



The Dress Shop of Dreams

Menna van Praag

Download now

Read Online ➔

The Dress Shop of Dreams

Menna van Praag

The Dress Shop of Dreams Menna van Praag

For fans of Alice Hoffman, Sarah Addison Allen, and Adriana Trigiani, *The Dress Shop of Dreams* is a captivating novel of enduring hopes, second chances, and the life-changing magic of true love.

Since her parents' mysterious deaths many years ago, scientist Cora Sparks has spent her days in the safety of her university lab or at her grandmother Etta's dress shop. Tucked away on a winding Cambridge street, Etta's charming tiny store appears quite ordinary to passersby, but the colorfully vibrant racks of beaded silks, delicate laces, and jewel-toned velvets hold bewitching secrets: With just a few stitches from Etta's needle, these gorgeous gowns have the power to free a woman's deepest desires.

Etta's dearest wish is to work her magic on her granddaughter. Cora's studious, unromantic eye has overlooked Walt, the shy bookseller who has been in love with her forever. Determined not to allow Cora to miss her chance at happiness, Etta sews a tiny stitch into Walt's collar, hoping to give him the courage to confess his feelings to Cora. But magic spells—like true love—can go awry. After Walt is spurred into action, Etta realizes she's set in motion a series of astonishing events that will transform Cora's life in extraordinary and unexpected ways.

Advance praise for *The Dress Shop of Dreams*

“Bighearted, beautiful, and brushed with magic, this novel celebrates life’s moments of joy, possibility, and transformation. Menna van Praag’s writing is bright with sparkles and lovely grace notes.”—**Susan Wiggs, bestselling author of *The Beekeeper’s Ball***

Look for special features inside. Join the Random House Reader’s Circle for author chats and more.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

The Dress Shop of Dreams Details

Date : Published December 30th 2014 by Ballantine Books

ISBN :

Author : Menna van Praag

Format : Kindle Edition 339 pages

Genre : Fiction, Magical Realism, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Romance, Fantasy, Contemporary

 [Download The Dress Shop of Dreams ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Dress Shop of Dreams ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Dress Shop of Dreams Menna van Praag

From Reader Review The Dress Shop of Dreams for online ebook

Heidi says

Four and a half stars: A delightful, magical, romantic read. A must read for fans of magical realism.

Cora awakens from the same recurring dream she has had over and over since her parents died on her fifth birthday. Cora shakes it off and proceeds about her day. As a scientist, Cora has little time for dreams, magic and love, unlike her grandmother, Etta. Etta runs a delightful, magical dress shop where she is able to help women find their heart's desire with the perfect gown and a few stitches for encouragement. Etta struggles though when it comes time to help her own granddaughter find her heart, and in the process, Etta might just recover her own. Can the dress shop of dreams deliver love?

What I Liked:

*What a relief to find such a charming, feel good book with pinches of magic thrown in to spark the imagination. I was in the middle of a major reading slump before picking this one up, and I was thrilled that his book delivered such a lovely story. I enjoyed every minute of it. If you adore magical realism books with romance, get this one. I highly recommend it,

*I loved the magical dress shop. It was a place I would love to visit with all of its colorful gowns, changing music and silk lined walls that transform with the season. It screamed cozy and wonderful. I also liked Walt's little bookstore and longed to go there and lose myself in the stacks of book while sampling cherry pie.

Loved the settings!

*This book features not one, but four different romances. I was a bit surprised, but pleased to uncover the additional romances. The main romance is centered around Cora and her childhood friend Walt. Walt has loved Cora from the moment he met her as a child, but Cora's heart has been closed off and frozen due to her parent's death. It will take some magic to make Cora open her eyes, and when she does will it be too late? I think my favorite romance, though, was the long, unrequited romance between Etta and The Saint. A romance that spanned over fifty years of longing. Loved it. The second and third romances were interesting and wonderful as well. I loved exploring the different romances and their themes.

*Aside from the magic and romance there is a bit of a mystery in this one as Cora strives to uncover the truth about her parents death. I loved how the author connected all the characters and how everything fell into place. I was never bored for a moment with this one.

*The Dress Shop of Dreams was a delightful tale with magic, romance, and a bit of mystery. I adored the characters, the dress shop and I appreciated the tight plot. This was the perfect pick me up read, and it helped cure me of a major reading slump. This is an excellent book for winter reading.

*The writing was outstanding. I loved the way the author engaged all my senses. Her descriptions are detailed and rich. I was enchanted by the writing.

And The Not So Much:

*While I loved that there were several story lines going on, I was a bit frustrated with the way the book was laid out. It is a story with multiple view points, and though I didn't have issues with the character shifts, I didn't like that often the change occurred from one paragraph to the next. It bothers me when I am reading one character's view point and find it shifts to someone else in the next paragraph. The end portion of the book gets too chaotic with the quick transitions.

