



The Magic of Ordinary Days

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Olivia Dunne, a studious minister's daughter who dreams of being an archaeologist, never thought that the drama of World War II would affect her quiet life in Denver. An exhilarating flirtation reshapes her life, though, and she finds herself banished to a rural Colorado outpost, married to a man she hardly knows. Overwhelmed by loneliness, Olivia tentatively tries to establish a new life, finding much-needed friendship and solace in two Japanese American sisters who are living at a nearby internment camp. When Olivia unwittingly becomes an accomplice to a crime and is faced with betrayal, she finally confronts her own desires. Beautifully written and filled with memorable characters, Creel's novel is a powerful exploration of the nature of trust and love.

The Magic of Ordinary Days Details

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Author : Ann Howard Creel

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From Reader Review The Magic of Ordinary Days for online ebook

Nancy says

I watched the Hallmark movie with Keri Russell and Skeet Ulrich first and absolutely loved the story, so I was eager to read the book that the movie was based off. Aren't books always better than the movies? In this case, no, for while it is a strong book I actually preferred the movie.

Livy, a young woman living in Denver, unexpectedly becomes pregnant when she has an out of character fling with a WWII soldier, for she has been bereft and lonely since her mother's death. Her pastor father is scandalized and arranges for her to marry sight unseen a rural farmer on the CO plains. Her new husband Ray is a plain spoken man who is very kind and never judges her for her unplanned pregnancy. Lonely out on the farm, she befriends two Japanese-American sisters who are working in the farm fields while they are interned nearby. When given a chance to go back to the city, Livy needs to decide if she wants to go back to her empty but cosmopolitan life, or stay with Ray and his extended family.

This was an engaging book, with a slightly different ending than the movie. The themes of God, family and duty were represented in a loving manner, and the title was a wonderful reminder that life doesn't have to be extraordinary to be beautiful.

?Laura says

I really did not like this book. I found the plot and the writing to be too simplistic, the characters to be too one-dimensional, and the relationships between characters to be poorly developed. The choices made by the characters felt contrived and I did not find myself caring in the least what would become of them. I especially disliked the main character, Livvy, and found her to be self-centered and lazy. You live on a farm during WWII and you complain that you don't have enough to do? Really? I would imagine that taking care of a home without all the modern conveniences must have been a full-time job in and of itself, not to mention farm work and maybe contributing to the war effort in some way. But no, she instead spent her time on leisurely driving, using the gasoline which they were allowed only because it was necessary for farm work. I guess I should have realized that a book which was the inspiration for a Hallmark Hall of Fame movie might somehow miss the mark in terms of literary quality, but I was sucked in by the promise of Livvy's unwitting involvement in some type of crime, which I thought must contribute some intrigue. Unfortunately, the crime occurs only in the last 30 pages of the book and was a big let-down in the intrigue department. Did you ever wish you could get a couple of days of your life back and do it all over again? Maybe read something good? Sigh.

Jayci says

The oldest of three sisters, Livvy insisted that her life was meant for exploring the world and making new discoveries. As she watched her sisters marry young soldiers, Livvy was certain she could accomplish more than love. However, all plans were put on hold when Livvy's ailing mother took a turn for the worse. Livvy drops everything to see her mother out of this world. Stuggeling with grief, Livvy makes a decision that will change her life. Now, she finds herself in rural Colorado, married to a stranger, and searching for friendship

with two internment camp prisoners.

This was a very quiet love story. The vivid descriptions glided along at a gentle pace. All of the hustle and bustle of life was left behind and I was able to breath for a few moments. So much humanity and selflesness tied up together with a little bow.....All of the indgredients for a Hallmark movie! I loved Creel's style. Her writing had a way of rocking me to sleep.

Jaidee says

3 "whimsical, delicate but sometimes (often even) off the mark" stars.

2016 Most Disappointing Read (Tie)

Ms. Creel had a 5 star book here had she taken more time and care with this gentle historical drama romance.

This book takes place in Colorado in the 1940s. It is about an intelligent young woman who gets herself pregnant and then is sent to marry with a socially awkward but loving farmer who is willing to raise the child as his own. She befriends two Japanese sisters that work on her husband's farm as they have been sent to a camp for being Japanese during World War 2.

Ms. Creel is expert at letting a story unfold slowly, langourously even and is quite adept at describing shifting emotions and internal psychological struggles around love, desire, grief and gender and ethnic dynamics. If she focused solely on this she would have had a quietly moving masterpiece.

Ms. Creel wants to do more though. She wants to "tell" rather than "show" the ethical dilemas about the treatment of the Japanese during World War 2 in the U.S. as well as the treatment of women who had unplanned pregnancies. She also wants to infuse poetry into her prose and this is where she really loses me. It is amateurish, flowery and often does not fit. It took me out of the very interesting and beautiful story and made me shudder. Saccharine, artificial and contrived were many of these passages.

