



Map of Dreams

M. Rickert (Editor) , Gordon Van Gelder (Afterword) , Christopher Barzak (Foreword by)

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Set in a reality where nightmares do not fade upon waking, this anthology skims along the surface of life and dips just beneath, revealing the hidden machinations that fuel dreams. These underlying myths and fantasies exist not as musty old stories but as ancient truths that have come to illuminate the modern human condition. The title story touches on themes of grief, redemption, and time travel; "Cold Fire" ventures into love and obsession; and "Peace on Suburbia" introduces readers to a Christmas with an entirely different kind of savior. These and 13 other tales are framed by four interludes—Dreams, Nightmares, Waking, and Rising—that guide readers through a world that is at once familiar and eerily off-kilter.

Map of Dreams Details

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Download and Read Free Online Map of Dreams M. Rickert (Editor) , Gordon Van Gelder (Afterword) , Christopher Barzak (Foreword by)

From Reader Review Map of Dreams for online ebook

Don says

This is not a happy, joyous book. Despite the fantasy elements, the stories show all the different facets of the suffering of life that I don't see much outside of Raymond Carver's collections. Except that the pain of the characters isn't hidden under even a thin veneer.

But the stories aren't devoid of hope, unless you're talking about optimistic, feel-good, against-the-odds kind of hope. The collection seems more about the kind you find in real life, that of scarred people who find their hope in clawing their way forward, choosing to light an inch rather than curse the darkness. And, not everyone does, not in life or in this book, I'll just be up front about that right now.

To fully experience *Map of Dreams*, save "The Chambered Fruit" for last. Seriously. It's only after you've read all of the other tales of loss and suffering that you can read "The Chambered Fruit" and, like the protagonist in that story, put all of that pain into the perspective you need to move forward.

M. Rickert is the writer I want to be when I grow up. This book is up for three World Fantasy Awards for a reason! I give it five stars because goodreads won't let me give it six.

Eleanor Toland says

Map of Dreams is a collection comprising a novella (also titled *Map of Dreams* and a series of interlinked short stories of a fantasy nature. The book has no less than two introductions (one of which is written by the novella's main character) and an afterword. I didn't think the ephemera was justified. I generally don't care for introductions unless they reveal some vital historical/social context. Christopher Barzak's essentially boiled down to "Mary Rickert is a really nice person", which while sweet, didn't really add to the reading experience. The second introduction, the one written by the author, was even more frivolous. However, these are minor issues, and had the stories been better I probably wouldn't have mentioned them. But the stories themselves have some decidedly non-minor problems.

The collection starts with *Map of Dreams* a novella about grief, time-travel and altered consciousness. It's set partly in America and partly in an Australian island. Rickert uses Indigenous Australians and their concept of time as a major plot point, and her portrayal of Aboriginal culture suffers from cultural appropriation and the tendency to confer magical powers on ethnic minorities. It's a huge stretch of the imagination to go from 'certain cultures have a very different way of looking at time to what traditional Western thought is used to' to 'therefore they can help me travel through time to save my loved one', and it's all a bit cringey. Not to mention none of the major characters are Indigenous Australian... Racism aside, the novella concludes with a series of annoyingly predictable twists. When Mary (view spoiler) And the author doesn't pay anywhere near enough attention to the much more interesting paradox the ending creates.

Despite the ending, *Map of Dreams* the novella contains pacy writing, vivid characters and a powerful sense of moral dilemma. The absence of any of these factors from the short stories that follow is what caused me to give up on the volume halfway in. Most of the stories are floaty, insubstantial, dream-like, more prose poems than fiction. Inner monologues and stream-of-consciousness abound. There are a few exceptions, for instance "Leda", a retelling of the conception of Helen of Troy in modern times. So it's a story about a woman being

raped by a swan. Actually, it's a realistic look at trauma combined with magic realist/absurdist elements. However, it's mostly written from the point of view of Leda's husband, and the emphasis on the husband's 'manpain' kills it. I lost patience with the book when I got to "Night Blossoms" a character sketch about a father who resents his daughters. I feel a bit guilty for giving up, but life's too short to force yourself to read 150+ pages out of a sense of obligation.