*I thought Etta's magical dress shop was delightful, but I was curious to know more about how Etta came by her gift and how she ended up opening the shop after her heartbreak. How did she know which stitches would work their magic? I thought this part of the story needed a touch more detail.

*I struggled with Milly's character. It wasn't that I didn't like her, because I found that as her story unwound,

I felt compassion for her, I think my issue stemmed from the fact that she was introduced as a love interest for one of the men who I knew was destined to be with another, so I kept wanting her out of the picture. Luckily, Milly finds her own romance in an unexpected way, and I liked it. So I got over my issues with her. *The book builds up these four different romances, and I grew more eager as the pages dwindled to see how each couple would get their ending. I was hoping for lots of feel good moments. While I did get some sweet, happy ever after scenes, I felt that all the romance endings were rushed. Just as each couple got to that one magical moment, the story shifted. I wanted more, more more.... I almost think there should be another book. Still all the loose ends are tied off and I wasn't left with lingering questions.

The Dress Shop of Dreams was a lovely book that was brimming with sweet romance, a pinch of magic, some mystery and an overall great story. I highly recommend this book for those of you who love magical realism and are looking for something light and feel good. This was just what I needed.

Favorite Quotations:

"I know that a heart can hold on for a lifetime, hoping for the impossible, loving, wanting what if will never have."

"If two hearts truly love each other then they always will, even when they are apart. Unless they both let go. But if one holds on then it's because the other one hasn't yet let it go either."

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own and I was not compensated for this review.

Posted@Rainy Day Ramblings.

Book of Secrets says

What a sweet and enchanting love story! Etta runs a very special shop where she sells dresses stitched with a wee bit of magic to help her customers' wishes come true.

One person Etta longs to help is her granddaughter, Cora. Cora's parents died when she was young, and for most of her life, she's hidden herself away doing research as a scientist. She's oblivious to the fact that her lifelong friend, Walt, is madly in love with her.

Worried that Cora will lose Walt, Etta does a little magical meddling with the best intentions. But, of course, things don't always go as planned...

This book is a lovely blend of mystery, romance, and magical realism. Many characters are introduced, each with a compelling backstory to share. There are four separate romances happening in this book, and some overlap, but each one remains unique.

I would like to have learned more about Etta's magical gift and where it originated, but I guess that will remain a mystery.

If you're in need of a whimsical and uplifting novel, I'd definitely recommend THE DRESS SHOP OF DREAMS.

Disclosure: I received a copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Nats says

I received an Advanced Readers Copy from Random House Publishing Group - Ballantine via NetGalley for an honest review. Thank you very much

I LOVED this book and I adored the idea of sewing magic into dresses in fact I found it very very inspiring. This book has everything, magic, love stories (4 in total) and a crime to be solved which kept me guessing right to the very end. It had so many twists and turns along the way. This book is a definite page turner and will keep you up into the small hours of the morning because you just cannot put it down. Also Walt is very good Book boyfriend material :-) a guy who owns a book shop what more can you want :-)

So if you are a fan of Sarah Addison Allen I urge you to get this book and even if you are not a fan of magical realism stories you will not be disappointed as this book has everything.

Happy Reading

Becky says

I would actually give this book 3.5 stars, it was a good story, nothing wrong with that but I was expecting more.

There was a magical feel to the dresses in the shop ,but I never felt a connection to the magic.

I liked the love of books & reading in the book & I liked the characters .

For some reason the story had an old feel to it,I know it was in current time but it could have been from 40 years ago.

I was given an advance copy of this book by net galley, in exchange for an honest review.

(Lonestarlibrarian) Keddy Ann Outlaw says

I enjoyed this magically real tale of lonely British people whose dreams of love often go wrong: Cora, a OCD bachelorette scientist, her apparently psychic seamstress grandmother, Etta, who unerringly matches her customers with just-the-right romantic dresses, a lovelorn bookseller named Walt who moonlights as a Night Reader on a literary radio show, a priest who still dreams of the woman he lost fifty years ago. Walt's voice weaves such a spell on his female listeners that he is sent sacks of fan letters. When radio station manager Dylan manager starts answering them, a conundrum which will affect many of the characters is born.(He gets a real glimpse into the female psyche, and realizes how deeply women are "primed for love." Add in a mystery about the death of Cora's parents, an academic couple researching foods to be used in the battle against world hunger, and you've got a lovely mix of people and plot elements. A suspension of disbelief is necessary to go with the flow of magic, wonder and whimsy. Try it -- you might like it!

