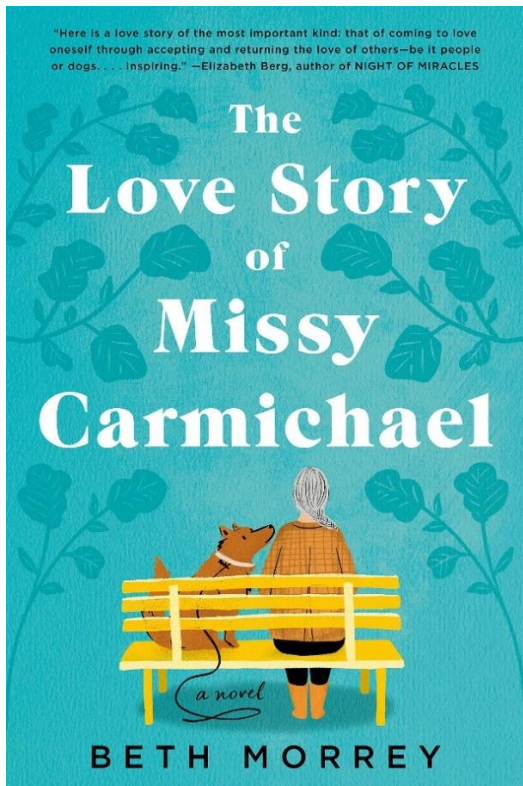


A Reader's Guide

The Love Story of Missy Carmichael

Author: Beth Morrey

Subject: Women's Fiction



Summary

The world has changed around seventy-nine-year-old librarian Millicent Carmichael, aka Missy. Though quick to admit that she often found her roles as a housewife and mother less than satisfying, Missy once led a bustling life driven by two children, an accomplished and celebrated husband, and a Classics degree from Cambridge. Now her husband is gone, her daughter is estranged after a shattering argument, and her son has moved to his wife's native Australia, taking Missy's beloved only grandchild half-a-world away. She spends her days sipping sherry, avoiding people, and rattling around in her oversized, under-decorated house waiting for...what exactly?

The last thing Missy expects is for two perfect strangers and one spirited dog named Bob to break through her prickly exterior and show Missy just how much love she still has to give. In short order, Missy finds herself in the jarring embrace of an eclectic community that simply won't take no for an answer--including a rambunctious mutt-on-loan whose unconditional love gives Missy a reason to re-enter the world one muddy paw print at a time. Filled with wry laughter and deep insights, *The Love Story of Missy Carmichael* is a coming-of-old story that shows us it's never too late to forgive yourself and, just as important, it's never too late to love.

Conversation Starters

1. Did you like Missy Carmichael when you first met her? Why or why not? How about at the end?
2. Is there someone in your life who has forced you to step out of your comfort zone? How did you feel about this person at first? Did your opinion change over time? What did you learn when you took a risk?
3. Were you surprised by the choice Missy makes in 1956? Why doesn't she tell Leo? How does this choice affect the rest of her life? What does she think about this choice now that she is eighty?
4. Missy thinks about the concept of oikos (p. 47) What does this concept mean? Do you feel oikos plays a role in your own life? Why or why not?
5. On p.41 Missy thinks "Sometimes the loneliness was overpowering. Not just the immediate loneliness of living in a huge house on my own, loved ones far away, but a more abstract, galactic isolation. What does she mean? Do you think there are different kinds of loneliness? Was there a time in your life when you felt this more abstract loneliness? What helped you to re-connect?
6. Why does Missy dread her 79th birthday? Do you agree with what she is saying that "age is just a number"? Why or why not? What do you think is different about looking for a fresh start in "old age"? How does Missy's story change the way you think about finding love?

About the Author

Beth Morrey's work has been published in the Cambridge and Oxford May Anthologies and shortlisted for the Grazia Orange First Chapter competition. She lives in London with her family and dog. *The Love Story of Missy Carmichael* is her debut.