



The Secret Lives of Dresses

By Erin McKean



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The Secret Lives of Dresses By Erin McKean

Dora has always taken the path of least resistance. She went to the college that offered her a scholarship, is majoring in "vagueness studies," and wears whatever shows the least dirt. She falls into a job at the college coffee shop, and a crush on her flirty boss, Gary.

Just when she's about to test Gary's feelings, Mimi, the grandmother who raised her, suffers a stroke. Dora rushes back home to Forsyth, NC, and finds herself running her grandmother's vintage clothing store. The store has always been a fixture in Dora's life; though she grew up more of a jeans-and-sweatshirt kind of girl, before she even knew how to write, Mimi taught her that a vintage 1920s dress could lift a woman's spirit.

While working there, Dora befriends Mimi's adorable contractor, Conrad. Is he after Dora, or is working from a different blueprint? And why did Mimi start writing down--and giving away--stories of the dresses in her shop?

When Mimi dies, Dora can't get out of town fast enough and cedes control of the store to her money-hungry aunt who wants to turn it into a t-shirt shop for tourists. But ultimately, she returns to Forsyth, willing to battle whatever may stand in the way of her staying there. Dora can trade her boring clothes for vintage glamour, but can she trade her boring life for one she actually wants?



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Blogger McKean's retro fashion-forward coming-of-age debut follows Dora Winston as she sashays toward a degree in "vagueness studies" while engaged in a fruitless flirtation with her coffee shop boss. She's got no idea what to do with her life, and then her adored grandmother, Mimi, has a stroke, and Dora is whisked back to Mimi's vintage clothing store, where she learns more about Mimi, thanks to the secret (and ploddingly overwritten) stories Mimi has stashed away on pieces of paper stuck in the pockets of her most intriguing inventory. Flashbacks flesh out Mimi's wisdom and wit, while store workers Gabby and Maux complete the trilogy of strong and funny women who run the business and help Dora find her way. The prose hovers somewhere below lackluster, however, and Dora's journey is as comfortable and unsurprising as a favorite sweater. (Feb.)

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From [Booklist](#)

College junior Dora drops everything, including her iPod, to rush home after hearing that the grandmother who raised her, her beloved Mimi, has had a stroke. Once there, she runs Mimi's, a vintage clothing store, to honor her love for the hospitalized owner. Romance abounds in this fun novel set in western North Carolina. The story gets its suspense from Dora's crushes, the dippy Gary she left back at college and the newly met Con. Whom will she choose? And, of course, there are the greedy relatives who try to take over the store. But she has wonderful friends to support her as well as a considerable amount of pluckiness of her own. This book originated on McKean's blog, *A Dress a Day*, which is currently archiving volumes about the secret lives of 18 dresses from the dresses' points of view. Those "biographies," given to the new owners of vintage outfits, are amusing and intriguing additions to the plot. Romance readers and fans of small-town fiction will love this positive and enjoyable book. --Ellen Loughran

Review

"A sweet tale, stylishly told: *THE SECRET LIVES OF DRESSES* is a find!" --*Lauren Lipton, author of MATING RITUALS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN WASP*

"McKean adroitly combines a warm small-town sensibility with a sophisticatedly modern sense of humor. As well-constructed and appealing as the vintage dresses it describes, this novel is a pure delight." --*Claire LaZebnik, author of IF YOU LIVED HERE, YOU'D BE HOME NOW and KNITTING UNDER THE INFLUENCE*

"Pleasantly effervescent debut." --*Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

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