

Goldmine Experience: A Lesson Through Experience



Jan Erikson's debut novel *Goldmine Experience* follows Julia Wells, in her journey of becoming a confident and happy individual. The story unfolds in Thames, New Zealand which serves as the setting and the novel packs murder, mystery, romance and more into one compelling book. Here the author shares her thoughts on what drove her to write the book and what she hoped to accomplish.

By Krishani Peiris

Can you relate your experience and journey before settling down in New Zealand?

As a young person, I felt that I needed to travel and see where my grandparents came from, namely Denmark and England. I grew up without knowing my aunties and uncles, cousins, or grandparents. This happens more nowadays when a family moves to another country to find work and make a better life for their own children. My father brought our family to New Zealand when I was eight years old.

After I had attended university and worked for a few years to save up, I travelled to Europe to see my extended family, and to find out how different life was over there. I then understood better why my father wanted us to grow up in New Zealand. He wanted us to have more freedom, better health, and more choices. I greatly respect my father for all the decisions he made.

I think that it's a really good idea to travel, if possible, and see how other people live before settling down and having children. It gives everyone a much broader perspective. It also helps us to appreciate how lucky we are, and how much we have. Living and working in other countries has given me a deep sense of gratitude to be in New Zealand now.

What inspired you to pen the novel 'Goldmine Experience'? And what is the significance of the name?

Writing has been a desire and a hobby for me since I was about ten years old. However, all my life I've found I was just too busy with other activities such as sports, studying, travel, meeting people, working and raising children. Now that both my children are young adults, I feel that there's no excuse not to write. It's something that I feel I must do.

The title 'Goldmine Experience' reflects the journey of the protagonist, Julia Wells, from being a nervous widow to a confident, happy person. Julia undergoes the experience of different trials before she is content at the end of the novel. The title is also the name of the real old gold mine in Thames in New Zealand, where I sometimes spend time as a tour guide in the summer months. I love meeting the

tourists and sharing their excitement as they learn about the history of gold mining in New Zealand. I hope that the novel will bring more tourists to visit it in Thames.

Can you elaborate as to why you chose to depict Julia Wells, the heroine of the book with characteristics that makes her seem to be more of an anti-hero?

This is a reaction to what I consider the Barbie-doll syndrome. I don't like the way that all heroines are supposed to be extremely glamorous, wear lots of makeup, be very fashionable and confident at all times, and so on. I know that television has fostered this culture. In contrast, I wanted Julia Wells to appear to be a normal woman that thousands of other ordinary women can relate to. Many women are trapped having to raise their children by themselves and struggle financially. Most women are not automatically glamorous. I portrayed Julia Wells as someone that every woman reading my novel 'Goldmine Experience' could relate to.

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Who is the target audience of the book?

The target audience is really everyone who enjoys reading a short novel, especially one that's set partly in New Zealand, Australia, and New Caledonia. I think that most women will enjoy 'Goldmine Experience' because of the female protagonist and the love story. I think that anyone older than about thirty will also enjoy the novel, because it reflects on different life experiences. Men interested in gold mining, or with connections to Jews or World War II, will also enjoy 'Goldmine Experience'. There's murder and mystery as well as romance and travel.

Goldmine Experience depicts the gradual transformation of Julia through numerous hardships. Can you elaborate on the progression and this particular approach of the book?

This approach is really so that female readers will gain insight into the main character, and also perhaps to help them reflect on their own experiences. Of course the novel is fiction. However, many women do suffer emotional abuse, and are targeted by unscrupulous men, therefore this is relevant to all women.

The plot of the novel is intricate with many twists and turns. Can you elaborate on the premise of the book that utilises a significant timeline in the history of the world and historical figures? How has this helped to develop the plot?

To me, the historical aspects of what happened in Nazi Germany are important to the plot. The ring that Julia discovers by accident is crucial to how the mystery unfolds. Many people lost their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers in World War II, and it's important to remember what happened, so that hopefully we can avoid the mass destruction ever happening again.

Thames is important as a place in the novel, because it's the anchor and the home that Julia keeps returning to. Thames was founded in the gold rush of the 1860s, and the old gold mining tunnels mentioned in the novel date from this era.

What are the issues that you have addressed in the Goldmine Experience and what is the message that you want to deliver?

I really want every person, especially every woman, who reads the novel to know that they can go through difficult experiences and still come out confident and happy. It's important to never give up.

I've addressed the issues of midlife dating, because our population is ageing all over the world. Also I've addressed issues of emotional abuse of women, and the controversy of mining versus the environment. This is particularly relevant in New Zealand, because we have a great deal of unexploited mineral wealth, and also very strong environmental measures. It seems that people want wealth from minerals or gas, without the infrastructure.

Especially in the beginning, Julia continuously attempts to draw strength from the men surrounding her. How would you describe these men that influence and surround Julia?

All of these men are dominant, and Julia is attracted to them because they come across as strong and protective. In fact this is a mask of their abusive personality. It takes time for Julia to learn not to trust this sort of a man. Throughout the course of the novel, Julia does learn by experience to trust her own instincts instead of relying on others.

You have worked with computers, as an export clerk and now you are working as a teacher. With the publishing of Goldmine Experience, now you are also a professional author. Which is your most preferred profession? And how do you balance writing with your job and family?

I love writing as a hobby, but I am still working as a teacher. I enjoy teaching because it helps people to develop more positive ideas about what they can do in the future.

I don't know how I manage to balance everything: I try not to waste time, and I try to enjoy everything that I do. I also try to stay fit and healthy, because that makes it easier to have a good life balance and still do lots of different things. Exercise is a good antidote to stress. Often I make a list of tasks that need doing, and then I cross them off as they get done. That's the only way that I can keep track of everything. My family is very supportive of my writing.

It is rumoured that you are working on your second novel? Can you give us a snippet of what is to be expected?

My next novel is going to have a male protagonist, so that will be really interesting and different. It's about a man who gets away with murder. At this stage it's going to be more of a thriller and less of a romance, but that could change. It depends on the editor. Whatever happens, it will be action-packed.

Will this book be available in Sri Lanka and when do you hope to visit the country?

Yes, the book will be available in Sri Lanka. I have never visited Sri Lanka, but I've heard that it's really beautiful, so I'd love to come and visit as soon as I can.

Final thoughts.

Thank you very much for this interview on 'Goldmine Experience.' I hope that everyone will enjoy reading it.

