

These Dreams



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From Publishers Weekly Heartfelt and moving, though undermined by competing themes and unrealistic plot twists, this ambitious novel charts the unraveling of an ordinary middle-class family in the wake of tragedy. After a long day at work, high school secretary Cricket Thompson stops at the local supermarket near her home in upstate New York. While standing in line, Cricket ruminates on her near perfect life with two healthy teenage daughters and an uncomplaining husband: "She needed nothing, and if she wanted more, it was just because she sometimes forgot how much she had." Unfortunately everything is about to change. The very next day, an unknown gunman goes on a rampage at the local shopping mall, killing 11 teens and seriously wounding many more, including Cricket's younger daughter, Grace, leaving her in a coma and near death. Her frightened husband is unable to give Cricket the emotional support she craves, and her elder daughter, Janis, withdraws into herself. Meanwhile, Pass the uncommonly handsome man who runs the local bird sanctuary where Cricket volunteers makes it clear that he's in love with her. Not surprisingly, as Cricket's world falls apart, she turns to Pass for solace. Though the novel takes some awkward turns and goes on longer than it should, Chepaitis endows her characters with genuinely human warmth, and her challenging contemporary themes make the story more interesting than the average romance.

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