



And the Mountains Echoed

Khaled Hosseini

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So, then. You want a story and I will tell you one...Afghanistan, 1952. Abdullah and his sister Pari live with their father and stepmother in the small village of Shadbagh. Their father, Saboor, is constantly in search of work and they struggle together through poverty and brutal winters. To Abdullah, Pari - as beautiful and sweet-natured as the fairy for which she was named - is everything. More like a parent than a brother, Abdullah will do anything for her, even trading his only pair of shoes for a feather for her treasured collection. Each night they sleep together in their cot, their heads touching, their limbs tangled. One day the siblings journey across the desert to Kabul with their father. Pari and Abdullah have no sense of the fate that awaits them there, for the event which unfolds will tear their lives apart; sometimes a finger must be cut to save the hand. Crossing generations and continents, moving from Kabul, to Paris, to San Francisco, to the Greek island of Tinos, with profound wisdom, depth, insight and compassion, Khaled Hosseini writes about the bonds that define us and shape our lives, the ways in which we help our loved ones in need, how the choices we make resonate through history and how we are often surprised by the people closest to us.

And the Mountains Echoed Details

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Author : Khaled Hosseini

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From Reader Review *And the Mountains Echoed* for online ebook

Will Byrnes says

The tale of how my father lost his sister was as familiar to me as the stories my mother had told me of the Prophet, tales I would learn again later when my parents would enroll me in Sunday school at a mosque in Hayward. Still, despite the familiarity, each night I asked to hear Pari's story again, caught in the pull of its gravity. Maybe it was simply because we shared a name. Maybe that was why I sensed a connection between us, dim, enfolded in mystery, real nonetheless. But it was more than that. I felt touched by her, like I too had been marked by what had happened to her. We were interlocked, I sensed, through some unseen order in ways I couldn't wholly understand, linked beyond our names, beyond familial ties, as if, together, we completed a puzzle. I felt certain that if I listened closely enough to her story, I would discover something revealed about myself.

In the opening chapter of *And the Mountains Echoed*, a poor father tells his children a story. A monster ravished a town until a child was offered to appease him. In order to save the rest of his family and the town, a father sacrifices his favorite child to the monster. Years later, unable to recover from the sorrow of this decision, the father scales a mountain to reach the monster's fortress, seeking to bring his son home. But, finding that the boy is happy, well-fed, clothed and educated, he reconsiders. In this story is the core of the tales to come. Hosseini writes of the bond between parents and children, and the sacrifices some parents make to see that their children are well looked after. Does the benefit of a more comfortable home, a richer material upbringing, outweigh the loss of that natural parent-child experience? The theme of parenting, with complications well beyond the keep-or-send-away element, permeates.

The son of a wealthy local big-shot comes to realize that his comforts come at the expense of others. A massively scarred girl is left by her mother in the care of someone who is probably better suited to raise her. A young woman sacrifices years of her life to take care of an ailing parent. A war-ravaged child is taken in by one of her caregivers.

I am forever drawn to family as a recurring central theme of my writing. My earlier novels were at heart tales of fatherhood and motherhood. My new novel is a multi-generational family story as well, this time revolving around brothers and sisters, and the ways in which they love, wound, betray, honor, and sacrifice for each other.

There are sibling issues galore here. An ugly duckling twin gets revenge on the favored twin, but takes on a considerable burden. A brother and sister who were very close, are torn apart at an early age, and must cope with the absence, of that missing other part of themselves. Friendships that seem more like sibling-hood sprout like poppies in Helmand. A Greek boy is joined by the daughter of his mother's best friend. She remains longer than expected. A fast, but fragile friendship forms between a rich boy in Afghanistan and the son of a poor man.

The cast here is international, as is the selection of settings. Hosseini was born in Kabul, but, as his father was an ambassador, he was exposed to the wider world. Dad was posted in Paris when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Hosseini's time in France informs the parts of the book that are set there. Eventually his family immigrated to the USA, taking up residence in California, another site in the novel. He has visited his homeland since growing up in the West, like émigrés we meet in these pages. One Afghani emigrant struggles with the tension between remaining connected to his homeland, in a very concrete way, or

maintaining his separation. How much responsibility for dealing with Afghanistan's problems lies with those who have moved away?

Hosseini, best-selling author of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* returns us to a world, or rather worlds that we have seen before, a harsh Afghanistan as the emotional and table-setting core, and western locales in which are echoed the events of the old world.

