



Secrets of Worry Dolls

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According to Mayan tradition, if you whisper your troubles to the Worry Dolls, they will do the worrying instead of you--therefore, it follows that Worry Dolls are the keepers of a great many secrets . . .

On the eve of the end of the world--according to the Mayan calendar--Mari Guarez Roselli's secrets are being unraveled by her daughter, Lu.

Lu's worry dolls are at-capacity as she tries to outrun the ghosts from her past--including loved ones stolen on 9/11--by traveling through her mother's homeland of Guatemala, to discover the painful reasons behind her own dysfunctional childhood, and why she must trust in the magic of the legend.

Secrets of Worry Dolls Details

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Author : Amy Impellizzeri

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From Reader Review Secrets of Worry Dolls for online ebook

Mary L says

didn't like this, it was depressing, I kept waiting for it not to be depressing, I couldn't even finish it, I was almost at the end but decided I didn't want to be more depressed.

Kate Moretti says

I adored Impellizzeri's first book, LEMONGRASS HOPE so I was anxious to get my hands on this one, too. It does not disappoint! Gorgeously written, this is a story about mothers and daughters, but with a twist. It touches on Guatemalan culture and customs, magic, 9/11, secrets and betrayals. You'll fly through the pages of this elegant story and think about it long afterwards.

Kerry says

Beautiful and unique. Gorgeously written. I thoroughly enjoyed the story of Mari and Lu. It's a perfect book club selection, especially for those who love stories that take the reader to exotic locales. I highly recommend.

(I received an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review.)

Sonja Yoerg says

In Secrets of Worry Dolls, Mari and Lu, mother and daughter, are separated by an abyss created by misgivings, long-held secrets and tragedies almost too great to bear. Every daughter will recognize the pull of self-discovery and every mother will feel the tension between who she must be as a parent and who she is destined to be as an autonomous person. Stirring, intricate and full of surprises, this story will propel readers forward through the twists of fortune in the lives of these two women, torn apart yet forever linked, not simply by fate and blood, but by true compassion—and a sprinkling of magic.

Terri Smith says

I found this book mesmerizing - couldn't put it down. Was introduced to this novel as a book club selection and I can't wait to discuss it! Once in awhile, a story comes along that is unique, full of of visualization, and feeling. I highly recommend this gem!

Sherrie says

Amy Impellizzeri is a truly gifted storyteller. I have a set of worry dolls, so I was intrigued from the moment I read the title. This story is about a mother (Mari) and daughter (Lu), the tragedies they have endured, and the secrets that help Lu understand who her mother really was and helps her move on with her own life. I cried, laughed, and felt every emotion these characters were experiencing. From their home in New York to Mari's home in Guatemala, this story takes you on a journey of love, loss, grief, hope, and truth. A very beautifully written story that I absolutely love and did not want to put down when the real world came calling. I highly recommend this book and cannot wait to read Lemongrass Hope.

Marisa says

SECRETS OF WORRY DOLLS is one of the most beautiful, heartbreaking, mystical and wonderful books I have ever read. Parts of this novel made me smile and more often, parts broke me in hysterical tears. This novel is part tribute to the NY Fire department, a reflection of 9/11 and a plane crash that was near to the author's heart and to those that lost and those that were heroes in that instance and part a slice of life and loving look at a complicated family relationship that falls between that of a mother and a daughter, two sisters and how complicated and intense grief can be.

Amy Impellizzeri has a way of taking a "normal" situation and adding in a taste of the mystic. In this novel the mystical portions are not as overtly presented as in her first (and equally fabulous) novel Lemongrass Hope they are there in forms of angels and the worry dolls themselves.

this novel felt so heartfelt and real. the characters spoke directly to me and their experiences were so profoundly told that as a reader my heart broke and healed with each of them.

I loved this novel more than I ever could express and would have to say it is in my top 25 of all time favorite books and in the top 5 of what ive read in the past 5 years.

loved, loved, loved it!!!!!!!!!!

Tina says

Oh how I struggled with even caring for Mari & Lu! Oh how I slugged through Part I of this story because I didn't care for Mari, and Lu just felt too tragic to me.

However, through Part II, I became intrigued to see where this story of mother & daughter was taking me as a reader. I started to wonder just how all of this tragedy would be resolved, when more tragedy seemed to loom.

