a female protagonist surrounded by music and I'm pretty much sold.

On average I'd say it's a solid 3 stars closer to somewhere bwn 3 and 4. But for me, I'm gonna say 4. Much closer to 4.

I just loved that it's not a clean tidy ending but just a kind of closing on one doorway into another.

I found this one for a dollar at strands...definitely one of my better finds. Well worth the read if you like books or films like this and I do.

Rilla says

A wonderfully compelling novel that touches so many chords. Smart, funny, and beautifully written, this near-picaresque tale of a young army brat coming of age in Germany and Oklahoma and her on-the-brink military family resonates with era, place, and Lucinda Collins's sassy, sometimes aching, always observant sensibility. And I love the broader picture being painted by the author here. With muscular prose and richly observed detail, Squires recreates the era between two wars in an American military haunted by Vietnam, based in a resurgent Germany haunted by World War II. Lucinda's untethered life, her complex relationship with her career military father, and her rocketing, ricocheting discovery of self, the powerful forces that rock music holds, and the truth about where 'home' lies, all make for a gripping, magical, rollercoaster ride. A terrific read, with layers and layers and layers of subtext and history and rock'n'roll underneath.

Toni says

This book was a lot. A lot of elements I adore, a lot of elements I relate to, and others I had never, and will never know that, for some odd reason, I felt so deeply. On the surface, it was a story with not really any plot, but the events that occurred in our main characters life were so real, and so familiar, that the entire novel felt like harpoons were pulling at my heart from seven different directions. I felt like Lucinda was a real person. And to be completely honest, she very well could be. The amount of empathy I felt during this story is immense. I cried a bit, which doesn't happen often. I finished it a while ago and I still have that odd sour feeling in my throat like I might ball my eyes out. This is just going to be one of those novels that really sticks with me. Like the Pink Hotel, and like Charlotte Doyle....Lucinda Collins is now another piece of me.

Steph says

Along the Watchtower-Although it is never a good idea to jump top optimistic conclusions about a novel based on its title and artwork, Squire's story of an army brat coming of age in the 80's lives up to its ultra-cool persona. Sentimentalists like me-whose childhood memories are forever entangled in the pink, crystalline visions of the era of punk rock, Rainbow Bright, and jelly-shoes-will fall under this novel's spell simply for the nostalgia of it all. But what lies beneath is a beautiful story of survival, a fascinating look at life as an army brat and the complexity of family dysfunction coupled with a socially acceptable form of transiency. It's about loving people in a temporary sense and being ok with it, and about living with role models who are even more f*ed-up than you, and loving them anyway.

I was thoroughly engulfed in the lives of these characters, and will gladly revisit them again.
