



Legends of the Twins Cirpaci

Terry B. Murphy

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In the resonant memoir Legends of the Twins Cirpaci, a family is formed via adoption.

Terry B. Murphy's memoir *Legends of the Twins Cirpaci* is about the process of adopting and raising twins.

Murphy and her husband made the decision to pursue international adoption with joy and hope. They ended up adopting twins, Sammy and Emmy, from Romania. But getting to that point was a process filled with surprises and challenges—the first being the fact that the children were twins at all, as the couple was only expecting to adopt three-year-old Sammy.

After bringing Sammy to the United States, the couple spent several years working to reunite Emmy with her brother. They were challenged by the stoppage of international adoptions out of Romania. But they maintained optimism, love for each other, and their faith, propelling them through each difficulty as it came.

When the twins were six, they were brought together again. In the aftermath of their reunion, the book is devoted to the challenges of raising twins, including identifying and managing their health and behavior issues, bonding as a family, and finding the right fit in a school.

Heavy on themes around memories, including the children's memories and lack thereof, as well as the beautiful unreliability of Murphy's memories of her children's early years, the book includes random snapshot moments from across time. These recollections flow from one to the next, their pace modulated by occasional jumps and gaps. Still, there is unabashed enthusiasm in how the story is shared: ideas around legends and myths are simultaneously used to meditate on the capabilities of imperfect memories, and the limits of a single person's perspective. Such themes are augmented by chapter-opening epigraphs from *The Odyssey*.

In addition to its personal story, the book indulges in exploring broader but related topics, including about Romanian history, the ethics of international adoptions, and childhood traumas. Its photographs and newspaper clippings are a more personal touch that reflect the book's admitted biases and deep parental pride. Most touching is the tone of maternal love; the book brims with it. Murphy works to include the voices of the twins (who were grown up by the time of the book's composition) in the book, including via a sweet interview with them about their childhoods, and about how cross cultural adoption shaped their identities. Their voices, hope, and young adult successes result in a full circle sensibility by the book's end.

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MELISSA WUSKE (January 7, 2022)

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