



Circa

Mariner Hardcover

By Devi S. Laska

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Introduction

For fans of *The Burning Girl* by Claire Messud and *Burnt Sugar* by Avni Doshi, a stunning, gut-punch of a novel that follows a young Indian American woman who, in the wake of tragedy, must navigate her family's expectations as she grapples with a complicated love and loss.

On the cusp of her eighteenth birthday, Heera and her best friends, siblings Marie and Marco, tease the fun out of life in Raleigh, North Carolina, with acts of rebellion and delinquency. They paint the town's water towers with red anarchy symbols and hang out at the local bus station to pickpocket money for their Great Escape to New York. But no matter how much Heera defies her strict upbringing, she's always avoided any real danger—until one devastating night changes everything.

In its wake, Marco reinvents himself as Crash and spends his days womanizing and burning through a string of jobs. Meanwhile, Heera's dream to go to college in New York is suddenly upended. Over the years, Heera's and Crash's paths cross and recross on a journey of dreams, desires, jealousies, and betrayals.

Heart-wrenching, darkly funny, and buoyed by gorgeous prose, *Circa* is at once an irresistible love story and a portrait of a young woman torn between duty and her own survival, between obligation and freedom.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do the costumes that Heera and her friends wear at the festival represent and how do they foreshadow the future? And what does her choice at Tiny's Costume Warehouse at the end signify?
 2. What is the significance of the name changes of Marco and Heera? What are Crash and Dia representing?
 3. How do Heera's and Marco's paths diverge? And what brings them back together?
 4. In Heera's marriage, how are cultural norms represented, and how are they broken? What are the expectations for her versus her husband Neel? Are the expectations fair, in your opinion?
 5. How do the secrets and lies play out in the novel? Is there ever a time to tell a "good lie?"
 6. How does the past inform the present for each character? How are the stakes raised by past experiences?
 7. How is marriage portrayed in this novel? Heera's? Marco's? Their parents?
 8. How do Heera and Marco work through their grief?
 9. How does the novel explore tragedy? How does the novel portray persistence?
 10. Heera reconciles with her family by marrying Neel. What do you think of her choices at the end?
 11. Here is a novel that explores the bonds of friendship and love. This novel also explores the tug between cultural obligation and desire to live as a free American. Which one would you choose? Why?
 12. The novel moves between North Carolina and New York. How do the characters' lives change with each setting? How do their dreams change?
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