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Grandmother's Secrets: The Ancient Rituals and Healing Power of Belly Dancing

Rosina-Fawzia Al-Rawi

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Come, sit next to me, says Grandmother. Take this chalk in your hand. Now draw a dot and concentrate all your energy into this one dot. It is the beginning and the end, the navel of the world. So Fawzia Al-Rawi describes her grandmother's first lesson about the ancient craft of Oriental dance. Grandmother's Secrets always circles back to this grandmother and this young girl, echoing the circular movements of the dance itself. Al-Rawi has written a strikingly graceful and original book that blends personal memoir with the history and theory of the dance known in the West as belly dancing. It is the story of a young Arab girl as she is initiated into womanhood. It is a history of the dance from the earliest times through the days of the Pharoahs, the Roman Empire, to the Arab world of the last three centuries. It is a personal investigation into the effects of the dance's movements on individual parts of the body and the whole psyche. It is a guide to the actual techniques of the dance for those who are inspired to put down the book and move. Al-Rawi conveys in this book not only the history and technique of grieving and mourning dances, pregnancy and birth dances, but the spirit of these age-old rituals, and their possibilities for healing and empowering women today. Rosina-Fawzia Al-Rawi grew up in Iraq and Lebanon and was educated at the Universities of Cairo and Vienna. She is an expert in Arabic studies and ethnology, and the author of Golden Sky, Red Earth: Women's Lives in Palestine. She lives in Jerusalem and Vienna, where she teaches belly dancing.

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