...when you grow up in a Third World country, you know, poverty and affluence are juxtaposed. It's literally next door -- you don't have to go to another zip code. It's right there when you walk out in the street, and there are beggars and so on and so forth. So it becomes part of your life, and you can either not, just not reflect on it, but I must have, because I remember my stories always had to do with these things. There was always some guy who came from a very affluent background and some person who came from a much less privileged background, and their lives collided in some way, and tragedy would ensue inevitably. I mean, sort of a recurring theme in my stories

One of the points Hosseini makes here is the commonality of East and West, despite outward differences. He mirrors many of his characters' experiences. People sacrifice themselves to care for those in need of help in both places. Parents are no less stressed in the West than in the East in terms of struggling with decisions about their children. Pain is too much for some in both worlds. In both worlds there are characters who cannot face their futures and opt out. In both worlds young people sacrifice themselves to care for others. In both worlds there are characters who are seriously damaged physically and must cope with adapting to worlds that value beauty or at the very least normalcy. In both worlds parents give up their children. We really are the same beneath our cultures and histories.

I do not have a comparative character count here, but it was my sense that this was a larger book than his first two. Each of those focused mostly on a smaller group of actors. This time it seemed there was more of an ensemble cast, in multiple stories. The links between some of the elements were a bit tenuous, as if a short story that was lying around was modified enough to serve a purpose in this larger tale and inserted. It is a large landscape and I felt that on occasion we wandered too long away from some of the primary characters, maybe lost some parts of their lives. To compensate for this, when we get back to them, we are offered a reader's digest condensed report of what has happened since last we checked in. This created a bit of distance.

That said, there is vast world of feeling here. Not only the agony of parents who feel they must give up their children, but the pain of other sundered familial connections as well. There are deep scars of guilt for terrible acts, and the pain of love denied. There is also joy in finding a kind of love where hope was slight, in reconnecting with those long lost, with saving and being saved. The echoes in the mountains are the sounds of tears, of both anguish and joy, universal, penetrating, human. Listen.

This review is cross-posted at Coot's Reviews

=====EXTRA STUFF

12/3/13 - The results are in and *And the Mountains Echoed* was voted the Goodreads Choice Award winner for fiction

Nenette says

A pebble thrown in a pool of water creates ripples; never just one, but countless of them. This is what this story is all about. An uncle's suggestion led to a father's decision, and there was no stopping what happened afterwards. The ripples were so vast it looked almost impossible to trace back to the central plop that the pebble created; but secrets are meant to be revealed, truths are meant to be uncovered. The story played out through many decades in at least five countries among a myriad of characters, and yet not once did I feel lost or confused while reading it. I feel for Abdullah and Pari, and I am glad that somehow there was redemption for them at the end, even if one can say that it was not too complete because of Abdullah's condition.

Another masterpiece from Mr. Hosseini, and may I say that in this third novel, he put the notch for himself much higher that it should be an exciting wait for the next one.

Natalie says

Date I finished this book: 06/09/2013

Date I was ready to review this book: Never

Unfortunately, I have to review it because it is due back to the library tomorrow, so here comes my completely insufficient review.

This book is by Khaled Hosseini.

Really, what more is there to say? I knew it would be wonderful.

I have to admit that the problem I ran into was that I was comparing it to his previous two books too often. And let's face it, they were *amazing*. And this book is incredible in its own right, too, but it's not to be compared. So, I tried to view this as its own book (which it most certainly is) and forget I had ever read the other two and that this was the first time I was experiencing Hosseini.

I'm not going to recap. It would be pretty difficult to not give anything away. There are many stories within this one story. The characters are intertwined, although many will never realize that they are. The story comes full circle, but this is Mr. Khaled Hosseini, so I didn't expect a full blown happy ending. And ***SPOILER ALERT***, I didn't really get one.

None of this business going on:

Although, I will say that maybe Disney and Hosseini are of one mind. Or at least Sebastian and Hosseini:

Yes it is, Sebastian. Yes it is.

What have I learned from this book?

We (the human race) have (mostly) good intentions. But we (mostly) do not follow through. We soothe

ourselves. We convince ourselves. We justify our actions. Or our lack of actions. We have an "out of sight, out of mind" way of thinking. It's a human flaw. And sometimes it has consequences that we cannot comprehend. Consequences that we may never realize because, hey, it's out of sight. Oh sure. Just like him to point out WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME! Not that I'm taking it personally...

One thing anyone who has read my other reviews should know is that I frequently complain about:

1. Not making me care about the characters enough
2. Not being able to envision the surroundings - the people, the buildings, the culture, etc.

I don't experience this problem with this book. The writing is so rich that I felt like I was there. My emotions reflected the emotions of the characters. I was *invested*.

I am not ashamed to admit that I went back to chewing on my nails while reading this - a habit I gave up over a *decade* ago.

