

Under the Visible Life

By Kim Echlin

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Fatherless Katherine carries the stigma of her mixed-race background through an era that is hostile to her and all she represents. It is only through music that she finds the freedom to temporarily escape and dream of a better life for herself, nurturing this hard-won refuge throughout the vagaries of unexpected motherhood and an absent husband, and relying on her talent to build a future for her family.

Orphaned Mahsa also grows up in the shadow of loss, sent to relatives in Pakistan after the death of her parents. Struggling to break free, she escapes to Montreal, leaving behind her first love, Kamal. But the threads of her past are not so easily severed, and she finds herself forced into an arranged marriage. For Mahsa, too, music becomes her solace and allows her to escape from her oppressive circumstances.

When Katherine and Mahsa meet, they find in each other a kindred spirit as well as a musical equal, and their lives are changed irrevocably. Together, they inspire and support one another, fusing together their cultures, their joys, and their losses—just as they collaborate musically in the language of free-form, improvisational jazz.

Under the Visible Life takes readers from the bustling harbour of Karachi to the palpable political tension on the streets of 1970s Montreal to the smoky jazz clubs of New York City. Deeply affecting, vividly rendered, and sweeping in scope, it is also an exploration of the hearts of two unforgettable women: a meditation on how hope can remain alive in the darkest of times when we have someone with whom to share our burdens.

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Editorial Review

Review
“I lost count of how many times I was caught off-guard by the poignancy of this novel . . . This story of motherhood and friendship, anchored by two extraordinary heroines, will stay with me for a long time.”**—Khaled Hosseini, author of *The Kite Runner***

“Jazz is blood, bone and spirit in Kim Echlin's wonderful novel. *Under the Visible Life* is as heady and unexpected as a Coltrane riff, as lush as life itself.”**—Esi Edugyan, author of *Half-Blood Blues***

“[*Under the Visible Life*] is a love song to music itself.”—***The Globe and Mail***

“Engrossing . . . the novel carries readers through an impressive cavalcade of personal and societal changes. Echlin is that rare writer who can evoke the joy of playing and listening to music without resorting to overly abstract language or fussy metaphors.”***—Toronto Star***

“Echlin's musical novel hits the right notes . . . Echlin is a wonderful storyteller, and has created two strong characters who have to battle far too many obstacles trying to live fulfilling lives.”—***Winnipeg Free Press***

“Echlin . . . delivers a clinic on how to conjure emotions readers didn't even know they had. Not since *The Diviners* has a Canadian novel explored the complex, messy, and sacrificial nature of creative self-actualization with such skill . . . Readers will revel in every charged scene, every breathtaking reversal, every hard-earned moment of wisdom that this devastating novel delivers . . . This book is nothing short of a masterpiece.”—***Quill & Quire*** **(starred review)**

“[Echlin's] talent is on full display in this lyrical, exciting story . . . Echlin's excellent novel introduces two complex women who sometimes succeed and sometimes suffer, and whose stories are moving from start to finish.”—***Publishers Weekly*** **(starred review)**

“Her prose is always arresting: plain and vigorous, laconic and sensual, a language of resistance, dreaming of female freedom.”—***The Independent***

“The sweaty clubs are vividly evoked, the music almost rising off the page. Rather than a study of stardom, the novel turns a spotlight on the jobbing players, the ranks of professional musicians who gamely keep on swinging but who never get the big breaks. It’s all the more effective – and poignant – for that.”—***The Guardian***

About the Author
Award-winning author Kim Echlin lives in Toronto. She is the author of *Elephant Winter* and *Dagmar’s Daughter*, and her third novel, *The Disappeared*, was nominated for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and won the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award for Fiction. Her most recent novel is *Under the Visible Life*.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daryl Thurmond:

In this 21st millennium, people become competitive in most way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make them survives, being in the middle of the actual crowded place and notice through surrounding. One thing that oftentimes many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a reserve your ability to survive raise then having chance to stay than other is high. For yourself who want to start reading a new book, we give you this kind of Under the Visible Life book as basic and daily reading publication. Why, because this book is greater than just a book.

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