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What Is Visible: A Novel

Kimberly Elkins

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What Is Visible: A Novel Kimberly Elkins
New York Times Book Review **Editors' Choice**

Bookpage Best Books of 2014

Woman's Day **"Most Inspirational Book of 2014"**

Women's National Book Association Great Group Reads Pick for 2014

A vividly original literary novel based on the astounding true-life story of Laura Bridgman, the first deaf and blind person who learned language and blazed a trail for Helen Keller.

At age two, Laura Bridgman lost four of her five senses to scarlet fever. At age seven, she was taken to Perkins Institute in Boston to determine if a child so terribly afflicted could be taught. At age twelve, Charles Dickens declared her his prime interest for visiting America. And by age twenty, she was considered the nineteenth century's second most famous woman, having mastered language and charmed the world with her brilliance. Not since *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* has a book proven so profoundly moving in illuminating the challenges of living in a completely unique inner world.

With Laura-by turns mischievous, temperamental, and witty-as the book's primary narrator, the fascinating kaleidoscope of characters includes the founder of Perkins Institute, Samuel Gridley Howe, with whom she was in love; his wife, the glamorous Julia Ward Howe, a renowned writer, abolitionist, and suffragist; Laura's beloved teacher, who married a missionary and died insane from syphilis; an Irish orphan with whom Laura had a tumultuous affair; Annie Sullivan; and even the young Helen Keller.

Deeply enthralling and rich with lyricism, WHAT IS VISIBLE chronicles the breathtaking experiment that Laura Bridgman embodied and its links to the great social, philosophical, theological, and educational changes rocking Victorian America. Given Laura's worldwide fame in the nineteenth century, it is astonishing that she has been virtually erased from history. WHAT IS VISIBLE will set the record straight.

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Sara Matthews:

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Jamie Durbin:

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