Amanda says

This was a lovely book! I could see it like a magic puzzle in my head with all the pieces moving around and then finally joining up together in the end in a perfectly perfect way. Such a wonderfully satisfying read! This book is beautifully written and the landscape and emotion was so lovingly described. The characters were all lovely and even though I felt like I should think that Milly was a home wrecker I still loved her and I was completely invested in her happiness ... that is a sign of good writing in my book!

Cathy Daniel says

What an enchanting book! I couldn't put it down and read it within one day (mainly one evening) first, it's totally clean. Not even sure there was one curse word? Oh yes, one or two but not gratuitous. It fit. Trust me. It was so magical and enchanting how all the characters fit together and came together perfectly in the end. I can't really even describe it well without giving spoilers away. So just read this book. This one will stick with me for a long time!!

Marcie says

Last year I fell in love with Meena Van Praag's House At the End of Hope Street, so I was very excited to read her latest book, The Dress Shop of Dreams. There's something about her books that suck you into the pages and you find yourself reading way past bedtime. It makes you wish that the characters were real and that you could actually visit Etta's dress shop.

Trying to explain this story in a nutshell is a hard job. First you have Etta. She's kind of a magician, but not in the pull-a-rabbit-out-of-your-hat sense. She owns a dress shop and has the mystical ability to help women's dreams come true by helping them pick the perfect dress and giving a bit of courage through her needle and thread.

Etta is grandmother to Cora. Cora's parents died when she was a girl. To protect her from pain, Etta did a little something to help repress the sadness and memories. Unfortunately the result isn't quite what she hoped for. Cora is a scientist who can't see past the end of her nose. She can't even see that her best friend is in love with her. Etta does the only thing she knows how to do, she undoes the magic. Leaving a bit of chaos in her wake.

This book is full of magic, romance, mystery, and more. I love how all the characters interact with one another. There are stories that coincide with Cora and Etta's. I love the twists and turns of the plot. Basically this is a must read. I highly recommend it. And I also recommend House At the End of Hope Street too.

Read more at <http://www.toreadornottoread.net/2014...>

Emmy says

1.5

To give this a single one-star seems a bit harsh because I didn't *hate* it. But I certainly didn't like it.

First the format. I am not a fan of present tense, but the real failure was in the SEVEN POVs. None of which lasted for more than a few pages at a time. This constant shift was exhausting. As soon as you start getting involved in one story, it would switch again. I knew all the individual storylines would eventually come together in the end, but that did not help me enjoy the journey anymore.

My other major problem was the relationships and characters in this and how they developed.

People fell in and out of love too quickly. Walt loves Cora one day and the next he's in a happy relationship with Milly. Milly proposes after a few weeks after falling in love with Dylan's letters.

Some characters didn't make sense to me. Milly is described as this kind, reserved woman and then she starts considering tricking Walt into getting her pregnant.

Some relationships didn't make sense to me. Walt and Cora grew up together and were friends as kids, but as adults they acted like acquaintances who occasionally interacted.

And then there was just the generally overly cheesy and sentimental nature of things in general. Too much even for me.

Amanda says

I love this book, and I absolutely adore Walt! He's my kind of hero: British, bookish and awkward.

Andrea at Reading Lark says

Review Posted on Reading Lark 11/27/14: <http://readinglark.blogspot.com/2014/...>

I was attracted to this novel after seeing that it was recommended for fans of Sarah Addison Allen, one of my favorite authors. I love how Allen tackles magical realism and I was excited to see how Menna van Praag would tackle the genre. Writing a strong magical realism novel takes skill and finesse. The magic element can't drive every aspect of the novel; it needs to linger like the smell of a perfume once someone has left the room. *The Dress Shop of Dreams* is a beautiful story full of compelling characters, romance, and just the right bit of magic.

Etta and Cora start the novel off and quickly became the protagonists in my mind. Etta is an elderly woman who is still full of spunk, beauty, and style. She spends her days creating gorgeous dresses that line the racks of her intriguing little shop hidden away on a small street in Cambridge. Etta's dresses are not only works of art, but they also have a little magic sewn into the seams. The dresses choose their owners and help the women who wear them find their greatest hope. Etta is a dreamer and a believer in magic, but her

granddaughter, Cora, has lost the ability to believe in such things. Cora's parents were killed in a tragic fire on her fifth birthday and since that tragic date she has locked away her heart. Cora functions purely on logic and reason. She has no time for emotions or love. Her grandmother and her scientific research are the only things that keep Cora plodding forward through life.

