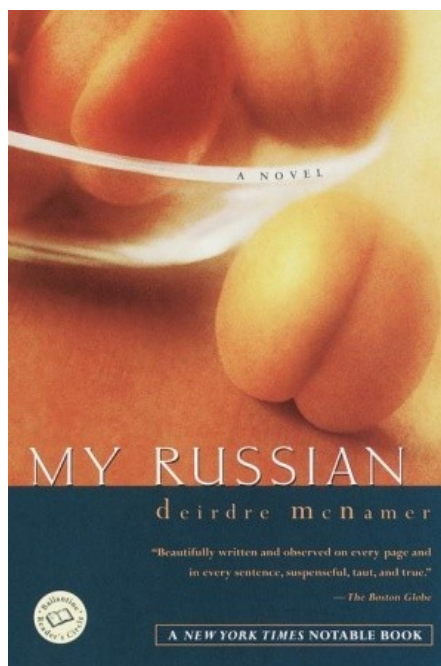




My Russian

Deirdre McNamer

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My Russian Deirdre McNamer

While her family thinks she is vacationing in Greece, Francesca Woodbridge- disguised by the wig, the dress, and the limp of an elderly woman - checks into a local hotel just blocks from her home. The reason for her deceit is twofold: to step outside of her life and observe it from a distance and to watch the comings and goings in her neighborhood for clues to potential suspects in her husband's shooting.

Ever since the night her husband Ren was wounded by an intruder's gun, Francesca has felt uneasy in their marriage and resentful of how Ren has changed over the years. Now, as an undercover spy on her own life, she scans her history in her unsparing, sometimes darkly funny search for clarity - from the idealistic days of college when she first fell in love, through the quiet disappointments that have collected in the depths of her soul, to her recent, unexpected, passionate affair with her Russian gardener, Yuri, whose sudden, unexplainable disappearance leads her to question just who she has become. As she seeks an answer, she meets people she could never have known in her "real" life and views people she thought she knew as strangers. As she reveals who shot her husband, she is forced to see herself in a bold, new, and entirely unexpected light . . .

My Russian Details

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Author : Deirdre McNamer

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From Reader Review My Russian for online ebook

Jean Marie says

This book was just overwhelmingly underwhelming. And 2 stars is my being extremely generous.

I tried to like it, but it is one of those books that almost landed on the I give up pile and it's not even 300 pages long which, I think, says a great deal about the book.

I have two big problems with this book. Firstly, the language. I can deal with poetic writing okay, but when its so blatantly fluffed so much so you know a thesaurus was used it makes the entire story fall by the wayside and you begin to focus on the sentence structure and how it's almost purposely written to read like a book that "should change the world". My second gripe is the ending. It ends. We find out what led our narrator to do what she did and yet there is no proper conclusion. The next chapter begins and the narrator is off starting a new life. Not the one she planned during her escapades but a new one nonetheless. The lack of progression made me feel cheated. The lack of a hashing out between the husband and wife, mother and son made me mad.

For being titled, My Russian, the Russian features only within a small amount of pages. If the author did not specifically point out at a stage in the book that the narrator had an affair with the Russian, you could completely miss it as there is literally no deep description of their relationship.

The book peaks, however, with those fleeting pages about the Russian and his life. If the novel had been about that, it would have been fascinating. Had the book been about the unraveling of a marriage and an affair it would have been easier to get involved with the story. Had the book been about the attack the husband suffered, or even the elaborate falsity of the society in the book, it would have been more entertaining. However, the book was not about those things a whole. They were small events which, I think hurt the overall work. This book was without consistent context which not only left the story with holes too big to ignore but also hurt the character development. The narrator seems pompous in the long run, her husband malleable, her son lost. The others are too superficial to even digest.

The story underneath the fluff of this novel was good, but the actual book itself, was not.

Anna says

I think this would make a good beach read. Nothing profound or spectacularly edifying about it, but it was entertaining enough.

Julie says

Apparently it's easier to fake your death than I ever imagined. I love the conceit of this book: taking off for holiday but really sticking around and watching your life from afar...an interesting way to gain new perspective, but I'd rather be on vacation.

Stephanie says

This one just didn't connect with me. The constant shifting of time periods, especially at the beginning were difficult to follow, and information I wanted to know, and felt was essential to the story line and main character development was not provided.

Marguerite says

I think we all fantasize about walking out on our complicated lives, at least occasionally, to escape its tedium or complications. Deirdre McNamer's character Francesca does it, and travels on the high road and (very briefly) on the low road. The events invite us, if we reflect on them, to become better observers in our own lives. The plot of the novel is somewhat melodramatic. I don't know anyone whose life brushes up against violence and drama to the extent that these characters do. But I was intrigued enough to read the book to the end. It was a surprising journey. I appreciated that Francesca wasn't totally likable and that McNamer left room for a lot of ambiguity. My only quibble is that the sort of escape McNamer describes is only available to people of means.

