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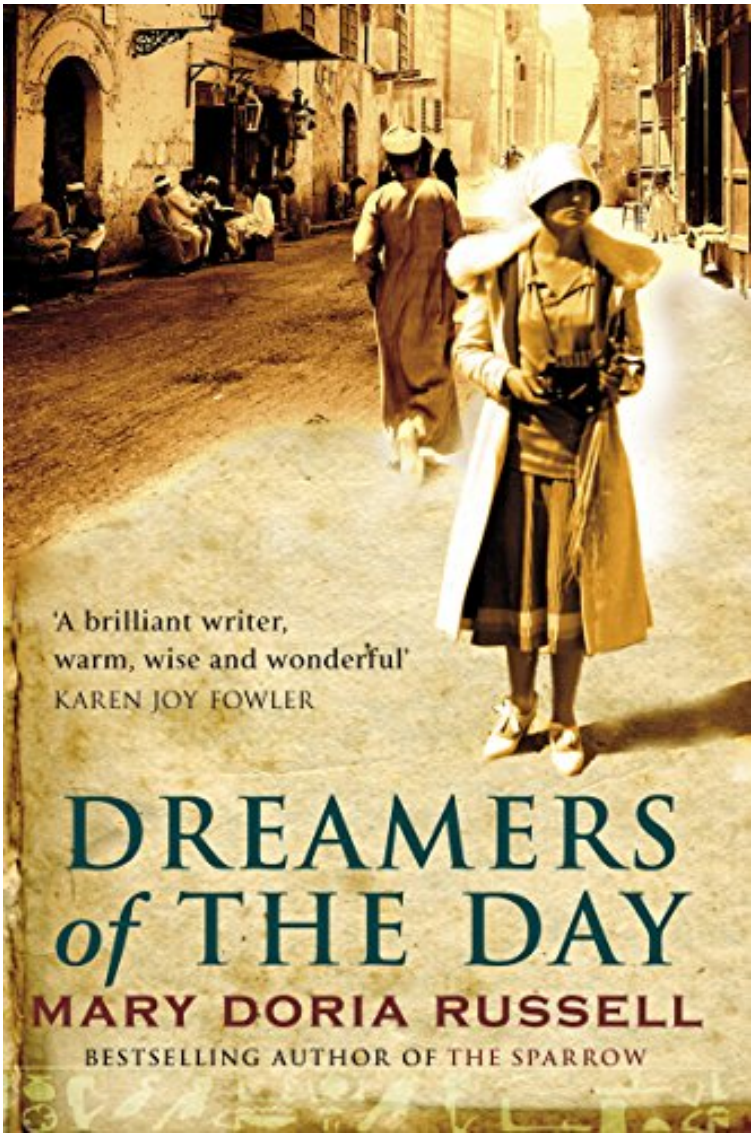
Dreamers Of The Day



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Par Mary Doria Russell
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(Pdf free) Dreamers Of The Day

Par Mary Doria Russell : Dreamers Of The Day before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dreamers Of The Day:

Description : Description du produitThe stunning new historical novel from the bestselling author of A Thread of Grace and The Sparrow.

Prsentation de l'diteur'I am sure of this much: my little story has become your history. You won't really understand your times until you understand mine...'Reeling from the aftermath of the twin tragedies of the Great War and the influenza epidemic, diffident schoolteacher Agnes Shanklin has taken the trip of a lifetime: to Egypt and the Holy Land. But her arrival at Cairo's Semiramis Hotel coincides with an event that will change history. For the year is 1921 and the Cairo Peace Conference is about to preside over nothing less than the creation of the modern Middle East. At first Agnes acts as a welcome sounding board for the historic players - Churchill, T. E. Lawrence and Lady Gertrude Bell among them - poised to invent the nations of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and so decide the fate of the Arab world. Yet as the