Theo Logos says

Outstanding writing, but the mood and tone of the stories just were not to my taste. It was recommended to me as speculative fiction, but was much closer to magical realism. The author is obviously quite skillful, and it is only a matter of personal taste that keeps me from giving this one a higher rating.

David Jenkins says

I enjoyed just under half of this short story collection with the only novella 'Map of Dreams' being the biggest disappoint as it dragged on but didn't explain enough how time travel worked. If it's a state of mind as suggested then how can it bring someone back to life and allow them to come home with you. Many of the stories are emotional and you can feel for the suffering of characters like Moorina as Rickert paints their pain so well. My favourite story and the reason I bought this book was 'Bread and Bombs'. Told from a child's point of view the actions, dialogue and viewpoint all ring true. This story of children burning down a house of refugees as their parents' paranoia and refugee strangeness has infected them has undoubtedly happened in somewhere. The only difference is the world situation is slightly more fantastical but one day could be a reality including snow as a biological weapon and aeroplane travel stopped due to terror threat. By only adding little touches of fantasy this story brought me into it more deeply and even the clichés like sweets they thought were from refuges weren't. Several stories are parables like 'Chambered Fruit' which poses an interesting question if the dead came back to life would you be happy. Would death have changed them not physically but emotionally would they make it hard to live your life? It made me think be careful what you wish for and sometimes you need to accept death otherwise it will rule your life. Rickert's power is in making you assume everything is normal then fantasy comes along and it takes an unexpected twist. In 'Chambered Fruit' after you had the horrible tale of the daughter being killed by an online predator I half expected the girl who can talk to the dead to be faking it and playing a prank on the old woman who has lost her child.

However this collection isn't all positive as it includes a lot of stories about women losing their kids and being seen as crazy so many in fact that it becomes repetitive. The endings of some stories fade out and disappoint like 'Art is not a Violent subject' with the narrator ended up in a prison still crazy after telling us his story. Something's needed describing more like how crows are proven to carry a disease which would help explain how quick government decided to kill them all instead of just stating the fact in a single line. Overall Rickert's collection is good for its characters you can root for and realism with small doses of fantasy which are unexpected in many stories. However the narrators in many stories are repetitive, as they are all woman who have lost children and people now think they are crazy so they talk in similar voices.

Stephanie says

The initial story is so convoluted and confusing (and long) that I thought I hated this book but the rest of the stories are hauntingly beautiful, moving and memorable. The writing is superb. Many of the stories explore devastating loss and elements of rebirth and are deeply feminine in many ways. I imagine that everyone will relate to the loss differently but it is a journey into the surreal well worth taking, both disturbing and somehow deeply nourishing. The stories are quite beautiful and could be taken at face value but I think the true value and depth would only be appreciated by someone with a mind for the abstract. This book will remain on my bookshelf for decades and I look forward to revisiting it.

Haddayr says

Full disclosure here: I LOVE M. RICKERT. She is a personal friend.

That said, this book is brilliant and I'd say it even if I hadn't read it. She is truly a genius with the short story. It's such a joy to read someone who takes short stories in and of themselves so seriously.

Also, her stories can be extremely creepy. Not in a blood-n-guts way, but in an OMG people-can-be-awful-including-me kind of way. You've been warned!

Bridgett says

Magical realist short stories with a starting and ending story about a young girl that dies, as well as themes about dreams and eggs. I really liked it.

Eastendleo says

It was amazing:

My first exposure to M. Rickert was her novel 'The Memory Garden.' And, like the novel, this book of short stories highlights her command of language, character and story. She is simply wonderful at story telling. I was glad to realize she is as adept at immersing a reader quickly in a short story as she was with her first book.

These are stories of death, madness and the destruction of the body and soul. I read the book over the course of only a few days and I don't think that approach served the stories well. I'm not one for short stories generally, but was so taken with her novel I wanted to read more of her. So I immersed myself in the stories.

But...my experience with this collection would suggest that spreading them out is the way to go. I found reading them all within a few days brought forward the one flaw I would suggest about these stories. They are unrelentingly bleak. As individual stories, this would not be a problem. But as a block of writing, they are overwhelming.

If you have a partner, children, or are contemplating them, this is a collection which should come with a content warning. The morning after finishing the collection, I awoke in a panic, her final story "The Chambered Fruit" still scaring (scarring?) me.

But! still! amazing writing. Next up: her short story collection 'Holiday.'