Then, Part III unveils itself in what I have come to see as that fire Impellizzeri imparts in her writing. The last phase which culminates in such a crushingly endearing way.

Everything about being a mother, the love of & for my children, and now for my grandchildren, came to the surface in reading this last part. Tears flowed, folks, in such a cathartic way.

I'm in awe of Impellizzeri's ability to tell a story which slowly reveals, engages, and then captivates. Her craft is impeccable. Read her works!

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

This is a slow-simmering story, as we read about mother-and-daughter Mari and Lu, each from their own very distinct, if equally unreliable, perspectives.

These two women have been touched by tragedy, over and over. They both seem to survive, and yet, neither of them really does. And the tragedies they share drive them even further apart than the ones they experienced separately.

As the story begins, Lu is at the airport, wandering a bit because she chose not to take her scheduled flight to her mother's home country of Guatemala. Lu just wasn't ready for the trip, or for whatever secrets her mother expected to be revealed to her.

Lu was even less prepared to hear over the airport's speakers that the plane that she was supposed to be on had crashed with no survivors. And that the crash site was her own little community in New Jersey.

This was the second time that Lu had dodged fate. She was supposed to have been on a school trip on September 11, 2001 to see the World Trade Center. In the midst of a snit with her twin sister Rae, Lu decided not to go. So Lu was at school when the towers fell, and her sister died. She lost her father that day as well, he was a firefighter, a first responder, and he never made it out.

Lu might as well have lost her mother that day too. Mari retreated for long stretches of time in to the sleeping pills and wine that had always been her crutch. The only difference now was that Lu at least knew what drove her mother to self-medicate her pain and loss.

When Lu comes back from the airport, she discovers that she is the only member of her family left behind, as tragedy has struck again. Her mother is in a coma as a result of the plane crash. And her mother is pregnant.

From this point we view the story from two diverging viewpoints. With Lu, we see her childhood and young adulthood as she remembers them, and we see Lu in the present, coping with the decisions that must be made about the care of not only her mother, but of her unborn brother or sister. And we see her finally take the trip that her mother meant her to take, the trip to discover the truth about Mari's past.

But we also view that past from Mari's perspective. Within the depths of her coma, she seems to be telling, at last, the true story of her life to her unborn child. And as the past merges with the present, the joys, the sorrows, and the regrets are finally laid bare.

Escape Rating B: This story takes a while to go from a simmer to a boil. It feels as if the first two thirds are set up, and the final third is the payoff. But it definitely does pay off marvelously in that last third. The story in the present is from Lu's perspective, and for a lot of the book, she is just barely treading water. Her life seems to have been on hold since 9/11. She can't seem to let herself live. She can't even manage to let herself leave the island community of Rock Harbor that both shelters and imprisons her.

There are so many things that Lu doesn't know, and so much that she doesn't want to tell herself.

But Mari is an even more unreliable narrator. She has been hiding the facts of her early life from Lu, and also from herself. There is too much in the past that she hasn't wanted to face – which has not kept that past from haunting her life.

There's also an element of magical realism in the way that this story works. After all, how are we reading Mari's perspective? She is in a coma in the present throughout the entirety of this book. And yet, it feels right that we learn about her in her own voice.

The story revolves around choices, the different choices that women make, and the different choices that are available to them. So much of what went wrong in Mari's life revolves around her choices and the choices of those around her. Lu seems to be trying to avoid making choices, until she finally realizes that she has to face up to them. In the end, she makes the choice that is right for her, and after having lived through her story, we feel it with her.

Camille Maio says

Kudos to the author for really pulling me into the story right away. I loved the cultural pulls to a country I've never been to - Guatemala, the tragedies surrounding 9/11, and a mother-daughter story that I'll remember for a long time.

DJ Sakata says

Favorite Quotes:

Missed chances, secrets and regrets. When the end of the world does arrive, that's all that will be left. And cockroaches, of course.

I switched my major 8 times in college... my college advisor said that I had 'broken the record for indecisiveness among co-eds.' I thanked him before I realized he wasn't actually proud of me.

I felt grateful and relieved and hopeful and confused and sad. Which is kind of the story of my life.

I hate that no one would describe me as strong anymore. I'm so disappointed in myself – people just meeting me now would describe me as frail – I'm sure of it. And I wouldn't be arrogant enough to disagree with them. They would be right. But my question is: When did I become frail? When did I stop being an orchid – beautiful and hearty and rare? When was that moment?

