

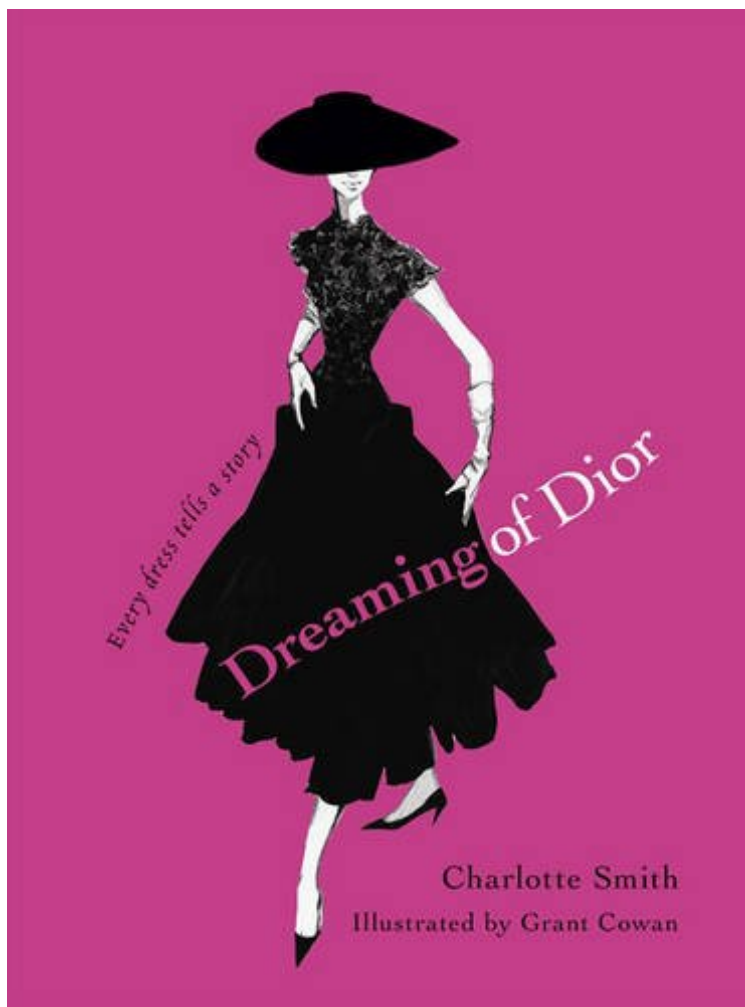
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*Charlotte Smith*

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## **Dreaming of Dior**

**Charlotte Smith : Dreaming of Dior** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised [Dreaming of Dior](#):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book for the fashionista! By MarcMy wife has an affinity for fashion books, and wanted to begin growing her collection. This is the second book I purchased for her collection. She

loves the book, and has added it to our coffee table. The hardcover book is bound nicely as well as having good quality paper. The images are also very crisp and colorful. As the title states, this is a great little book to get for your loved one as a "just because" gift. It's priced great, and with Prime you can't beat the free shipping! also has special boxes that they use for their books, so you're not getting some huge box just for a book. Good job ! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Fashion Fairy Tale worth reading By TVDIVAMy godmother and I lived a 30 minute walk from each other. We rarely saw each other except on my birthday and Christmas where we dutifully exchanged