SOMETHING BAD IS GOING TO HAPPEN!!!

You would think this was an edge-of-the-seat suspense novel. It's not. But it is heartbreaking. I bet I cried no less than ten times. Granted, I cried when they showed a bear on the local news that they rescued from a telephone pole, so I cry more than the average bear (ha. ha. ha.). But it was still really heartbreaking...over and over and over because there were so many intertwined stories.

I really enjoyed this book. I didn't love it in the same way I loved the previous two, but I loved it still. And I will give you a parting paragraph that is an example of the beautiful writing that makes me savor every word of this book:

Now and then, when she turned to tap ash into a saucer, I stole a quick glance at the red polish on her toenails, at the gold-tinged sheen of her shaved calves, the high arch of her foot, and always at her full, perfectly shaped breasts. There were men walking this earth, I marveled, who had touched those breasts and kissed them as they had made love to her. What was left to do in life once you had done that? Where did a man go next once he'd stood at the world's summit?

I just finished this. I am emotionally *drained*. Review coming soon.

04/18/2013

Did...did I just read that there is a giveaway for this? SHUT THE FRONT DOOR!

Too much?

Ok, I'll settle for cute and hope for the best. ;)

WHAT?! A new book by Khaled Hosseini? I can't...I just can't....I can't even think straight right now
BECAUSEOHMYGOODNESSIAMSOSESOSOSOSOSOEXCIIIIIIIIITED!!!!!!!!!!

I CAN'T WAIT!!

Have I mentioned how EXCITED I AM!?

I am so excited!

Raghad says

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Sarah says

What did I think? I don't know exactly. Like his two other books, Hosseini is an excellent storyteller. He's great with words and produces images that flow like poetry. The story is touching, emotional and speaks of life's hardships and the difficult choices one must make. Deeper than that, it speaks of how the choices you make now may have a ripple effect- or echo- over time. If you don't happen to shed a tear at some point while reading, you're heartless. He captures your emotions from the very first page and he does this very well, as he did in his other novels. You find yourself transported to 1950's Afghanistan where you smile, cry, and feel pity right alongside the unfortunate characters in this book. But Hosseini tried something different with "And The Mountains Echoed" and that was incorporating a slew of different characters as opposed to just two, like he did in his last two books, and I don't know if it worked out too well. Some people could have been mentioned in passing, or not even at all, as opposed to dedicating whole chapters to them, such as Markos and Thalia's story. Also the Bashiri cousins seemed unnecessary. Even though these characters were unique in their own way and provided food for thought regarding their plights, I still felt like these chapters dragged on when I was more concerned about what was happening with the others. It was like Hosseini deliberately sucked us in, made us get cozy with Saboor and his family just to rip them away from us and branch off onto some completely different writing exercise. As the reader, I just couldn't reshape my feelings to feel another strong connection to these new characters. Regarding the writing style, the book spanned over several generations and then spoke in the first person from the point of view of different characters from the next generation which got confusing at first, especially as he jumps between past and present and even geographical locations. Furthermore, he squeezed in yet another subplot towards the end of the book (with Iqbal and the commander) and it came off sounding short and incomplete. I feel like the author could have dedicated more pages developing and telling the story of the characters we already got to know and love in the beginning, rather than introducing new, unnecessary ones halfway through the book. This format Hosseini used left a lot of open ends and a kind of longing, leaving the reader unsatisfied.

Not my favorite out of the three but still, somehow, an enjoyable read.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

2.5 Stars

Oh that felt like blasphemy to type, but I've gotta be honest here. I loved *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, but Hosseini just missed the mark with this one.

The story begins with a father telling his children a fable of an evil div (monster) who roamed various villages and would choose a home at random. Said home would have to sacrifice one of their children, or the div would kill as many as he pleased. The father in the story is beside himself with the idea of offering one of his children to be slaughtered. That tale seems so fitting, because I can picture Hosseini at the editing table going through the same process. However, rather than opting to cull one (or a few) of the massive amounts of characters/stories in this book that were barely connected – he opted to keep them all. Unfortunately, that meant the ultimate sacrifice was my enjoyment. Too many characters – many with stories not long enough to actually to get invested in their lives.

I'm sad that I had to type that.

Fabian says

One terrific novel. The page-turning literary novel is alive & well in the 2010's!

The intersecting stories are all pearls of a deep maudlin color mauve. Blue, frozen stories which, because of their humanity, resound like the echoes of mountains. (An interesting motif regarding the immobility of singular fates, &/or the full circle reconciliation with the past.)

Wholeheartedly recommended to me by my pal Segen, & I in turn also wanna do the same.

