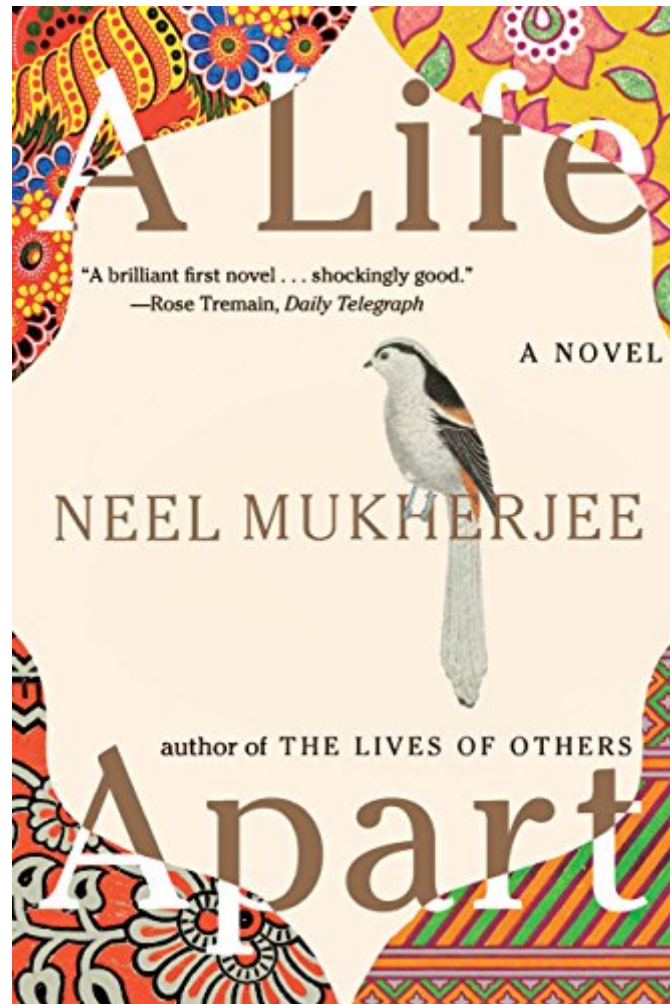


The book was found

A Life Apart: A Novel



Synopsis

"A brilliant first novel . . . shockingly good." —Rose Tremain, Daily Telegraph
Ritwik Ghosh, twenty-two and recently orphaned, finds the chance to start a new life when he arrives in England from Calcutta. But Oxford holds little of the salvation Ritwik is looking for. Instead, he moves to London, where he drops out of official existence into a shadowy hinterland of illegal immigrants. The story that Ritwik writes to stave off his loneliness begins to find ghostly echoes in his own life. And, as present and past of several lives collide, Ritwik's own goes into free fall.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The book appears to be two stories, told in alternate chapters and set in different type. One is the story of Ritwik Ghosh, a young man born in Calcutta around 1970. It begins with his childhood in an extended family. (No need to remember the many names and relationships - they soon disappear.) Ritwik's mother is an unbelievable sadistic disciplinarian; but both his parents die when he is 21. At the age of 23, he wins a scholarship to Oxford, and determines never to return to India. He regularly cottages in the public lavatories in Oxford; the descriptions of this activity are graphic and prolonged. When his student visa runs out, he stays in England illegally. He becomes the lodger and carer of an 86 year-old widow, Anne Cameron, who had once lived in India but was now living

in Brixton. The descriptions of this lady - her mind often wandering, but at other times suddenly very lucid - are superb, as is the tender way in which Ritwick looks after her. But at times he also earns some money by doing back-breaking work during the day on fruit farms, exploited alongside other illegal immigrants, while on some evenings he rents himself out by cruising, dangerously, in the King's Cross area. The other story is set in Bengal, mainly during the turbulent period between 1903 and 1905 when the British Raj was dividing the country between Western (mainly Hindu) and Eastern (mainly Muslim) Bengal, to the fury of the Hindus. The central character here is Maud Gilby, who is employed as "governess" (tutor) and companion to the wife of a Hindu landowner presiding over a largely Muslim village.

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