tumultuous days pass, she attracts the attention of a charismatic German spy and is inexorably drawn into the duplicitous, dangerous world of geopolitical intrigue... As enlightening as it is entertaining, this compelling, passionately felt novel casts brilliant and perceptive light on what lies behind so many of today's headlines.ExtraitChapter OneI suppose i ought to warn you at the outset that my present circumstances are puzzling, even to me. Nevertheless, I am sure of this much: my little story has become your history. You wont really understand your times until you understand mine.You must try to feel the hope and amazement of those years. Anything seemed possiblethe end of ignorance, the end of disease, the end of poverty. Physics and chemistry, medicine and engineering were breaking through old boundaries. In the cities, skyscrapers shredded clouds. Trucks and automobiles were crowding out horse-drawn cabs and drays in the boulevards below. The pavement was clean: no stinking piles of dung, no buzz of flies.In 1913, America had a professor-president in the White Housea man of intelligence and principle, elected to clean up the corruption that had flourished in the muck of politics for so long. Public health and public schools were beating back the darkness in slums and settlements. The poor were lifted up and the proud brought down as Progressives reined in the power of Big Money.In the homes of the middle class, our lives ticked along like clocks, well regulated and precise. We had electric lights, electric toasters, electric fans. On Sundays, there were newspaper advertisements for vacuum cleaners, wringer-washers, radios, and automobiles. Our bathrooms were clean, modern, and indoors. We believed that good nutrition and good moral hygiene would make us healthy, wealthy, and wise. We had every reason to think that tomorrow would be better than today. And the day after that? Better yet!The Great War and the Great Influenza fell on our placid world almost without warning.Imagine: around the world, millions and millions and millions vital and alive one day, slack-jawed dead the next. Imagine people dying in such numbers that they had to be buried in mass graves dug with steam shovelsdying not of some ancient plague or in some faraway land, but dying here and now, right in front of you. Imagine knowing that nothing could ensure your survival. Imagine that you know this not in theory, not from reading about it in books, but from how it feels to lift your own foot high and step wide over a corpse.What would you do?Ill tell you what a lot of us did. We boozed and screwed like there was no tomorrow. We shed encumbrances and avoided entanglements.We were tough cookies, slim customers, swell guys, real dolls. We made our own fun and our own gin, drinking lakes of the stuff, drinking until we could Charleston on the graves. Life is for the living! Pooh, pooh, skiddoo! Drink upthe night is young!I dont want children, said one celebrated writer after an abortion. Wed have nothing in common. Children dont drink.Does such callousness shock you? But I suppose it does. You see, by that time the plain stale fact of mortality had become so commonplace, so tedious . . . Well, mourning simply went out of style.And just between you and me? Even if you find yourself among illustrious souls, you can get awfully tired of the dead.Let me count my own. Lillian and Douglas, and their two dear boys. Uncle John. And Mumma, of course. Six. No, wait! Seven. My brother, Ernest, was the first.I last saw Ernest in September of 1918. Slim in khaki, a mustachioed captain in the Army Corps of Engineers, my brother waved from the window of a train packed three boys to every double seat. They were headed for Newport News, where the battalion would ship out for Europe.By the time Ernest left for the coast, five million European soldiers had already disappeared into the sausage machine. Thats what their commanders called the Great War. To understand why, you must call to mind some modern war. Think of the casualties endured in a years time, or five years, or ten. Now imagine sixty thousand men killed in a single day of combat: meat fed to the guns. Imagine four years like that.America stared, aghast and uncomprehending, while the Old World gorged on its young and smashed its civilization to pieces for reasons no one was able to explain. From the start, there was some war sentiment in America, but it was largely confined to those who knew there was money to be made selling weapons, uniforms, steel, and ships, should America join the fight.Reelected, barely, on a peace platform, our professor-president remained steadfast even when he was called a coward for refusing to involve us in the madness of foreigners. Then, eight weeks after Woodrow Wilsons second inaugural, a document was captured and made public. In it, the German foreign minister urged the Mexican government to join Germany in a war against the United States and, in so doing, to reclaim the lost lands of New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas.Call me cynical. I always thought that document was a fraud. And even if it was genuine, why send our boys to France if the threat was on our southern border?Of course, I was just a schoolteachera woman without a vote of my own, or even a husband to persuade. The men all said that document changed everything. Certainly Mr. Wilson believed it did. When he turned the ship of state toward Europe, the nation cheered and felt gratified to have exciting newspaper stories to talk about at breakfast. Those of us who saw no need for war found the enthusiasm of our fellow citizens bewildering. I read all the

