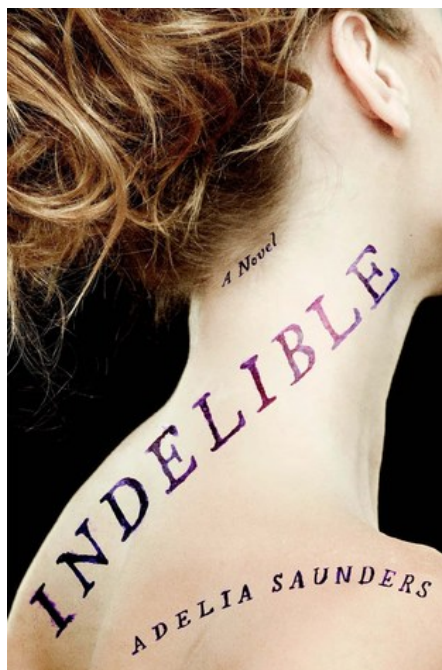




Indelible

Adelia Saunders

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Indelible

Adelia Saunders

Indelible Adelia Saunders

Magdalena has an unsettling gift. She sees writing on the body of everyone she meets - names, dates, details both banal and profound - and her only relief from the onslaught of information is to take off her glasses and let the world recede. Mercifully, her own skin is blank.

When she meets Neil, she is intrigued to see her name on his cheek. He's in Paris for the summer, studying a medieval pilgrimage to the rocky coast of Spain, where the body of Saint Jacques was said to have washed ashore, covered in scallop shells. Desperate to make things right after her best friend dies - a loss she might have prevented - Magdalena embarks on her own pilgrimage, but not before Neil falls for her, captivated by her pale eyes, charming Eastern European accent, and aura of heartbreak.

Neil's father, Richard, is also in Paris, searching for the truth about his late mother, a famous expatriate American novelist who abandoned him at birth. All his life Richard has clung to a single striking memory - his mother's red shoes, which her biographers agree he never could have seen.

Despite misunderstandings and miscommunications, these unforgettable characters converge, by chance or perhaps by fate, and Magdalena's uncanny ability may prove to be the key to their happiness. *Indelible* pulses with humanity and breathes life into unexpected fragments of history, illustrating our urgent need to connect with others and the past.

Indelible Details

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Author : Adelia Saunders

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From Reader Review Indelible for online ebook

Emer says

When I first came across this book two things really struck me: the cover showing the woman whose face and eyes we can't see, and the blurb; the story of a girl who reads the invisible words of people's lives on their skins. Imagine that. If you could see someone's life story etched onto their skin? How would you cope? You would see their hopes, their dreams, their pains, their sufferings and so much more!

So I was surprised when I started reading to find that the book didn't just follow this girl's story. It followed the lives of three people: of Richard whose chapters are written in the first person perspective, and then in the third person perspective are chapters following his son Neil and Magdalena who is the girl who can read our skin.

I think this initially threw me for a loop and is probably the primary reason for not loving this book as much as I thought I would. I just wanted to know more about the words on people's skin. I was expecting Magdalena to be the primary focus but this really was Richard's story. However, once I got used to the layout I became fascinated by the story and I wondered how they would interlink.

What followed were incredibly poignant stories, especially for Richard and Magdalena. We learn of their pasts and of their presents. The book felt very much like a catharsis for each character. A process of discovery and acceptance mixed with truth and myth. And it was interspersed with moments of such beautiful poignancy. However, at times I found some of the events quite tangential to the main story lines and that detracted a little from the overall beauty. I found this to be quite a slow burning reading experience even though it is already quite a short book in my opinion. And for some reason I could never accept that most of this book was set in 2008. I don't know... It just seemed too other worldly for that and the modern setting somewhat jarred with me.

This book just was a little bit frustrating. Because it's all there. Everything I want in a book is all there but it just needed.... More!!!! I can't quite explain what was missing for me. I found it too easy to put this book down at times but every time I picked it back up I was immediately lost in the words. It had this sort of quiet magic, an understated charm. The writing was simply beautiful. The plot; gloriously meandering, and the three stories of the main characters were so delicately and carefully interwoven that I could only compare them to the beauty of a fragile piece of stained glass that just reveals its true beauty to the world when the sun shines through at a certain angle. I wanted to love this book. Well I actually kinda did... Because when I reached the last page, the tears were glistening in my eyes. The emotion was there, the connection to the characters was there... but that extra something special was missing.