Cora is not open to possibility which keeps her from noticing the handsome, timid bookseller, Walt. He has always been a fixture in Cora's life, but she takes his presence for granted. Cora doesn't realize that Walt isn't her steadfast friend and purveyor of cherry pie. He is something more for he has loved Cora since the moment he first saw her. He fears that Cora could never return his affections so he keeps them hidden. Like Cora, he is afraid to embrace what could be and continues to flow with the status quo. Both characters will learn a great deal about themselves and love throughout the course of this novel. In addition, I felt a deep connection to Walt. How could I not love a character who cared so deeply for books? He is a kindred spirit.

This is one of those novels that has a rotating cast of characters. I was slightly intimidated by this when I first began reading, but I soon settled into the style and became smitten with almost all of the characters. The chapters feel almost like vignettes, but like the dresses in Etta's store, the threads of each character's story ties together to form a dazzling creation. Some of the connections between characters are obvious while others are more subtle.

I enjoyed the emphasis on relationships that flows throughout this one. The bond between Etta and Cora was one of the elements that first grabbed my attention, but I quickly grew transfixed by the romantic relationships and the platonic relationships as well. I loved the intricate details that painted the overall picture of how each of the characters impacted others. I was briefly reminded of Maeve Binchy's writing as she also tended to have multiple characters who interacted with one another through the course of the story. The notion of a main character begins to fade as the reader realizes that all of these people are important.

In addition to the characters and relationships, I was pleasantly surprised that a mystery also runs through this one. Etta is not convinced that Cora's parents died accidentally. Both women decide that it is time to put the past to rest by finding a definitive answer about what happened the night of the fire. This added a new layer to the story that brought a little reality to the magical elements.

Finally, I loved the English setting. I have long craved a trip to England, but sadly have not managed to make that a reality yet. I loved walking the streets of Cambridge with Etta, Cora, and Walt as my guide. I even got a brief visit to Oxford. Menna van Praag might just be the European version of Sarah Addison Allen. While both of these women have beautiful writing styles and stories that dance through the heart and mind, they do share a common thread of bringing a little magic to the mundane.

One Last Gripe: There was a component towards that end that irked me. I didn't agree with Cora and Henry's decision. That's all I can say without spoiling anything.

My Favorite Thing About This Book: I loved the writing in this one. It was gorgeous and magical.

First Sentence: When ordinary shoppers stumble into the little dress shop, they usually leave without buying anything.

Favorite Character: I loved so many, but if I can only choose one, it has to be Etta.

Least Favorite Character: Milly - I was supposed to feel sorry for her, but I thought she was manipulative and whiney. My opinion of her improves in the end, but it took a long time to get there.

Wendy'sThoughts says

4 Meant To Be Stars * * * *

Take one part beautiful crafting; mix with a dash of magical play and add just the right amount of intricate weaving of characters. The events all happen on crossing train tracks ... always just missing their connections.

But no worries, because in the end... everyone gets where they should be going, including the readers.

A very smart read.

A gifted copy was provided by Random House Publishing Group - Ballantine via NetGalley for an honest review.

For more Reviews, Free E-books and Giveaways

Susana says

1.5 Stars

Lately I can't seem to find the patience, or the will, to write reviews. Especially for books that I don't like (which unfortunately seems to be the rule lately).

I feel emotionally drained at all levels, so my patience for half-assed stories is even more reduced.
This was my first story by the author, and most likely will be my last...

Some writing styles and stories work out for me, others don't: what is supposed to feel magical realism feels lame to me, and sometimes I just feel like dnf a book after a first paragraph.

But then bad things happen, and I feel so lousy, that this is just the kind of story that I should be reading: a story in which I don't care about anything. Or anyone! ;)

I thought this was going to be about a character, Cora. Instead there was a myriad of characters _ most of which I couldn't care about _ with their vastly pov's, who would change briskly at the will of the wind?
Every single time I would start feeling some connection to a character, boom, there would be a pov's change.

For me the characters felt cardboard, the romances weak as hell (with the exception of the police officer and his wife... that one I would have liked to have had more), and one of the characters _Milly_ almost made me throw the Kobo against a wall. -_-

Not for me I'm afraid.

Angie says

3-3.5 stars...

Dress shop of Dreams is a good book, but not great. I think maybe my expectations got a little too high when I saw comparisons to one of my favorite authors, Sarah Addison Allen--Her books are an emotional journey. This fell a little short of this for me. It was a cute story with hints of magic, quirky characters, and a good ending. Etta, Cora, Walt, Milly, Sebastian...all have stories to tell that will intermingle. I just felt something was missing. I've heard good things about her book House at the end of Hope st, and I will try it.

Myrna says

I agree that this book is comparable to Sarah Addison Allen's books. It is an enchanted story with great characters and magical moments. I loved the ending. Absolutely charming!
