

Almost Visible

Michelle Sinclair

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A solitary young woman gazes into a senior's tumultuous past in *Almost Visible*, Michelle Sinclair's immersive novel about finding connections and living through regrets.

Fresh from Nova Scotia, Tess moves to Montreal and in with a high school classmate. Though she feels like an outsider, she's enchanted by the city and the lives of its strangers. She volunteers with Meals on Wheels and meets Mr. Hewitt, an elderly hoarder, from whom she steals a journal that's packed with poems and letters. It's a beguiling text through which she escapes her own grief, learning to identify with its idealism and romance.

The book flips between Tess, who sifts through her memories and learns to become vulnerable, and the fascinating journal author in the 1970s, as he chronicles how he fell in league with a revolutionary woman and alienated his best friend. His veiled references to his home in Argentina underscore the journal's dreamlike features. He hints at brewing dangers and the need for discretion, even as he is engulfed in intense feelings of love.

Indeed, the journal, which Tess attributes to Mr. Hewitt, is intense and suspenseful in its own right. While reading it, Tess questions what about it is true. What she reads about influences her own thinking, too, exposing frailties that threaten her stability. The story becomes more provocative and tense as Tess continues to cross boundaries. Her conversations with Mr. Hewitt have a widening effect; their exchanges are philosophical, literary, and companionable. But the twisting secrets lead to grief, and the space for atonement is limited. Still, in confronting old stories, Tess is inspired toward new perspectives.

Almost Visible is a poignant, time-traversing literary novel about the rewards of daring to involve oneself in a stranger's pain.

KAREN RIGBY (September / October 2022)

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