papers, frantic to understand why this was happening to my country and the world. To me, Mr. Wilsons conversion was so shocking, it seemed Saint Paul had renounced Christ to become Saul once more. But there you are: even if the reason for going to war was a shameless hoax, the war itself was real and, by God, America was in it!In fact, Mr. Wilson informed the nation, the Almighty Himself no longer wanted America to stand aloof from the slaughter in the Old World. America, the president declared, was born to exemplify devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture.By turning the other cheek? I wondered. Silly woman . . .No, exemplifying righteousness required America to fight a war to end all wars, a war so brutal and ruthless that war would never be waged again. Mr. Wilson assured us that this crusade was Gods will and Gods work.If Abraham Lincoln had erred in allowing the press to criticize the government during our Civil War, Woodrow Wilson vowed, I wont repeat his mistakes. The president didnt repeal the First Amendment; he had, after all, recently sworn to uphold the Constitution. The press could print what it liked, of course, but the post office didnt have to deliver it. The Wilson administration ordered the confiscation of anything unpatriotic, which is to say anything critical of his administration. Total war demanded totalitarian power, Mr. Wilson told a compliant Congress. There are citizens of the United States, the president thundered, who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life. Such creatures of passion, disloyalty and anarchy must be crushed.Anyone who protested, or even voiced reluctance, was called a traitor. Mr. Eugene Debs was sentenced to decades in prison. His crime? He said that a war abroad did not excuse tyranny at home.Mexico was all but forgotten in the excitement.Thats why, by the summer of 1918, a million American men had been mobilized to fightfrom career officers like my brother, Ernest, to draftees straight off the farm. Ernests train left Cleveland carrying nearly 250 soldiers, including a boy from Wooster who seemed to have a dreadful cold. When the troops arrived on the Virginia coast two days later, more than 120 of the soldiers already had the flu. Sixty others were ill within a day or two.In Ernests last letter home, he confessed that he was afraid hed miss the war. He was so eager to embark! I doubt he mentioned his headache to anyone else. The next letter we received was from a friend of his. Ernest had been buried at sea before the boat was halfway to France. Later we learned that most of his battalion had sickened. Many died while standing on a French dock, awaiting orders in a chilly autumn rain.In October, the military finally canceled leave and liberty, but it was too late to make a difference. Railways had distributed the influenza with the same swift efficiency that carried coal, wheat, and livestock to and from every corner of the continent. Within weeks, the flu was everywhere.People spread the disease before they knew they had it, got sicker, brought it home, and died. Fiances, parents, brothers, and sisters: kissed good-bye at train stations. Ambulance drivers, stretcher bearers, doctors, nurses: working until they died on their feet. Trolley conductors, shopkeepers. Teachers.Waves of influenza broke across the nation and all the while, the war ground on in Europe. Cleveland sent forty-one thousand boys over there. One of my students came to see me before he lefta boy named for the great Italian patriot Garibaldi. Gary, we called him at school. He was a good student. Arithmetic was his best subject, as I recall. Off he went with the Fifth Regiment of the Ohio National Guard, to revenge bleeding Belgium and rescue poor brave France, to make the world safe for democracy and kill Huns for Mr. Wilson.Gary visited me again after he got home, in 1919. You were wrong, Miss Shanklin. The Grim Reaper isnt a metaphor, he told me. The Reapers real. I saw him. We went over the top and machine guns mowed us down, like a scythe through weeds. Row after row of us. You cant imagine, miss.No, not that, but I had seen men struck down in the streets of Cleveland. Theyd leave for the office in the morning feeling fine. During the day, theyd complain of being hot and achy. By evening, waiting on the corner for a streetcar, theyd fall to the pavement, already dead or near to it. Gary soon became one of them. Poor boy. He had just married his sweetheart and found a job as a bank teller. He left work feeling woozy and never made it home for supper.Even then, before the worst of it, I wanted to escape from the sadness. I was older than the lost generation of the Roaring Twenties. I began the decade too shy to dance, too homely to imagine myself of interest even to a maimed veteran, too timid to break the Prohibition laws and risk blindness drinking bathtub gin. But in the end? I was not so very different. I, too, yearned for new sights, new sounds, new peopleand, yes: a new me. I wanted to believe again in peace, and progress, and prosperity.Prosperity, at least, I would have and this one certainty: of all my natal family, I would be the last to die. My brief obituary would be written by a bored young newspaperman in 1957: Agnes Shanklin, heiress, dead at 76, after a long illness.Thats what they called cancer then. A long illness. And dont be fooled by that fancy word heiress. No single estate was all that much, but taken together and added to $1,000 of soldiers insurance from Ernest, they totaled just enough to afford me a careful independence.Frugality I had learned at my mothers knee. Use it up, wear it out, make it

