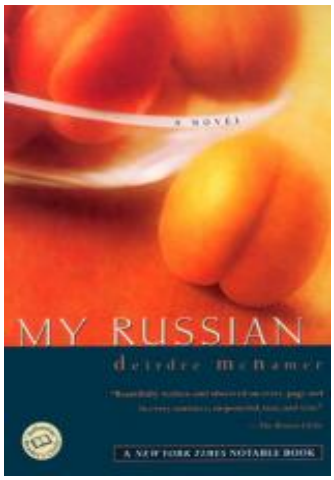
My Russian

by Deirdre McNamer



About the Book

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 . . .

Discussion Guide

1. Reviews of My Russian have praised McNamer's portrait of Francesca as being one of "the most original" explorations of a woman's mid-life crisis in recent fiction. What are some of the elements that make her such an original creation?

2. "Who shot Ren?" is one of the central questions that carries the plot forward. Were you surprised to learn who did it?

3. Look back and examine the passages in which McNamer alludes to the possible culprits who shot Ren. How does she lead you to think it is someone other than the person it turns out to be while not technically "deceiving" the reader?

4. By the end of the novel, we learn who shot Ren and whether Francesca will assume a new identity or embrace her old one. What does Francesca learn by the end of the book?

5. What roles do the elements and the natural world play in this novel? How are they woven into the plot and themes of the book?

6. Many of McNamer's characters mark time with historical events; their lives and perceptions are changed significantly by some of these events. In what ways have the events she describes?or any of similar magnitude?altered your life or your outlook on life?

7. If Francesca decides to fake her death and assume a new identity, she will have to forfeit her role as a mother. Can you recall other novels, recent or historical, in which women entertain the possibility of "unbecoming" mothers, or in which women actually abandon their children?

8. Though Francesca's Russian gardener has a relatively small role in the actual text, why is My Russian an appropriate title?

Author Bio

Critical Praise

"McNamer writes with extraordinary emotional acuity and with a keen sense of the small detail that says it all. . . . Quietly devastating."

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