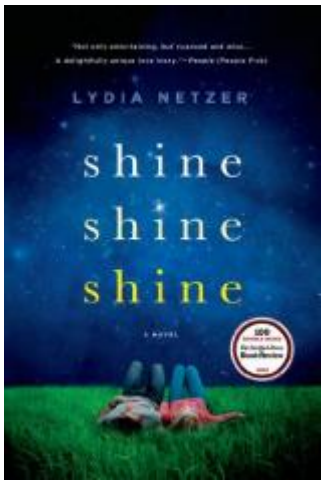
Shine Shine Shine

by Lydia Netzer



About the Book

When Maxon met Sunny, he was seven years, four months, and 18 days old. Or, he was 2693 rotations of the earth old. Maxon was different. Sunny was different. They were different together.

Now, 20 years later, they are married, and Sunny wants, more than anything, to be “normal.” She’s got the housewife thing down perfectly, but Maxon, a genius engineer, is on a NASA mission to the moon, programming robots for a new colony. Once they were two outcasts who found unlikely love in each other: a wondrous, strange relationship formed from urgent desire for connection. But now they’re parents to an autistic son. And Sunny is pregnant again. And her mother is dying in the hospital. Their marriage is on the brink of imploding, and they’re at each other’s throats with blame and fear. What exactly has gone wrong?

Sunny wishes Maxon would turn the rocket around and come straight-the-hell home.

When an accident in space puts the mission in peril, everything Sunny and Maxon have built hangs in the balance. Dark secrets, long-forgotten murders, and a blond wig all come tumbling to the light. And nothing will ever be the same.…

A debut of singular power and intelligence, SHINE SHINE SHINE is a unique love story, an adventure between worlds, and a stunning novel of love, death, and what it means to be human.

Discussion Guide

1. Is Emma a good mother?

2. What might Sunny's life have been like if she had never gotten pregnant, and therefore never felt the need to put on the wig?

3. Was Sunny culpable for Paul Mann's death?

4. Do you agree with Rache that everyone has their baldness, or do you think those perfect housewives actually exist?

5. Perhaps Maxon was better off without his dad, but do you think Sunny was negatively affected by growing up without a father?

6. If you wrote a letter to your child, to be read only after your death, what would it say?

7. The book suggests that raising any child is like programming a robot, with scripted replies, ritual behaviors, and reinforced responses. Do you agree?

8. Emma did not want Sunny to marry Maxon. Why? And was she right?

9. Do you think that Sunny seriously considered Les Weathers as a replacement for Maxon, if he should die?

10. Where would you prefer to live: the perfect house in a respectable neighborhood in a historic city, or a strange farmhouse in the wilds of an eccentric rural county?

11. What changes have you made to fit in to a new role you've taken on, whether it's parenthood, a new job, or a marriage?

12. Do you think that motherhood fundamentally changes a woman, or do you think it's possible to hold on to the person you were before kids?

13. Why did Emma bring Sunny back to America?

14. How is Maxon flawed as a husband? How is he a good spouse?

15. Could there be someone better for Maxon than Sunny?

16. In her worry that marrying Maxon would ruin Sunny, should Emma have wonder if marrying Sunny would be the best thing for him?

17. Is it Maxon's fault that Bubber is the way he is?

18. Did Sunny make the right decision in taking Bubber out of his special school and off his medications?

19. How does a woman's relationship with her mother change when she becomes a mother herself?

20. Sunny felt she had to let her mother's ship fall past the horizon before her own could set sail. Can a woman truly become "the mother" while her own mother is alive?

21. Although Sunny's mother Emma was the epitome of acceptance, and encouraged her to go without a wig while she was growing up, why do you think Sunny started wearing them?

22. Why did Emma turn her husband in to the communists when they lived in Burma, and was this revelation necessary for the plot and coherence of the book?

23. In pages 291-293 of the book, during Sunny's labor with Bubber, she at first thinks she overhears her mother and Maxon having a conversation about Maxon going to the moon, but later Sunny thinks she must have made up the conversation. Do you think this conversation did occur? Why or why not? If you think it did occur what do you think motivated Sunny's mother to make the suggestion to Maxon that he complete his mission to the moon?

24. How is Sunny's decision to abandon her wig after her car accident related to her decision to take Bubber off of his medication?

Author Bio

Lydia Netzer was born in Detroit and educated in the Midwest. She lives in Virginia with her two home-schooled children and mathmaking husband. When she isn't working as a book doctor, blogging, or drafting her second novel, she writes songs and plays guitar in a rock band.

Critical Praise

"Netzer deftly illuminates the bonds that transcend shortcomings and tragedy. Characterized by finely textured emotions and dramatic storytelling, Netzer's world will draw readers happily into its orbit."
—Publisher's Weekly

“A funny, compelling love story from the freshest voice I’ve heard in years. *Shine Shine Shine* picked me up and left me changed in ways I never expected. Intelligent, emotional, and relentlessly new, Netzer answers questions you didn't know you were already asking and delivers an unforgettable take on what it means to love, to be a mother, and to be human.” —**Sara Gruen**, *#1 New York Times* bestselling author of*Water for Elephants* and *Ape House*

“From the icy dead surface of the moon to the hot center of the human heart, Lydia Netzer's debut novel takes you on a journey that will rattle your bones. Part science fiction, part pure magic of the human kind, Netzer makes a book that is wholly her own, and endlessly fascinating. At every turn, you think she cannot astonish you again, and then she does it one more time. And then again and again and again. This is an astounding first novel by a writer who is unique in her immense gifts.” —**Robert Goolrick**, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *A Reliable Wife*

"Creating one of the most compelling protagonists I’ve read in a long time, Lydia Netzer manages to capture the outsider in each of us. Whether looking at the moon, a child, the suburban landscape, or the face in the mirror, Netzer shows us something we’ve never seen before, something we thought we knew. A beautifully written story where the exception proves the rule: the things that seem to divide us are, ultimately, the very things that unite us."

—**Brunonia Barry**, *New York Ti*mes bestselling author of *The Lace Reader* and *The Map of True Places*.

“A perfectly structured gem of a book that held me spellbound as I unraveled the twisted histories of this unconventional family. You’ve never read anything like it, and yet Sunny’s story is every woman’s story. We are all outsiders, all alone in space, all trying so hard to find a place called home. I loved this book.” —**Joshilyn Jackson**,*New York Times* bestselling author of *gods in Alabama* and *Backseat Saints*

“An astronaut, an autistic child, a bald woman and a meteor collide, churning up the ground around a couple of decades-old murders. Life and death intersect in this wildly inventive love story I will be talking about and thinking about for years to come. If Yann Martel and Mary Gaitskill had a literary baby, it would look a lot like Lydia Netzer.” —**Karen Abbott**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Sin in the Second City*and *American Rose*

Shine Shine Shine
by Lydia Netzer

Publication Date: July 2, 2013
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin
ISBN-10: 1250020417
ISBN-13: 9781250020413