This is a debut novel so I think that probably explains the 'missing something'. I will definitely read more by this author in future because if this book is anything to go by her future is very bright.

four stars

A copy of this book was kindly provided to me by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Christie says

This was not quite what I expected. I was hoping the book would focus more on the writing Magdalena sees on other people's skin, but it felt like such a minor detail at times (even though it was a key part of the story). The book is told from the POV of three characters. Magdalena, Neil, and Neil's dad Richard. I flip flopped between being engrossed and being bored. It all depended on the character speaking. The pacing was very slow during parts of the novel, especially Richard's chapters.

All three characters have some issues. Richard being the one carrying the greatest baggage, which is a surprise since Magdalena can tell you when you'll die (and how). Poor Neil just seemed sick of dealing with his dad's continuously resurfacing mommy issues. Magdalena was fascinating and I enjoyed her chapters the most. Her struggles with knowing everything about a person's past, present, and future by reading the words on their skin couldn't be easy, but she seemed so well adjusted considering.

The historical aspects of the novel were fascinating. I was intrigued by the pilgrimage that was discussed. I also enjoyed the Paris setting. I enjoyed seeing how the character's lives and paths intertwined. The writing was nice and descriptive, but the novel never fully grabbed me like I was hoping it would.

The ending was a bit too convenient as far as Richard's mom's story was concerned. I very much enjoyed the finale to Magdalena's long journey. I am glad everyone seemed to get the closure they needed.

Ena Tintentick says

Sowohl das wunderschöne, blaue Cover als auch der Klappentext machten mich sofort neugierig, als mir „Die Worte, die das Leben schreibt“ zum ersten Mal ins Auge fiel. Eine Geschichte über eine junge Frau, die eine besondere Gabe hat und die Geschichten fremder Menschen auf deren Haut liest? Wow, das klingt doch magisch und vielversprechend, oder?

Auf den ersten Seiten begegnen wir Richard, einem Mann, der seine bereits verstorbene Mutter nie kennenlernte und auf der Suche nach Spuren aus der Vergangenheit durch Paris reist. Ihn beschäftigt der Gedanke, ob seine Mutter ihn wirklich nie wollte und wieso sie ihn als Baby fort gab. Anschließend lernen wir den Studenten Neil kennen, der sich für Geschichte interessiert und kein sonderlich inniges Verhältnis zu seinem Vater pflegt. Und dann ist da noch Magdalena, die junge Frau aus Litauen, die von der Haut fremder Menschen lesen kann. Alle drei Figuren erzählen abwechselnd ihre Geschichte, wobei Richard aus der Ich-Perspektive erzählt, während Adelia Saunders bei Neil und Magdalena in die dritte Person wechselt. Alle drei Figuren berichten aus ihrem Leben, was sie bewegt und welche Last sie auf ihren Schultern tragen. Dabei wechseln wir nicht nur die Erzähl-Perspektive, sondern auch Ort und Zeit.

„Die Worte, die das Leben schreibt“ ist ein Buch der ruhigen Töne und mutet stellenweise poetisch an. Es versucht nicht durch Spannung und Action zu fesseln, sondern durch die Charaktere und wie diese zu sich selbst finden. Durch die wechselnden Perspektiven, die Sprünge in Zeit, Erzähler und Ort, verlor ich jedoch häufig den Überblick. Wo bin ich nun? In welcher Zeit? Wie passt das zum Rest? Ich hatte dabei das Gefühl als würden sich die verschiedenen Erzählstränge sicherlich bald auf eine besondere Art zusammenfügen, wie ein Puzzle und alles eine runde Sache werden. Stattdessen stellte sich mit fortschreitender Seitenzahl

Enttäuschung ein.