gifts. The year we gave each other the same clutch wallet for Christmas we decided to stop sharing gifts and just send cards (even after I moved to another state.) Imagine having a godmother who loves fashion as much as you do, and when she goes to fashion heaven leaves you an amazing legacy. Quaker Doris Darnell collected vintage clothing and accessories (dated 1795-present.) The pieces came from acquaintances and friends who also sent letters, stories and photographs about each piece Doris received. Charlotte Allen inherited the collection and began chronicling the pieces - especially the dresses and the personal stories that came with them. This first book in the series shows stories on one page in paragraphs and snippets with beautiful illustrations of each dress by Grant Cowan. What we really get is a view of social history from the stories - how women lived in different centuries and decades and what they endured to keep fashionable with their times. Whether you are a fashion historian, fashion designer or a fashionista, *Dreaming of Dior* and the follow up book *Dreaming of Chanel* belong in your fashion library. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Can't put this book down By EBMI admit I haven't done much reading through the book outside of the introductory. The dresses, the designs, the looks are just so stunning, I can't stop flipping through and looking at all these different designs through the ages. I wish that the gowns had been better organized in years from old to new, but not every single one has a date listed so maybe some were unknown. Every single one comes with a story and the few that I read are pretty inspirational. I'm not sure if all the dresses are merely Dior, the title would suggest it, but it states in the cover flap that it includes pieces from Dior and Chanel originals. The book won't really tell you which designer the gown came from, just the story of who had it. The illustrations are very inspiring and I've had a few friends who are artists become easily inspired for clothing when they looked through this. I really love this book and it will wear out soon from my constant shuffling through the pages.

Every woman knows a dress can hold a lifetime of memories, but imagine inheriting thousands that tell their own stories of love, loss and joy. Charlotte Smith has had more than her fair share of fabulous dresses and adventures. Born in Hong Kong and raised in the United States, she lived life to the full in London, Paris and New York before falling in love with Australia and discovering she had inherited a priceless vintage clothing collection from her American Quaker godmother, Doris Darnell. Then the boxes started arriving, with more than three thousand treasures dating from 1790 to 1995, from originals by Dior, Chanel and Balenciaga to a pioneer woman's daintily mended best dress. But when she unearthed her godmother's book of stories about the dresses and the women who wore them, the true value of what she had been bequeathed hit home. This wasn't a mere collection of beautiful things, it was a collection of life. Women's lives. tiny snapshots of our joys and disappointments, our entrances and exits, triumphant and tragic. This is a book for any woman who knows a dress can hold a lifetime of memories.

About the Author Charlotte Smith is the curator of the Darnell Collection, Australia's largest private collection of vintage clothing and accessories, which she inherited from her American godmother, Doris Darnell. Born in Hong Kong and raised in the United States, Charlotte has lived and worked in America, England and France but now lives in the Blue Mountains, Australia. She has a degree in Art History and lectures on the history of fashion. Excerpt.

Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Inheriting a priceless vintage clothing collection containing more than three thousand pieces sounds like every woman's dream come true. But all I could think after my American godmother Doris Darnell told me her invaluable legacy was on its way across the world to me was: What on earth am I going to do with it? Doris's collection had been a lifetime labour of love for her, more precious than any treasure I knew of, and she had chosen me as custodian. I was simply overwhelmed. That is, until the first box arrived at my home in the Blue Mountains. I peeled back the packing tape, pushed aside layers of white tissue and caught my breath at what lay inside. It was a gown of gossamer silk in the palest cream with silver beads glistening over and beyond the bodice; panels of frothy chiffon slipped through my hands as I raised it to the light. I had unearthed my first treasure. I was instantly enchanted, as Doris knew I would be. For the next three months Christmas came every day. Out came strapless ballgowns with vast, sumptuous skirts of taffeta and moiré silk, velvet hats bedecked with exotic plumes, organdy party dresses in every style and hue and every stitch, every sequin, ribbon and silk petal reminded me of Doris. When I was a child growing up in Philadelphia, Doris was the ultimate fairy godmother. Tall and elegant, flamboyant and utterly charming, she was exotic and unpredictable in a thrilling way. She always dressed in clothes from a time long ago, swishing bustle skirts, lace blouses and trailing feather boas. Clothes that no one else wore, and no one else could wear with quite the sense of drama that Doris did. I grew up thinking everyone had a special room in their house full of nineteenth-century hats and crocodile handbags, and that every woman had - or should have - wardrobes and trunks filled with rainbows of shimmering gowns. Each time I visited Doris, the two of us would climb the impossibly narrow and steep staircase to the top floor of her townhouse and lose ourselves for an hour or two amid her latest acquisitions and old favourites. For me this was where magic happened, brought alive by Doris's wonderful stories about the dresses and the women who wore them. Her eyes would sparkle as she recounted the adventures of 1920s flappers, Edwardian ladies at high tea, new brides, debutantes and pioneer women. And it is these stories that make her collection unique. Doris's collection is a spellbinding journey spanning two hundred and five years, from 1790 to 1995, and encompassing famous couturiers like Lucile, Madeline Vionnet, Dior, Galanos and Jean Muir, but