I find it really difficult to deal with a book that is so moving and important on one page that then leads to a horrible Hallmark greeting card on another page.

Very glad I read the book but I'm not sure I'll be back to read another of her books !

Addendum: So weird. My partner just looked up and saw that Hallmark actually makes movies and this book was adapted into a film. I will watch it and report back.

Linda says

I first 'saw' this book as a Hallmark Hall of Fame movie on TV. I was so impressed with the story that I had to get the book. Olivia Dunne is the oldest of three sisters. She is the only one who is single and she is also pursuing her master's degree in history. Intelligent with goals to better her life, she wants to become an archeologist. At the opening of the story she is taking care of her mother who is ill.

This is a simple story of love-gone-wrong during the early days of WWII. Olivia is a minister's daughter who does the unthinkable; she gets pregnant after a one-night stand with a soldier that she thought would love and marry her. Unfortunately it is war time and he never returns.

Her mother passes away and her strict father sends her off to marry a farmer. A stranger. A lonely man. A gentle man. Someone who has known heartache in his own way.

Journey with these two isolated individuals who eventually earn the respect and then love, from one another. Deep in scope, this is a powerful story with interesting characters. Besides the warmhearted romance you will learn what was expected of farmers during this era. There is also a secondary story between Olivia and two Japanese sisters she meets.

THE MAGIC OF ORDINARY DAYS moves slowly but not in a bad way. This is one of those romances that you will be sad to end. Ann Howard Creel normally writes young girl fiction but this adult fiction is oh-so-sweet. The movie follows the book but takes some liberties. Read the book first. I highly recommend this special form of enchantment.

Raina says

I really liked this book. I was a bit disappointed in the ending--not how it ended, just that it was wrapped up a little more quickly than I would have liked.

That said, please don't let the slow beginning turn you off. Trust me on this. Don't give up on it. This book is a love story that kind of sneaks up on you. Contrasts true love with what so many girls think love is and in the end I loved it! It's not an exciting book, but a good book that will leave you feeling warm and fuzzy.

I was really touched by this book. I especially loved the characters. Although Livvy is the main character, my thoughts of Ray lingered for several days. I know there will be many out there who would call this story cheesy or predictable whereas others would criticize Livvy for conforming to society's expectations of her at that time period. As a stay-at-home housewife with kids to tend to, however, I found that I could relate to Livvy's sacrificed dreams. Having said that, I, like Livvy in the end, wouldn't change a thing which is probably why this book touched me so much.

My favorite thing about this book, however, is the title. That is absolutely a 5-star title! It's so evocative, and it's the reason I picked it up in the first place.

Abby says

I thought this book was okay. But if you like novels, you probably would like it more than I did. (My reader friend who suggested it to me said it was the BEST BOOK EVER!!! But she also loved Twilight and all the other books that I am ho-hum on.)

My problem is, when I am reading a fictional book I keep thinking, "This is so dumb. It didn't even happen.

These people are fake. It's not even real. Why am I even reading this?" I just love awesome non-fiction, where the stories are true and you could actually meet the people involved!

This book moved slow for me, and nobody survived a natural disaster or invented something or almost got ate by a shark. What did happen was this: the main character meets a handsome young man named Edward, who is not a vampire, falls in love, and sleeps with him the night before he ships off to war. He says he doesn't write letters much, and that he won't be able to send a letter at all for at least a couple weeks. A month passes. No letter. And she's pregnant. But month two, she knows he never cared about her and slept with her only as a conquest. Her dad arranges a marriage for her with a farmer in the country, and she meets him the same day she marries him, 3 months pregnant.

At first the farmer is boring, then she gradually decides she loves him. Plus another subplot, but that's the basic story.

Seriously, though - did she even TRY to get ahold of her Edward lover? Maybe write and tell him you're pregnant? Maybe find out if he was killed at war? Call his parents?

IMO, a better ending would have been Edward coming to find her after he heard she was pregnant, but after meeting him again she realizes that she actually loves the farmer. Edward doesn't want the baby, so they go their separate way and she chooses farm guy. And then they should escape a shark attack.

Dorcas says

This is a gentle, thought provoking story of a young pregnant woman who is sent away to marry a farmer before her child is born. Its a story of acceptance, forgiveness, and a slow building love. Life doesn't always turn out the way one envisions but that doesn't mean it can't turn out well. Ray (her arranged husband) is so sweet and tenderhearted that your heart aches for her to accept him. Overall a very good read and I enjoyed it.

CONTENT :

SEX : There is one sex scene (one paragraph) where she thinks back on what it was that brought her to her present predicament.

PROFANITY : None

VIOLENCE : None

MY RATING PG -13

Because of the sex scene I can't recommend this to YA readers. It was a short reference but fairly descriptive. If viewer ratings are anything to go by, the hallmark movie is supposed to be wholesome and family friendly.