Morgan says

Every so often a book comes around that rocks you to your core. It makes you cry, laugh, think, feel and dream so intensely that when it is over you wonder where that life has gone. The characters are your friends and you realize you should probably call them because you haven't heard from them in awhile and you wonder what is going on in their lives. Then you remember that they aren't real and that seems impossible because they had a whole life that you were living for as long as you could hold off racing to the end of the book to find out what happened. As a reader I wait for books like this to come out. Sometimes its months or years before I find one. And *the Mountains Echoed* is one of those books. The writing is incredible, the characters are memorable and the story is woven together with extreme care. Simply amazing. I received this book as a first reads book.

Bobi Tychynski says

Why do people rate books before reading them? This skews the ratings and I wish people wouldn't do so...

This was my most anticipated book of all time. I couldn't wait to read and and naturally was a bit let down. My least favorite of his three.

I found the voice in some of the chapters a bit awkward.

The characters were interesting and well developed for the most part. I didn't like how the author chose to weave everything together.

There were some very well done parts -some moments that were very beautiful. I'm glad I read this but won't anticipate the next book nearly as much although I will definitely read the next one hoping to experience something powerful.

Pushkar Singh says

And The Mountains Echoed (ATME) is a brilliant stand-alone book, however, it's not up to the mark that Khaled Hosseini set for himself with his earlier two fantastic novels. Starting with the negatives, the narration style simply didn't work out. Though Mr. Hosseini deserves a pat on the back for trying out something different this time and not sticking to a tried and tested formula by going beyond a two-person narration as in A Thousand Splendid Suns (ATSS), but this time it just somehow looks rusty in places. The editing was not up to the mark too, some parts could've been easily cut out, personally, the part of Markos and Thalia's sibling hood goes on for way too long. Along with that, ATME doesn't move you as much as the first two books did. However, coming to positives, the story is extremely beautiful. The way it places emphasis on relations between siblings or sibling-likes is refreshing and delightful. The characters are well sketched out and the imagery, as Mr. Hosseini is massively talented in, works too. Overall, the positives outweigh the negatives, however, Mr. Hosseini must keep the negatives in mind before we see a fourth one from him. He has been my all-time favourite author, and this is a great book, just not in the league of his astounding ATSS and The Kite Runner. 4/5

Marialyce says

You know how you hate when a good book ends? You know you have to keep reading, reading, reading because you just can't stop and yet you are ever so mad when the book does just that? You know how you feel like wow! how can I find another like this, a book as good, a book as well written, a book that has touched you in so many places? This is one of those books. Mr Hosseini has written a brilliant novel which is about family, its importance, its closeness even though one is continents away, and its ability to love through the years and separation.

AS I was nearing the end, I had to think how this could have been anyone's story. Separated because of poverty, uprooted because of conflict, this family beset by many tragedies pushes forward. They reconnect and reunite in a future that looks to be bright and loving every bit as loving as that love which transpired between a brother and a sister so very long ago.

This author has definitely a kindred mind with the human spirit. He speaks so well of people, making the reader get to know his characters on so many levels. He is a gifted storyteller and one who makes the pages fly as the thoughts of things held dear become a focus of one's life. He is able to see and portray so well that

one's past can and often does have repercussions long after the incidents of life have intruded and that perhaps in reality it is through one's family that you can go home again even though Thomas Wolfe might disagree.

This book can't come more highly recommended by this reader. It presents us all with the concept that no matter what country, nationality, heritage you may bring with you, the family and its core of love is ultimately the greatest equalizer to humanity.

Patricia says

I finished reading this book on May 24, but did not write a review because I didn't want to taint the experience for many of my friends who had not yet read the book. Since then I've seen several people post where they've finished the book and how much they loved it. Unfortunately I did not love it. I was highly disappointed in this book, it was not at all what I expected. I wanted the richness of the culture, I wanted to immerse myself in the feelings and experiences of the people who live a life so totally different from anything I've experienced. But I just did not get that feeling from this book. I loved the first one third, I loved the ending, but most of the middle of the book just didn't grab me. There was way too much jumping around with the characters, and everything just moved too fast-forward in time. All the characters got old too quickly.

Perhaps because I had read his other 2 books and loved them so much, I was expecting something more similar to those. I wanted the entire story to be about Pari and Abdullah and their families, to me they ARE the story, way too much time was spent with what I considered unimportant characters and their lives. Doesn't Hosseini know his stories shouldn't be about internet, television, and airplanes?? He does so well with the culture of his country, and the traditions that form it, that's what I wanted from this book but it just wasn't there.