do. That was Mummas motto, especially after the bankruptcy and Papas death.In the beginning, I believe, my parents anticipated something close to the ideal marriage of the nineteenth century. They met and married late, both nearly thirty and too mature for silly romantic illusions about love. When they pledged their troth in the sight of God, they did so in the hope that theirs would be a union of souls. They understood that this would demand an equal sacrifice of personal interests. Papa would lose his place in the home; Mumma, her place in the world. He would strive for material sustenance and guard the family from the corruption of the marketplace. In return for cooking and needlework, the bearing and raising of children, she would receive shelter, food, and a clothing allowance.Such marriages always ran the risk of becoming cold but practical business partnerships. In the case of my parents, mutual admiration rested upon an economic arrangement that seemed to suit them both. Mumma was a fine seamstress, Papa a mechanical engineer. You might not think theyd have had much in common, apart from their children, but together they reasoned out a design for a sewing machine foot that would make cording easy and automatic. In the tenth year of their marriage, walking home from church one Sunday, they hatched a plan. They would take all their savings and start a factory right in Cedar Glen, just east of Cleveland. The business could provide good, honest work for the sons of slaves whod come north on the Underground Railway. Those men would demonstrate that Negroes were capable of skilled labor, and the business would benefit by undercutting the competition on wages.Papas probity and Mummas piety were well known in Cedar Glen. Their good character convinced several members of their congregation that they could do well by doing good, and they agreed to invest in the venture. Papa took the idea to a banker, who steered him toward a partner said to be a person of energy and vision.To our familys misfortune, Papa was an honest man in a time when business was increasingly often conducted between strangers who recognized no good or god excepting only Profit. In Washington and Columbus, politicians wearing masks of unctuous respectability legislated mightily to outlaw private sin and enforce private virtue, all the while accepting money to overlook the public crimes of industrialists and financiers who made incalculable fortunes by exploiting workers and swindling investors. In that climate, Papas trustworthiness was the very hallmark of a patsy. He built the factory; his partner and the banker disappeared with the money.For Papa, it was a matter of honor that he keep his employees working and make his creditors whole. That determination left hardly any time or money for his family. Mumma soon found it difficult to hide our circumstances from public view, but Papa steadfastly refused help from her brother, a bachelor attorney with money to spare.Foolish pride, Mumma called that. How am I to run a proper household with what you bring home?Others are worse off, Papa said, time and again. We shall manage without charity.Easy for you to say, Mumma would mutter, and the household would go very quiet, unspoken accusations loud in our minds.From the Hardcover edition.From Publishers WeeklyRussell's enjoyable latest historical is told in the exuberant, posthumous voice (yes, it's narrated from the afterlife) of Agnes Shanklin, a 38-year-old schoolteacher from Cedar Glen, a town near Cleveland, Ohio. After the influenza epidemic of 1919 strikes down Agnes's family, a childless and unmarried Agnes settles the family estate, acquires financial independence and adopts an affable dachshund named Rosie. Accompanied by Rosie, Agnes travels to Cairo during the Cairo Peace Conference, where she befriends Winston Churchill and Lawrence of Arabia among other historical heavy hitters. She also falls in love with the charismatic Karl Weilbacher, a German spy whose interest in Agnes may have less to do with romance than Agnes will allow herself to believe. Agnes's travelogues, while marvelously detailed, distract from the increasingly tense romantic play between Agnes and Karl. When a more worldly-wise Agnes returns home, her lifefirst as an investor wrecked by the Depression and then a librarian until her death in 1957remains low-keyed. Though the bizarre, whimsical ending doesn't quite gel, Russell (The Sparrow; A Thread of Grace) has created an instantly likable heroine whose unlikely adventures will keep readers hooked to the end. (Mar.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.