not one bit of it was purchased by her. They are all gifts from friends and acquaintances who either knew or had heard of her legendary hobby. As the Quaker saying goes, every piece was given in love and in trust. Doris was a Quaker her whole life, and while her passion for clothes and accessories was frowned upon as immodest and frivolous by the elders of her religion, her passion remained as irrepressible as her character. In the spirit of love and trust, Doris devoted the last few decades of her life to sharing her collection with the world. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Doris became well known throughout the east coast of the United States and beyond for her living fashion talks, which she would give in museums, college halls and even on cruises around the world, including the QEII, donating her speaking fees to the Quaker Society of Friends. Her audiences were invariably so enchanted by her shows that they would donate some of their own treasures to the collection, from a great aunts pair of Victorian dancing slippers to the latest designer gowns by Chanel and Dior. And so the collection continued to grow, more and more stories were added to share, until the baton was passed on to me. The treasures that lay before me were worth a fortune. Selling them would set me up for life, but enticing as that thought was, I could never consider such a thing or the idea of them being broken up by donation to museums or other collections. I still had no idea what to do with the collection, but somehow, like Doris, I would find a way to share it, and to keep it growing. Over the years, Doris had loaned me some of these gowns to wear, for a ball in Oxfordshire, a wedding in Monaco I had so many stories I could add too. Then, among the last of Doriss boxes, I found her catalogue notes - the notes of all her stories, of the dresses and the women who wore them. As I pored over Doriss words - her wit, wonder and wisdom - the true value of what I had been bequeathed hit home. This wasnt a mere collection of beautiful things, it was a collection of life. Womens lives. Tiny snapshots of our joys and disappointments, our entrances and exits triumphant and tragic - and sometimes tragically hilarious. And so, in the spirit of love and trust, I - and the inimitable Doris Darnell - share some of those moments with you now. Charlotte Smith Dearest Charlotte, You cannot imagine how happy I am to learn that you are thrilled to have me pass on to you my collection of clothing and accessories of other eras. Ever since I was a teenager, I have loved to dress up and I still do! Family and friends and friends of friends heard of the old trunk in my attic where I stored my dress-up clothes and started adding to my collection as they cleared out ancestral attics and wondered what to do with all that stuff. Thats when my collection really started to grow! Its been hard, if not impossible, for me to turn down any gifts, because I soon discovered that I was not just collecting dress-up clothes, but, in addition, each piece was a springboard to history. Each donor told me the story of the woman or man who wore the clothing, fascinating stories of other times, sometimes full of joy, other times grief, sometimes bitterness, other times heartache. In my opinion these stories make my clothing three dimensional and in some odd way the people who wore the clothing come alive again in the telling. I am giving you all the stories so that they can continue to be an extension of each outfit. You ask me what everything I am giving you is worth if you have to declare a value. I have a hard time with that question. I have never bought a single thing nor has anything been appraised. I am giving you a part of my life. I have been a trusted custodian and I am delighted that you see yourself in that same capacity. The contents of our home are insured for a modest amount with no mention of my clothing. If our house burned down and we lost everything, all of the stories, the glimpses of history, would have no value without the clothing. Money could not replace what I had lost, so why insure? If I had to come up with something, I would call my gift to you Old-fashioned clothing with stories about the people who wore the clothes. They have been treasured by me, but never evaluated. I had planned to leave everything to you in my will, dear godchild, but I am 87 years of age and feel now is the time. So here it is with my blessing! Love, love, Doris 2009 Charlotte Smith