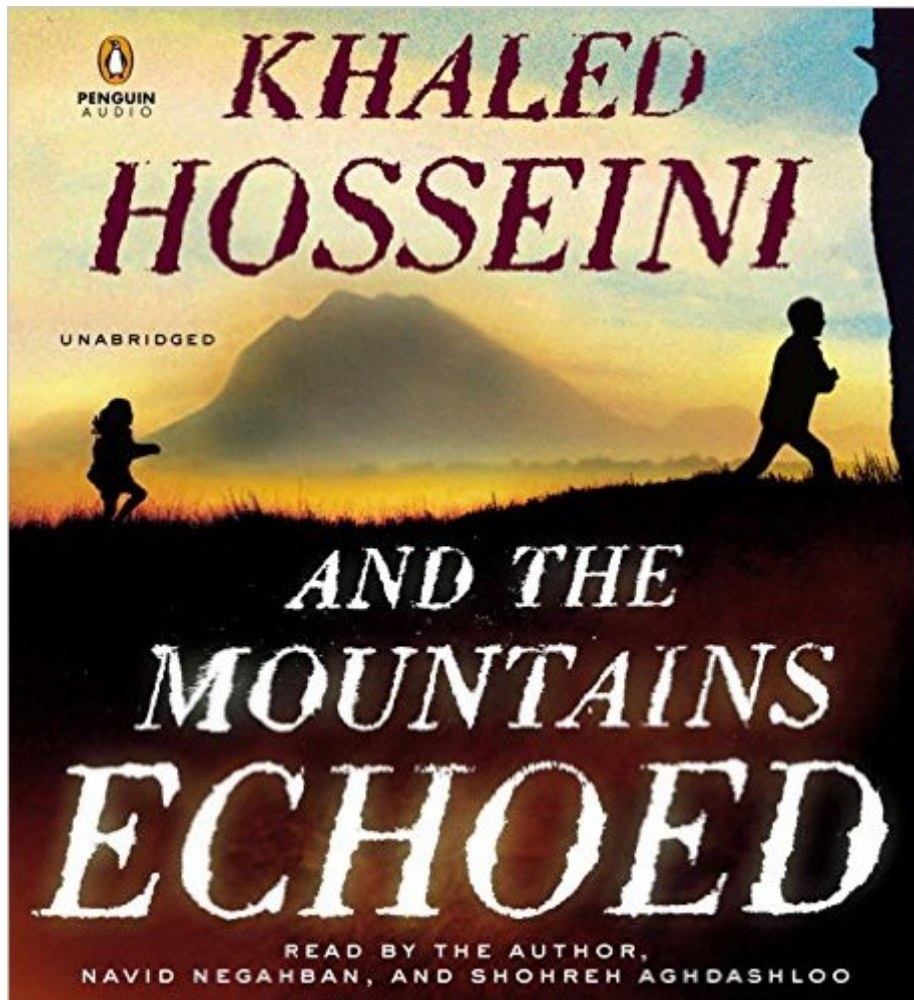


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And The Mountains Echoed



Synopsis

On May 21, 2013, the new novel from Khaled HosseiniKhaled Hosseini, the #1 New York Times-bestselling author of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, has written a new novel about how we love, how we take care of one another, and how the choices we make resonate through generations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Summary: Pari and Abdullah are as close as siblings can be. Abdullah loves his sister so much, she is almost his daughter. So when the powers that be tear them apart, both of their lives are irrevocably changed. Years down the road we meet friends, doctors, chauffeurs, people whose lives are changed through this one event. What unfolds is a story that crosses oceans, teaching us what it means to love and care.Review: Another hit from Khaled Hosseini! Truly, this man knows how to weave a story. And the Mountains Echoed is a less brutal novel than *Kite Runner* or *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, but the story is no less meaningful nor less heartbreaking. Each chapter is written from the POV from a different character, and one chapter actually has two different POVs intertwined. Each POV is a different character's journey, but they are all related to each other.Unlike the other two novels, this book does not center around regional conflicts. Hosseini delicately tells us stories of individuals who are going through real life journeys. They love, they die. They acquire dream jobs, and real life illnesses. The story is about individuals and how they relate to one another. Sure, the Taliban and the Russians are mentioned but only as a part of the setting. And since the story takes place in four different countries, we see a vast array of settings that help give more

richness to the story. One of the major themes of this novel is appearance vs. reality. The beautiful are empty, the morally repugnant are heroes. What may seem like a good idea at the time is actually the worst idea. The characters are also morally ambiguous, much like the main character in *Kite Runner*.

This novel opens with a parable told by a father to his son, about another father who is forced to give up his young son to a monster, a *div*. When the father later confronts the *div* and discovers that his son has been well taken care of and is leading a happy life, the *div* asks the father to make a choice: take his son home or leave him to his happy life. Realizing that to take his son would fill the void in his own heart but ruin his son's life, he leaves the son. Recognizing the father's selflessness, the *div* rewards him by erasing the memory of his son. Despite this "gift," the father is left with a hole in his soul that is never filled. This opening parable is reflected in the rest of the interconnected stories in this novel, all of which involve, to some degree, characters presented with the same choice. Although the main narrative involves the bond between a brother and sister, this novel is actually much broader in scope than a story of siblings. The common thread, in my mind, is the effect of breaking a bond between two family members or close friends. When these bonds are broken, often voluntarily and for the good of one of the pair and the detriment of the other, the characters are forced to view the world in a new light. As young Abdullah notes shortly before losing his sister, he "felt the true vastness of the desert, and the world, for the first time. How easily a person could lose his way in it." Of course, every broken bond leaves a hole in the lives of the characters, ones they attempt to fill, often with other people. As one mother explains, she needs her daughter to "fill these holes inside me." Some succeed in filling these voids, while others are left with gaping holes that will never be filled.

The trouble with having Khaled Hosseini as your name and writing as your profession is that no matter how hard you try, your works will always be compared to your piece de resistance, *The Kite Runner*. While the debut novel of Hosseini lit the literary circuits on fire and was quickly adapted to a namesake film too, the new work by him fails to create the magic again. I have gone through the work twice in a span of eight days, the second time in a bid to search for the all important connection that I so lovingly made with the characters in *The Kite Runner*, but alas, there was none to be. Hosseini keeps the base intact as his earlier two novels- War torn Afghanistan, the protagonist(s)' lives changing on account of the tumult etc. where the novel fails, and a momentous failure it is, is that the author fails to keep the emotional crescendo sustained. The novel works

brilliantly towards the middle, where the reader misses a heartbeat or two on Pari discovering her brother, again. But the crescendo quickly turns flat, a cola without fizz, a plateau and never works up again. As I write this, I also realise that in the true sense, there are no protagonists or antagonists - there are too many characters. Just too many. Unlike *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which had focus on characters and developed them in flesh and bone, the current work burdens itself with creation of unnecessary characters, reeling across three generations. A lot of irrelevant time is spent on characters like Markos, Thalia etc. and at the risk of sounding brusque, I dare say that this seems like an attempt to add volume to the work, sans real content. The real heroes are muddled in page after page of unnecessary description of decrepit characters, and it shows.

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