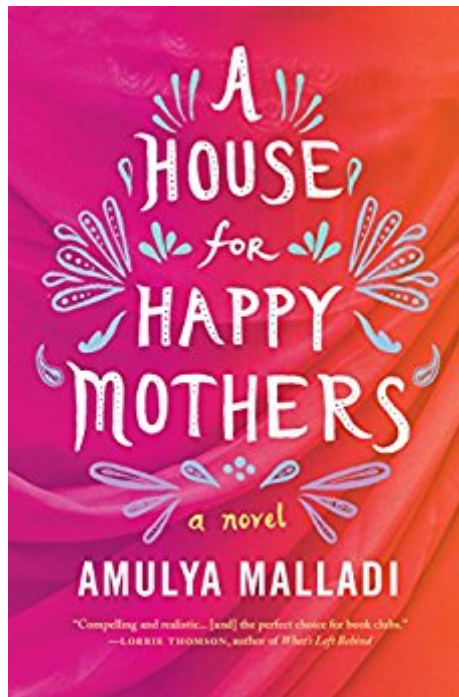


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A House For Happy Mothers: A Novel



Synopsis

A stunning new novelâfull of wit and warmthâfrom the bestselling author of *The Mango Season*. In trendy Silicon Valley, Priya has everything she needsâa loving husband, a career, and a homeâbut the one thing she wants most is the child sheâs unable to have. In a Southern Indian village, Asha doesnât have muchâraising two children in a tiny hut, she and her husband can barely keep a tin roof over their headsâbut she wants a better education for her gifted son. Pressured by her family, Asha reluctantly checks into the Happy Mothers House: a baby farm where she can rent her only assetâher wombâto a childless couple overseas. To the dismay of friends and family, Priya places her faith in a woman sheâs never met to make her dreams of motherhood come true. Together, the two women discover the best and the worst that Indiaâs rising surrogacy industry has to offer, bridging continents and cultures to bring a new life into the worldâand renewed hope to each other.

Book Information

File Size: 3754 KB

Print Length: 316 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1503933318

Publisher: Lake Union Publishing (June 1, 2016)

Publication Date: June 1, 2016

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B015XWK89M

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #3,787 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #69 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Literary Fiction > Women's Fiction #115 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Women's Fiction > Domestic Life #137 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Family Life

Customer Reviews

I picked this book as my Kindle First pick for May because I am an infertile woman who considered

surrogacy. The main characters in this book are Asha, an Indian woman who becomes a surrogate for an Indian-American woman from California named Priya. What I enjoyed most about this book is it tackled the difficulties of surrogacy and infertility from several different angles without becoming preachy and without trying to push the reader into agreeing with one side or the other. The characters aren't perfect and both are experiencing real pain for different reasons. One thing I liked about the book is that it made me examine my privilege and prejudices. One example of this was the actual "House for Happy Mothers" which was the name of the home that the surrogates were required to live in during most of their pregnancy. At first, you hear the description of the home as a really great place for the mothers. They get classes in computers and English, which should be helpful as many of the women have little education. There are yoga classes and massages, there are maids and food is provided. At first, I thought it sounded like a great spa where the women got pampered. The reality of the house is a lot different. The book slowly exposes the flaws in the system, a lot of which are intertwined with the culture. The women have to have money to pay for their daughter's dowry or their son's education. These seem like little things until you realize how poor these women are and how little they have. They are ultimately renting out their bodies in exchange for money because they will never be able to get this much money any other way.

I always look forward to the Kindle First releases each month because you just never know what kind of books will be released and I think that's half the fun of it. I chose *A House for Happy Mothers* because I figured it would be an interesting read about a surrogate woman living in India and the mother living in California, two different women from two different worlds who help each other out, but I ended up being pretty disappointed in this book and I'll explain why. Priya is in her thirties, married to a wonderful man and lives a good life in Silicon Valley, California. She wants to be a mother more than anything and after a few heartbreaking miscarriages and unsuccessful IVF attempts, she and Madhu, her husband, decide to try a surrogate in India. Asha is also in her thirties but she, her husband and two children live in poor conditions in India. Asha loves her family and would do anything for them which is why she reluctantly agrees to be a surrogate for Priya and Madhu when she wants to help give her family a better life. Everyone involved goes through the surrogate process and it's tough on all individuals. Priya and Madhu's baby is halfway across the world in another woman's womb and Asha has to pretend to feel nothing while the baby continues to grow inside her which proves more and more difficult as time goes on. I thought when I picked this book that it would be an emotional read because of the subject matter and I'll say that there was some emotion in it. I could feel Asha's tendencies to want to grow closer to the unborn fetus but she

has to pull back because ultimately, the baby isn't hers. I could also empathize with Priya over her desire to get pregnant and her frustration and disappointment when it doesn't happen for her.

I have mixed feelings on this book. It's not the type of book I would usually read but it was my favorite of the options for this month's Kindle First. I have read about India's medical tourism and surrogacy use so I was curious to learn more. The book jumps right in from the start and continues throughout alternating points of view between the woman wanting a child and her surrogate in India. Despite such a heavy topic the book itself is a fast read and moves quickly. As the book progressed it almost felt like the book was really missing the point of view of the Doctor in India to round out the story. Unfortunately I never felt very connected to either character because of the pacing. I'm not one for long flowery descriptions but this book really needed to spend more time developing the characters and show us about where they live and their lives for us to care about them. Priya is living in the Bay Area in Northern California and wants a child. We see large portions of her relationship with her husband and her infertility struggles as flashbacks so it didn't seem as emotional as if we went through them with her. We didn't go along for the ride with her as she struggled and ultimately decided on surrogacy. I'm from the Bay Area so I recognized the names of the cities that are occasionally referenced but she never adds any description at all to explain how Los Gatos is very different from Milpitas. It would have been helpful to have some idea about where they live and their circumstances since it is mentioned several times how different their circumstances can be from their friends. Later on in the story Priya is worrying about finances but we have no idea what that really means since it's never shown to us. Are they struggling to afford the high cost of living in the Bay Area?

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