Heather says

I loved this. Reading each page was like rolling a chocolate around in my mouth. The words and images were that beautiful. The story was artfully and thoughtfully created and I ended up loving these wonderfully human characters with all their brilliance and flaws. As my friend Laura pointed out, it was so great to see the protagonist's attitude change over the course of the book. I think it was because she was surrounded by uncommonly good and kind people, whose words and actions brought me to tears several times. Maybe these kind of people aren't so uncommon though, because I know many in real life, and this book made me appreciate them even more.

Hilary says

I loved this book! I picked it up after watching and loving the Hallmark movie version of the novel. It's even better than the movie! It's set in 1940's Colorado farming country, and Livvy is forced into an arranged marriage by her strict father when she becomes pregnant out of wedlock. She marries a shy, simple farmer she's never met before her wedding day. This book taught a few lessons that I loved:

1. Love between a husband and wife is not just about physical attraction, butterflies in the stomach, etc, that is portrayed in the movies. It's about selflessness, kindness, and commitment. Livvy learns that through her saint of a husband, Ray.
2. Forgiveness is powerful. Throughout the book Livvy has a hard time forgiving herself for getting pregnant by some loser she thought she loved. Ray is patient and loving, and never judges her about her past. This allows her to forgive herself. She is also able to accept the consequences of her actions, and she realizes that this new life is even better than she could have hoped for.
3. I want to be a spouse like Ray! He is so kind, he is so patient, he is extremely selfless, doing anything to make her happy, even when she gives him nothing in return. That's what makes a good marriage!

I've said a lot, but I just thought this book was great! I must say, there were a couple sexy scenes, just so I said I warned you!

Heather *Awkward Queen and Unicorn Twin* says

I wanted to read this book after learning about the movie starring Skeet Ulrich and Keri Russell. Recently my library purchased the movie, and I decided to move the book up my TBR.

This book tells the story of Livvy, a young woman who gets in trouble with a soldier and has to enter a marriage of convenience with a young farmer. Ray is very shy and set in his ways, and Livvy feels stifled by the isolated community. She befriends two sisters from a nearby Japanese internment camp, and their friendships help pass her days, as well as her amateur archaeological discoveries on the farm. Although Ray's feelings for her are quickly apparent (he was very lonely before her), it takes Livvy a while to warm up to him.

I ended up watching the movie first and liking it much better than the book, and I think that would have been

the case even if I'd read the book first. I found the book boring, and I didn't like the writing. The story was pulled much tighter for the movie, and to me it flowed better. There wasn't much emotion in the book—it was a read-between-the-lines sort of thing—and this quiet kind of love story was more adequately conveyed by being able to see actors' faces (and better storytelling on the movie script's part).

Plus, the movie had Skeet Ulrich, who was so adorable I wanted to die.

So while I don't recommend the book, I do suggest watching the movie if this is the kind of story you like.

1.5 stars

Sawsan says

Happiness may be found in unexpected places and with unexpected people.
enjoyable warm novel, its events going on during the world war2
story of forgiveness, trust, love and starting over
ordinary days could be magic if you were with someone who really cares

Avid Booker says

RATING JUST BASED OFF OF THE MOVIE!!!! I KNOW THIS IS A BOOK PLACE. BUT I KNOW I'LL NEVER READ THIS BECAUSE OF THE MOVIE AND PEOPLE SAID THE MOVIE WAS PRETTY ACCURATE.

For one, I HATED the heroine. She was ungrateful, and treated the hero badly when all he wanted to do was help her and love her. She planned to leave after practically mooching off his money, food, and home for like 8months.

The hero was perfect. Like literally. He said such sweet things.

There were moments of too much history. His brother died in the war and there was a sort of clear animosity he had with Asian people kinda.

Why did she help the Prisoner of war only to turn him in?

At the end, I didn't feel like she change any. Maybe the book will prove to be different. But just from the movie alone, I'm gonna prob stay far far away from this.

Diane says

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. The author generally writes for juvenile audiences, and I think that shows through a little in this book. I felt there were a few parts that were weaker in terms of the writing; at several

points the author gives factual detail about farming or the war that almost reads like a textbook, for example, but these did not dominate the story for me. I found the plot to be engaging, perhaps because the crisis the main character faces is one so many women have faced throughout the ages: if, to marry and have a family, means you must drastically change your original plans for your life, are you comprising yourself too much? What really is the value of love and family? Can one love someone who is significantly different in education and outlook than oneself? Is being a "good" man enough to win a woman's love? and so on. The writing is very simple and direct, but drew me in. The substory about the young Japanese women is also interesting and expands on the themes of love, loyalty and honor.

Larada Horner-Miller says

I love the setting because it is very close to where I grew up. She is a great story weaver!