Magdalenas Gabe, die so magisch klingt ist nur ein kleiner Bestandteil dieses Buchs und bewegt sich im Hintergrund. Neils Liebe zu historischen Fakten, bringt diese sowieso schon sehr langsam voranschreitende Geschichte weiter vom Kurs ab und dann entwickeln sich Gefühle und Verhaltensweisen, die für mich nicht nachvollziehbar sind. Im Grund war ich plötzlich noch verwirrter als zuvor und Verlor langsam die Lust an diesem Buch.

Ich hätte so gerne mehr über Magdalena und ihre Gabe erfahren. Richard ist zwar eine authentische Figur, der die Zurückweisung seiner Mutter nicht verkraftet, doch sympathisch war er mir nicht. Auch Neil schaffte es nicht, dass ich mich für ihn, sein Schicksal und seine Sorgen interessierte. Dass Adelia Saunders die offenen Fragen schlussendlich nicht alle beantwortet, macht den Gesamteindruck dann leider nicht mehr besser.

Fazit:

Zum Ende hin bleibt nur festzuhalten, dass die großen Erwartungen nicht erfüllt wurden und der Klappentext irreführend ist. Mir fehlte die Magie, die spannende Handlung und ich wollte so gerne mehr über diese besondere Gabe von Magdalena erfahren. Das ist insgesamt sehr schade, aber dieses Buch war einfach nichts für mich.

Nadia says

What an accomplished, fascinating debut novel! It definitely held my pulsating attention from start to end. Can't wait to read what's up and coming next from this new author!

Suzanne says

Dark, but also lovely and haunting! This novel has an original, fresh hook in its concept, yet tackles the evergreen questions of love, loss, and human connection.

Aimie says

DNF @ 69%

I was really intrigued by the premise but after picking this novel up I can say 100% that it didn't live up to my expectations. I thought the novel would be more about Magdalena's gift than anything else but her gift felt like it was only a small part of the story. Most of the time I was bored with the novel and had a hard time caring about the characters or the plot development.

eARC was kindly provided by publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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Leigh Kramer says

Trigger warning: suicide, suicide attempt, and sexual harassment

3.5 stars. The premise of this novel greatly intrigued me. What would it be like to see words on someone's skin and know their fate? How would I respond to that kind of gift? How does Magdalena respond? I thought this would encompass the bulk of the novel based on the synopsis but the story centers more on Magdalena, Richard, and Neil and how their paths intertwine.

Magdalena lives a diminished life because of her gift. She quickly learned as a child it wasn't normal to see words written on skin and that no one else could see them. She stops telling people the stories written on their skin and she even starts wearing strong prescription glasses so the world becomes blurry and she can't see the words at all. She carries a great deal of guilt with her after her best friend dies, feeling the clues were there all along on Lina's skin and she could have prevented it. This was the most interesting part of the novel, though trigger warnings abound. The tone of the novel made some of the content choices extremely unexpected and hard to read at times and for that reason, I recommend this with reservations.

Magdalena, Richard, and Neil are all waking up to their lives in different ways and much of this awakening predicates on how their paths cross. There was strong character development throughout, particularly as Magdalena grappled with her ability, but the story moved slower than I would have liked. I did, however, like how the author lets us come to our own conclusions about each character's history and choices. There are no tidy conclusions But as they began to move forward, I was left with a sense of hope.

Disclosure: I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Olivia Farr says

"Indelible" was not what I expected. We follow three characters as their lives collide and separate. I found it to be overall a somewhat dark and depressing read. Magdalena is a young woman who has the ability to read what fate or "Luck" has written all over a person's skin. Sometimes this is useful information and sometimes not. Sometimes it is written in a language she can read, but sometimes not. Regardless, she finds that it is more of a burden than an aid, and so she avoids reading or acting on what other people's skins say. This brings the guilt she feels about her best friend Lina, who dies accidentally, but whose death was written plainly on her skin. Could Magdalena have prevented it? This is unknown/unclear.

We also follow Richard Beart fairly often. He is on a quest in Paris to learn more about his mother, Inga Beart, who was a famous novelist and who gave him up when he was a baby/had no interest in him. He believes that she actually came to see him when he was two and he remembers her red shoes. His life has turned into a quest to discover if such a thing was possible/true. He was disgraced and had to leave his job as a teacher (unclear if the accusation of sexual assault was true or not) and his son has little interest in him. He is alone and clings to the idea that his mother did love him, despite all the evidence to the contrary.