We never really had a chance – my mother and I. It wasn't my fault. It wasn't hers either... Losing her isn't the hard part. The hard part is knowing now why, and not being able to tell her I forgive her.

My Review:

I vacillated in deciding how to rate this intense and complicated story as, at times, the characters frustrated

and greatly annoyed me, yet I still cared about them and remained invested and interested in their tale. I delayed in writing a review – something I seldom do, to process the complex piece in total. After considering the consistent superior quality of the writing, I determined this work more than deserved a full set of five shiny stars. Ms. Impellizzeri's writing was relevant, highly emotive, and vividly descriptive. She placed me securely in their heads... I was right there with them – seeing what they saw, feeling heavy with their anxiety, and gripped with their tension. Written from a dual POV of a mother and daughter with a difficult relationship and rocky family history, the story was laced with their inner musings, fears, dreads, regrets, guilt, and sorrowful memories. The narrative moved back and forth in time over 30 years as they each mined their histories, and I relished how the characters would suddenly gain a surprising insight from an observantly detailed memory that generally came unbidden. Both characters lived in a state of chronic anxiety and regret, yet they seldom spoke or acknowledged this with each other. Both were prone to pull to the negative, quick to jump to the worst-case scenario and then be practically immobilized and overcome with irrational panic. The plot was as complex as the characters with many twists and turns and blind alleys, but the ending was such a surprise and the relief brought a smile to my face, if only life events really did work themselves out that well. Amy Impellizzeri has been added to my ever growing list of uber-talented authors to follow.

Alison says

I enjoyed this book very much. At first the cover and name of the book caught my interest as I grew up in Guatemala and enjoy reading stories that take place there.

This is a story which takes us back and forth between, New York and Guatemala.

It is told mainly in two voices that of the mother Mari and her daughter Lu.

Mari Guarez originally from Guatemala, ends up in NY after having to leave her country, but never getting over what happened to her there. While in NY she meets her husband to be, a firefighter and together they have two twin daughters, Lu and Rae.

The book centers around what happened in Guatemala, on 9/11 in NYC and an airplane crash in the neighborhood where the family lives.

It is a story of regrets, longings, secrets, facing ones fears and trying to cope. A story that will pull at the heartstrings but also one that will make you want to shakes some sense into certain people.

There are a lot of good stories and people to read about as both Mari and Lu tell their stories. Mari about her life before leaving Guatemala and her choices after. And that of Lu's trip to Guatemala, to find out more about her mother and her own heritage.

Beautifully written and great descriptions. I look forward to reading something else by this author.

Kathleen says

So I'm not really a crier but I definitely cried on multiple occasions while reading this book. Told by dual narrators—Lu and her mother Mari—this intricately layered novel explores grief, guilt, and, ultimately, hope. It's really gorgeous and really heart-wrenching, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Gabriela says

This book is a balmy shower of love, finding oneself, coping with grief and finding the strength to keep going and living. I am so grateful to have found about Amy Impellizzeri's book from my bookstagram friends.

First of all, the writing style is soothing and real, these are the first impressions that come to my mind when thinking about this book. The worry dolls element is unique and adds complexity and depth to the story and even an element of supernatural. I really love such in a novel that is apparently about just life and common people.

The plot is beautiful woven, I really think the author is gifted and understands a lot about grief and love, and how these two come together.

Mari is kind, strong in a deep sense, psychologically messed up by everything that happened in her first 20 years of life. I had no idea about the atrocities committed during the civil war in Guatemala. I will probably read more on the historical part.

Lu is thoroughly affected by the lack of communication and affection during his childhood, though the twins had some really good years together with their parents. There was always the shadow of "sickness" from Mari's side, some unknown deep affection, a secret. The girls were too young to understand worries.

Tragedy after tragedy, leave their marks on Mari's psychological well-being and deeply affects the relationship with the remaining daughter Lu. There is a lot of learning and searching for the truth in this story, forgiving and realising the reasons behind a life of secrets.

I recommend yhis book whole-heartedly, to those who are in the mood for Women Fiction sprinkled with all of the above. The novel can be too much if one is not in the mood for sadness and characters searching for deeper meanings.

Orly Konig says

A beautifully written story about mothers and daughters, love and grief, secrets and regrets. Highly recommend!
