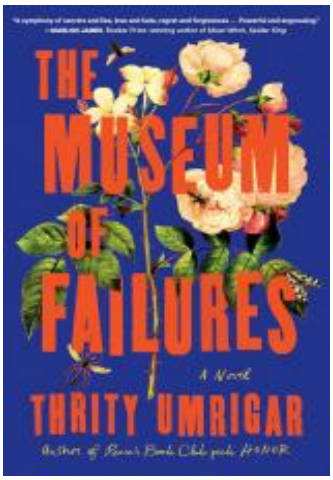
The Museum of Failures

by Thrity Umrigar



About the Book

An immersive story about family secrets and the power of forgiveness from the bestselling author of HONOR, a Reese?s Book Club pick.

When Remy Wadia left India for the United States, he carried his resentment of his cold and inscrutable mother with him and has kept his distance from her. Years later, he returns to Bombay, planning to adopt a baby from a young pregnant girl --- and to see his elderly mother again before it is too late. She is in the hospital, has stopped talking, and seems to have given up on life.

Struck with guilt for not realizing just how ill she had become, Remy devotes himself to helping her recover and return home. But one day in her apartment, he comes upon an old photograph that demands explanation. As shocking family secrets surface, Remy finds himself reevaluating his entire childhood and his relationship to his parents, just as he is on the cusp of becoming a parent himself. Can Remy learn to forgive others for their human frailties, or is he too wedded to his sorrow and anger over his parents? long-ago decisions?

Surprising, devastating, and ultimately a story of redemption and healing still possible between a mother and son, THE MUSEUM OF FAILURES is a tour de force from one of our most elegant storytellers about the mixed bag of love and regret. It is also, above all, a much-needed reminder that forgiveness comes from empathy for others.

Discussion Guide

1. Remy has so many advantages in his life in America. Why does he still feel divided about living there?

2. What do you think of Cyrus? decision? Do you understand it, or do you think it was selfish? Would you have been able to forgive a parent who made such a decision? As a parent, what kinds of information have you kept from your

children, and how does that make you feel?

3. How do you think Remy?s ignorance of his true past affected his personality?

4. What do you think would have happened had Shirin told Remy the truth? Why didn?t she? How do you feel about her choice? How did your feelings for her change as you heard her version of their past?

5. The flashback scenes are sometimes told from Shirin?s first-person perspective. Is this a successful strategy?

6. What did you make of Dina?s role in this? How did you end up feeling about her choices?

7. Why does Shirin side with Dina after the party?

8. What did you learn about the Parsi community as you read?

9. What do you think of Remy?s colleague greeting him daily with ?namaste? in a mock Indian accent and how Remy reacts to that? Remy struggles to find the right word for this daily provocation. It?s not exactly racism, or is it?

10. How did you feel about Remy?s school friends? What does he have in common with them, and is it enough?

11. Why does Remy think of Bombay as a Museum of Failures? How does his past color his view?

12. How do you feel about Remy?s motivations for the adoption? Is Kathy right in pressing him to adopt a child from India?

13. What do you make of the fact that it takes a trifecta of women --- Shirin, Dina and Hillary --- to give Remy what his heart desires?

14. Both of Remy?s parents advise him to not look back when he leaves India. Why? Is this good advice, given everything that he?s learned?

15. If you could add one more chapter, what would happen?

Author Bio

Thrity Umrigar is the bestselling author of such novels as HONOR, which was a Reese's Book Club pick, as well as three picture books and a memoir. Her books have been published in over 20 countries and in several languages. A former journalist, she has contributed to the *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and other newspapers. She is a recipient of the Nieman Fellowship to Harvard, and winner of the Cleveland Arts Prize, the Seth Rosenberg prize and a Lambda Literary award. She is currently a Distinguished University Professor of English at Case Western Reserve University.

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