Richard's son, Neil, is the third person which we sometimes follow. He is a college student in London and meets Magdalena briefly when she is carrying Lina's ashes. He calls her Magdute for a while until she corrects him, but he actually has her name written on him. Magdalena is too preoccupied/upset about Lina to really pay too much attention to what it means, but we learn that Neil becomes interested in her very quickly and imagines their meeting going a different way.

There should be some content warnings for this book, including for attempted suicide, sexual

assault/harassment, and voyeurism. This is definitely written for a mature audience. I found it to be rather slow moving and depressing on the whole as many of these characters seem to be stuck in the past/weighed down by their lives. Magdalena's gift is a very, very small part of the plot, which surprised me because from the synopsis, I thought this would be the main part of the book. It more follows these character's links with history and with each other, how briefly or not. I did find it to be similar in feel to "Cloud Atlas" in some ways.

Overall, it's an intriguing book about missed connections and how we relate to history and others, but I found it a little too slow and depressing for my liking. That being said, I read the whole thing and was curious to see what would happen to these characters, so I would give it 3.5 stars.

Please note that I received an ARC from the publisher through netgalley. All opinions are my own.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

This story felt very original. Magdalena is a woman who possesses a gift - she sees words on the bodies of others, describing life events, how they will die, who they will love, sins they have committed. One day she meets a man whose name is written underneath his eye (but he can't see it.)

Richard is a retired teacher, in Paris looking for information about his famous mother in an archive. She abandoned him as a child but the latest biography about her triggered a memory he has that may reveal some details of his past.

Neil, Richard's son, is traveling with a history professor as he does the work for his PhD.

The three intertwine, there are a lot of scenes in archives and libraries, and I just really enjoyed reading it.

Thanks to the publisher for providing a copy through Edelweiss.

Regina Cattus says

I got an ARC of this book through a Goodreads giveaway.

The very premise of this book is at once familiar and new, which is to say Saunders' particular take of seeing-people's-fates-when-you-look-at-them isn't completely unprecedented, but the idea of seeing random facts on them isn't something I've really come across before, and is a very interesting concept. However, this concept isn't as much of a starring character as I expected it to be.

The main character isn't a superhero- in fact, the main character is a man who's just trying to finding where he came from, which does get a little confusing because an omniscient narrator who is not this first-person narration character narrates the lives of another two key characters. I think the way I wrote that is about as confusing as I found it reading it- well maybe more bemusing than plain confusing, as it didn't really disrupt the story too much, and the story would definitely be missing an intriguing layer without these other narratives. Nonetheless, the characters who have this strange power are achingly realistically portrayed as struggling to come to terms with this strange ability. They also learn to use it to their advantage in a range of ingenious ways.

If you were to just read one of the narratives alone, or even if you just left out Magdalena's part, this story would make just as much sense. However, by adding in this supernatural side, Saunders has brought a new dimension to the story, and given these other two stories an extra meaning that the characters aren't aware of.

It's quite fun, really, trying to pick out who might have the same magical sight as Magdalena. So, overall, "Indelible" is a complex, well woven and slightly haphazard tale of love, loss and learning who you're meant to be, with a little predestination sprinkles in there just for luck.

DeB MaRtEnS says

Be prepared: "Indelible" is a slow burn of a novel, wending its way through cities, countries, the past and present with three people who each have a piece to stoke the fire, until its final illuminating blaze. It is a kind of mystery, surrounding an otherworldly and not altogether wonderful gift of the senses, which somehow makes perfect "sense", grounding the story in a fragile beauty and urgency. It isn't fluffy, or magical, in that Cinderella sense, but rather is touched with the darker edge of old superstitions and a whiff of Grimms.

Magdalena sees words- on people's skin. Much of what she reads is incomprehensible to her, without context, but some words- cancer, kill- stand alone. She wears her contact lenses or glasses as little as possible so that she doesn't have to face the writing she meets on everyone's face. Richard is in Paris to research the life of the famous mother who abandoned him at birth, in 1950. He is sure she returned to the USA when he was three, because he can still visualize her red shoes; he is looking for any connection. Neil is Richard's son, at college in London, but on a work study project in Paris.