The ending was wonderful, I had a lump in my throat when I read that. I just wish he had taken me on a better route getting there.

Nimra khalid says

OMG..! OMG..!

OMG..! OMG..! OMG..!

OMG..! OMG..! OMG..! OMG..!

Oh-MY-GOD..!

(that pretty much Explains my reaction after seeing that a new book by Khaled Hosseini Is coming..!)

.....

Seeing this review and 66 likes makes me smile..

After all the excitements and waiting, I practically ruined this book by trying to read it when I was not fit for reading.

OH well, I can add another thing to my ever growing long list of regrets and things that I could have done "not Wrong".

Review to come..! This book deserves some words from me.

Scarlet says

Here's something you should know about Khaled Hosseini: **All his stories have more or less, the same ingredients.**

It always starts with Afghanistan in its pre-war days. The protagonists are children, guileless and innocent. Then the invasion happens. People separate, the bonds between them torn apart either by fate or by design. Many gut-wrenching chapters later, there's some kind of reunion but with a catch - there's something amiss, something unfulfilled, like a testimony to the unfairness of life.

To be honest, I'm not a fan of formulaic things. Yet, when it's Hosseini telling a story, I listen. I give in. I let his words curl around me like a blanket. I fall in love. And when it's all over, I clutch the book to my chest and weep like a child.

Because formula or no formula, **Khaled Hosseini just knows how to tell a story.** He knows what to say and how to say it. It's like an art he's mastered - and no matter how many times he does it, the impact of it doesn't seem to fade.

And the Mountains Echoed is an **ode to siblinghood** and all the joys and heartbreaks that come with it - the anguish of separation, the guilt of envy, the comfort of companionship, the burden of responsibility. Unlike his previous books, Hosseini adopts a short-story approach for this one. There are multiple narratives in multiple time-frames spread across several different countries, all connected by a common link to Afghanistan.

The writing is beautiful, as always. Sample this:

"All my life, I have lived like an aquarium fish in the safety of a glass tank, behind a barrier as impenetrable as it has been transparent. I have been free to observe the glimmering world on the other side, to picture myself in it, if I like. But I have always been contained, hemmed in, by the hard, unyielding confines of the existence that Baba has constructed for me, at first knowingly, when I was young, and now guilelessly, now that he is fading day by day. I think I have grown accustomed to the glass and am terrified that when it breaks, when I am alone, I will spill out into the wide open unknown and flop around, helpless, lost, gasping for breath."

And the Mountains Echoed was one of my most anticipated books this year and it did not disappoint. That being said, **it pales in comparison to his previous works** - *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Maybe it was the multiple POV thing. With so many characters and so many stories, it's inevitable that some would hit harder than the rest. Personally, I found the first half more emotionally striking - Abdullah, Nabi and Parwana's stories all made me tear up. I missed Afghanistan in the later segments.

And in case it wasn't obvious enough, I just wanted to say that I love Khaled Hosseini. If it weren't for him, I would have foolishly associated Afghanistan with just the Taliban. It's shocking how little I know about this

country even though it's so close to mine.

Thank you for the culture-cum-history lessons, Mr. Hosseini. And even if your next book adheres to the formula, I'll still read it and in all likelihood, cherish it.

Leah says

Blown like leaves in the wind...

‘A story is like a moving train: no matter where you hop onboard, you are bound to reach your destination sooner or later.’

Within the first few pages of this book, the reader knows s/he's in the hands of a master storyteller. In a village in rural Afghanistan, mid 1940s, a father tells a folk tale to his two young children. On the next day, they will travel to Kabul and start a chain of events that will take the reader on a journey across the world and through the decades.

The novel is made up of a series of linked and interlinked stories about members of this one family, their descendants and people whose lives they touch. Hosseini takes us back and forwards in time but each episode tells a whole story of one of the characters. This made the book feel in some ways like a collection of short stories rather than a novel, but Hosseini brings us round in a perfect circle and the last few chapters bring all these disparate episodes into one immensely moving whole.

The beauty of the writing is only matched by the humanity of the characters. Hosseini takes us inside their minds and their hearts and we see them laid bare, essentially good people but with their flaws and weaknesses exposed, to us and to themselves. Although much of the book takes place in Europe and America, Afghanistan remains at the heart of it because it remains in the hearts of the characters, even though they may have become part of the war- and poverty-driven diaspora.

A beautiful and very moving book that brought me to tears on several occasions, this isn't fundamentally about politics or war; it is about the unforgettable people who populate its pages – about humanity. And though there is sadness and sorrow here, there is also love and joy and a deep sense of hope. Highly recommended.

NB This book was provided for review by Amazon Vine UK.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com
