

Go Slowly, Come Back Quickly

David Niven

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Movie-star Niven has shown his gift for farcical, ribald anecdotes in Bring on the Empty Horses and The Moon's a Balloon, and this novel has its fair share of such wartime/Hollywood incidents. As a full-length story, however, it's slow and shapeless, with nothing holding it together except a rather uninteresting hero and a gooey, routine romance. That hero is Stanislaw (""Stani"") Skolimowski, blondly handsome son of a Polish diplomat father and a Continent-hopping American mother (divorced). Stani is raised in Europe, goes to high school in California, and just before WW II winds up in England--where mum has married a jaunty ex-Navy type. He boards in London with a popular, cheerfully aging courtesan, supposedly studying so that he can switch to British schools. But Stani's real interest soon centers on well-born musical-revue performer Pandora Bryce, who, though aloof at first, soon shows herself to be ""a four-star, fur-lined, oceangoing expert in the noblest art of all."" And Pandora remains reasonably devoted as Stani, whose parents and stepfather become war fatalities, does his patriotic bit: as an RAF pilot (he's shot down, nearly dies in a dinghy, is rescued, but needs his foot and face rebuilt); as a Bundles-for-Britain war-hero touring the US; as an officer with the liberating Allied forces (he pluckily refuses to turn over anti-Communist Cossack prisoners to the Russians). But once the war is over, the focus largely shifts to ambitious Pandora, who's off to grotesque, idiot-controlled Hollywood with lover Stani in tow. Pandora's name is promptly changed to ""Jan Ricardo."" The butler/cook couple in their hideous ""Moorish prison"" of a house turn out to be murderers on the lam..... -- Kirkus Reviews



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