Step by step, more is revealed. Bit by bit, the reader sees connections develop. As each character follows their individual search, each unlocks a piece of self inspiration. Magdalena knows that there are others like her, whose fate has not been pleasant. But the three of these rootless people must search, must look, must try, must see.

I liked this novel - unique, moving characters, touching themes and gorgeous locales. 4.00 stars

Sarah Joint says

Very unique. Haunting, at times very bleak, poignant. It then has very inspiring moments. Sometimes I had to just stop and read a paragraph or sentence again and again because it resonated so much with me and it was so beautifully written. I really look forward to reading whatever else this author comes up with! It's not quite perfect and some parts bothered me, I wished a few things were different, but it was really a great story and deserves a strong four and a half stars. Make sure to give it all of your attention, this is not a book to speed read.

Magdalena has an interesting and heartbreaking ability: she sees words written on everyone's skin. They can be names of those important to them, dates, events, and even the cause of their own death. *How terrible it would be to know exactly how most everyone you see will die. What a crushing reminder of mortality!* Thankfully, her vision requires glasses. She regularly chooses to leave them off so the words on everyone are blurred, even though it makes travel difficult. She would rather take photos of people, since the words don't show up on film.

Neil is an American student studying in Paris. He meets Magdalena in order to exchange Christmas presents from his father to her mother, who know each other. He feels strangely drawn to the woman who removes her glasses as soon as he gets close. Magdalena is left confused by what she did manage to see on Neil's skin: her own name written on his face.

Richard, Neil's father, is also in Paris. He's a teacher who retired after some kind of scandal with a student. Neil doesn't even know he's in Paris. Their relationship seems fairly strained. He's there researching his own mother... a famous author who gave him away as soon as he was born and wanted nothing to do with him. Richard is convinced that she returned once when he was a child, and seeks proof... even though everyone, including the author of the newest biography of his mother, insists he's mistaken.

These three very interesting people all come together and separate in different ways. It seems they're meant to have an effect on each other's lives... and we wonder exactly what will happen the whole book. Very intriguing.

I was given an ARC of this book from Net Galley and Bloomsbury USA, thank you! My review is honest and unbiased.

Jen says

I received this as an e galley from Edelweiss in return for an honest review.

I know I didn't even make it through the second chapter, but I can already decide that this book is not what I expected, nor is it something I really want to read at the moment. I can easily tell that the part about Magdalena's ability to see words written on people's skin is not going to play as major of a role in this book as I thought it would, which saddens me because it is what attracted me to this book in the first place. Already in the first few chapters I have issues with the ramblings-on of the paragraphs, with characters' thoughts going off on long tangents. Not to mention that two of the characters are written in third person POV, and one is written in first person - an immediate no-no in my book.

This one just is not for me right now.

Lucy Banks says

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley, in return for an honest review.

A strange, meandering novel, with moments of real beauty, but a little bit too much confusing waffle!

There was much about *Indelible* that I really enjoyed, and sadly, some that I didn't.

Firstly, let's start with the premise itself, which really lured me in. A girl from Lithuania finds that she can 'read' people's histories and futures on their skin. Lovely idea - I was totally sold on it.

And indeed, that aspect of the book worked really well. I loved the character of Magdalena, I adored the idea of being able to 'see' random phrases like tattoos on people's skin, and I think the idea was executed brilliantly, in a very unsettling, haunting way.

Whenever the book was focused on Magdalena (one third of the time) things were good. Then we moved on to Neil, and I felt my interest flag a little. Not because he wasn't a good character; in fact I liked his bumbling personality - it's always nice to see a male protagonist that is a bit more than your average dishy Mr Nice

Guy. However, his trajectory path in the book just felt a little bit flat for me, plus he kept doing things that didn't seem very plausible. I mean, heading off to Lithuania to find a girl you'd only met once, but not calling her first (despite having her number)? It just didn't seem very rational to me.