Ore says

Actual rating: 3 1/2 stars

It is harder for anthologies. And I suppose I am harder on anthologies as well, mostly because although I've had a fifteen year romance with the novel (I'm starting at the first one I ever read) short stories have my heart.

Fans of this style of writing may have read other anthologies such as Somewhere Beneath Those Waves (Sarah Monette), The Forest of Forgetting (Theodora Goss), Pretty Monsters (Kelly Link) and The Empire of Ice cream (Jeffery Ford) all of which are so ridiculously amazing that I could never even write a review on them because I would just ramble, tremble and gush.

Here is the thing, M.Rickert is just as good a writer as any of the ones I mentioned above, it's just some of her stories are not as good. Yikes! That sounds harsh. It isn't meant to be. I think, what was missing for me was the strength of direction that I am used to in a really gripping short story.

Like the box of chocolates that you gave your third-favorite coworker for Christmas, some of the stories are not the greatest, some an acquired taste, and some are truly amazing.

My favorite story BY FAR in the anthology is the last story, The Chambered Fruit. (I guess she really was saving the best for last).

This story contains similar elements to Ricket's other stories witches (there is also a really great witch in Cold Fire's my second favorite story), dead daughters, distressed middle aged wives. If you want to know why this story is so great read it for yourself!

But here is my favorite quote from it :)

"Dead daughters do not wear socks or shoes and they won't go into old bedrooms unless you beg or coax (...) Dead daughters have little in common with the living ones. They are more like sisters than the same girl and you realize, just as you miss the daughter you've lost, so does the dead girl."

Gregory Frost says

Wonderful work as always from M. Rickert.

Nic says

First collection (there have been two since) of literary fantasy shorts from M(ary) Rickert. The stories tend

towards the intense and introspective; most are first-person, and grief, mental illness and emotional disconnection are strongly recurring themes. The stories' settings tend to be a magical realist small-town and rural US - many of the stories are suffused with a rich, heady sense of the natural world - but the shadow of 9/11 and the subsequent American-led invasion of Iraq hang heavy over a number of the entries (notably the Shirley Jackson-esque 'Bread and Bombs').

With the exception of the opening, titular novella - which is original to this collection - the stories tend to be very short (ten pages or less), making the collection ideal for dipping into. As is generally the case with single-author collections, reading the whole lot in a short space of time is an interesting exercise. On the one hand, you get a clear sense of a writer honing her craft, and reworking key ideas; 'Map of Dreams' and 'The Chambered Fruit', both reflections on coping with the death of a child, make fascinatingly contrasting bookends. On the other hand, it does run the risk of smothering some of the shorter and/or quieter entries (like the short interludery mood pieces 'Dreaming of the Sun', 'Feeding the Beast', etc.). But there's enough variety of tone and affect here - from delicate weirdness of 'The Girl Who Ate Butterflies' to mind-of-a-killer creepiness like 'Art Is Not a Violent Subject' - to make reading the whole thing more than worthwhile.

Kathy says

This is a difficult book for me to rate. There were times I thought I wouldn't finish it, and there were other times I thought it was brilliant. I felt like I was on an emotional see-saw while reading it. I wish Goodreads had 1/2 star ratings, because I think I'd give this one 3.5 stars. I read *Holiday* & thought it was brilliant. I found this book to be a mixed bag.

Claudiu says

Some stories I liked, some I really loved. A new favorite author.

H.N. says

Beautiful, strange stories.

Rob says

(9/10) This one is hard to get your hands on, but definitely worth it. M. Rickert is a master on the micro level, stringing together perfect sentences that reverberate with mythological clarity. Her stories are often folkloric, and frequently question the divide between fantasy and insanity.

Rickert's attempts at longer narratives don't quite work as well -- the titular novella is full of excellent moments but fetishizes Aboriginal culture to an unfortunate extent, and the other long story towards the end of the collection seems more like a supernatural-tinged CBS procedural. But most of this book is wonderful, and even the non-wonderful parts sparkle with indisputable grace.

M. Rickert should really be one of fantasy's most heralded authors, but specializing in fantasy short stories is kind of like shooting yourself in both feet when it comes to authorly fame and fortune. But to tell the truth, I almost prefer her as a semi-secret treasure, enjoyed only by the initiated.