Lisa says

I got this in a book swap - still not sure if the person loved, hated it, or couldn't figure out which and wanted a second opinion! Extremely flowery language. Unfortunately they are in place of any progressive forward motion in the book. The change of identity at the center of the plot seems far fetched, though at least interesting, but in the end it was pretty meaningless and just took a meander, much like Francesca herself. Not sure I liked any of the characters much, except maybe the Russian gardener (nothing much Russian about him, tbh). The writing doesn't give a strong sense of time and place, especially considering all of the descriptive language. Apparently it was a notable book in the NYT in 1999 - well there is no accounting for taste, including my own! Maybe I missed the point here.

E says

Very Odd Read. Interesting at times, but for the most part was a very long and overly thoughtful read.

Lori says

Deirdre McNamer writes gorgeous vignettes. Her descriptions of a scene, a glance and a moment are beautiful and haunting.

I wish her plot had moved me as much.

My Russian is a wonderfully written portrait of angst. But I didn't really feel a thing.

Dana says

This book was a mess. Initially it was intriguing: how a distraught upper middle class woman can create a false identity, fake her death, go back home to spy on her family and have illicit affairs. There are some really beautiful thoughts in this book about the nature of love and marriage and community, but they are disjointed and eventually come to no specific point. There are like 15 possible story lines in this book, none have satisfying endings or thematic revelations. At the end, you realize Francesca just sucks, she isn't the one being slighted, she is simply self centered, judgemental, and in the most fragile constructed plot twist, surprise, the shooter!

Kelli Oliver George says

Ack. It is difficult to plow through a book when so few of the characters are likable or sympathetic.

Jon Terry says

The engrossing tale of a woman leaving a marriage, and why.

Allison says

Well, it was weird. I kept wanting to like the main character and hoping that the next revelation would do it. But, alas, no. With all the books in the world, I say spend your time on a different one.

U.R. Bowie says

LITERARY SPARKS THAT FLARE UP INTO FLAMES: DEIRDRE MCNAMER

You read something, the words flash at you; they spark creativity in your brain. Deirdre McNamer's writings often do this to me. Here are some examples from her novel *My Russian*. The ones in direct quotations are (I think) totally Ms. McNamer's. The ones not in quotations are what my creative mind came up with when reading her creativity.

(1) [the main character, Francesca, having disguised herself to look older, is chagrined at people's new take on her] "Had I been a dog, I think he would have glanced at me. It's a revelation—the invisibility of old age."

(2) You're outside a house looking in. The family room, flashes of blue television light, the faint drone of an announcer at the football game, some tiny cheers from a tiny crowd.

(3) That horrific lunch when Laura broke all the rules of social etiquette was wiped out, off the map, never discussed again, but it still sits there at the edges of our days, the mute residue of the thing, lethal and irremediable.

(4) The feeling I always get when watching standup comedians on TV. "I feel desperate to usher the performer offstage, desperate to wipe the leer off his face and keep the next joke unsaid, because even the best of all jokes won't be enough to compensate for such stark public vulnerability."

(5) She was one of those intensely ebullient people who are great at the right kind of party but wear mightily on the nerves in a small tight space.

(6) Lies get installed. They skitter into place like a panting child late for the first day of class, unsure she has the right room. Heads turn. Where did she come from in all her blonde-haired dishevelment? A half-hour later, yellow head bent, tongue protruding, scribbling away, she's always been there, she's never been absent—she's not a lie anymore.

Really nice stuff here. Don't you agree?

Susan Beecher says

Well-written novel with surprises. She is a good writer.

Tina M. says

I agree with some that say the novel comes out kind of clipped into pieces and stitches at times, but in general I would not condemn it as a whole. It is not a five star read. however, with patience the reader can discover good passages, unusual twists, and let's say I did not quite guess right who the mystery shooter would be.

Sam says

The book had an intriguing premise--a woman takes a vacation from her life and puts a plan in place so that she can become someone else and never return--but ultimately I felt like there was a wall of gauze or a thick fog between me and the protagonist. I never felt like I really understood her. On the one hand, this made for an unpredictable read; on the other, I couldn't relate to her and found myself judging her a little bit about her cold treatment of her family.

Candace Klenk says

I liked this book, but I didn't love it, that's why I gave it a 2.5 stars. The story was good, well written, just really nothing to original, I'm confused why the name of the book is "My Russian" when the russian guy had a very minimal part in the book. She didn't really develope that part of the story very well. If it was just supposed to be a part of her life and the book was named something else that would've been more understandable...eh...oh well...I'm probably picking apart things that don't really matter...like i said, overall the book was a decent read :D

Rachel says

How had I not discovered Deirdre McNamer before now? I got wrapped up in her prose and sucked into the

mind of this character. I think I will still be thinking about this novel for some time to come. I particularly liked the author interview in the back of the book.

Candi says

Interesting premise. Woman is struggling through some problems at home and creates new identity for herself, plays with that identity. But sometimes the plot details didn't flesh out enough, the characters remained somewhat one-dimensional for me.

Candy Lund says

When I read a book I want a lead character that I can enjoy. They don't have to be saints but when they are annoying, stupid and down right childish I find it difficult to really enjoy the book. It received 2 stars because I did finish the book, but I do have to admit that I did wonder why I wasted my time.