I'm afraid I found the third perspective in the book, Neil's dad, even more frustrating. It was a shame, because I loved the idea of this man tracking down the truth about his absent, celebrity mother - such a good idea. But it just didn't quite come off.

And the ending - oh I would have liked to see more! Again, it just meandered a bit, and left me feeling a tad unsatisfied.

Overall - I'd still say it's worth reading, because my word, it's such a good idea for a plot. LOVE the concept. Like the characters too - just wish the narrative had been tightened and that it had been a bit more dynamic. I'd definitely look out for more from this author though, as she clearly has great ability. (Maybe this was a case of, it's not you... it's me!).

Kathleen says

I read this debut novel slowly, stopping to consider the development of the story lines, the memories of each of the characters, knowing that each was harboring secrets and that their stories were interconnected. A certain grace and dignity permeates this novel not so much through the characters but through the language and writing that describe their thinking, observations, and memories.

Magdalena, who has migrated from Lithuania to the UK, sees words and phrases written all over people that tell a person's life story, what has come before and what is ahead. So disturbing is this to her that she wears glasses to blur her vision. An even heavier burden is her friend's death, a death that had for me a medieval overtone, for which she feels responsible, and thus, she carries Lina's ashes searching for a final resting place. Early in the novel, she meets Neil, a graduate student who has been chosen to be part of a research team in Paris studying medieval pilgrimages devoted to St. Jacques, who has tracked her down to deliver long overdue Christmas gifts from his father to her mother. Her name is written on Neil's cheekbone. She later meets an older man, Richard, on a Paris street; an expression her mother often used, "If the eyes don't see, the heart doesn't hurt" is written on his face. She is mystified by these encounters but is driven by her task to settle her friend's ashes, which she decides to do by making the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela after learning the story from Neil. The pilgrimage seems to be the most deliberate decision Magdalena has made to this point in her life, which seemed to be more a series of random choices.

Told in alternating chapters (first person for Richard and third, for Magdalena and Neil,) clues sparingly offered as the plot unfolds, the reader slowly learns what has brought each to this moment in time. Richard, raised on a Colorado ranch by his Aunt Cat and Uncle Walt, was a school teacher who has been forced into retirement, the details explained later in the novel. He has lived all his life haunted by knowing his mother abandoned him at birth and a conflicting memory of seeing her in red high heeled shoes as a little boy. Inga Beart was an expatriate who lived in Europe writing noir novels in the 1950's, which were celebrated in the literary world for a number of years before and after her 1954 death, her life and death the subject of speculation and biographies for years. Richard has come to Paris to resolve the questions he has about his mother, to finally find his truth and dispel the work of the biographers.

Completing the trinity of characters is Neil, Richard's son, not necessarily a dutiful son, not necessarily at odds with his father, perhaps judgmental without having the understanding that comes with experience, and not very attentive or responsive to his father. Neil's research focuses on a specific rebellious monk from

Rouen who defies the thirteenth century edicts of the abbott of Vendome and the Pope forbidding monks to go on pilgrimages. This monk, who painfully wrote his story on eight pages of vellum and is still carefully archived, makes the pilgrimage from Paris to Santiago de Compostela in Spain in honor of Saint Jacques (or James) whose body was said to have washed up on the shore, protected by scallop shells, his legacy marked by miracles.

Wonderful metaphors are imbedded throughout the novel: the painstaking, detailed research of Neil, uncovering history and unlocking understanding for him...the burdens, physical and otherwise, Magdalena and Richard carry like pilgrims, looking for redemption...eyes “that never quite look at you”...“If the eyes don’t see, the heart doesn’t hurt”...the pilgrimage following the Milky Way, known as the Way of Saint James in medieval times, to the town of Santiago de Compostela, “the field of stars” and Finisterre, the final town on the pilgrimage, “the end of the earth.”

The plot lines remain complex right to the end where each of the characters gains a deeper understanding of the secrets and mysteries that have haunted their lives, freed from them to live a different life now. I am still thinking about Richard’s life in Colorado, his mother’s world in the 1950’s, the dots that connected Richard to Magdalena’s mother, to Magdalena, to Neil, and the circumstances that brought them together, and the relevance and significance of Saint James’ pilgrimage to people I know.