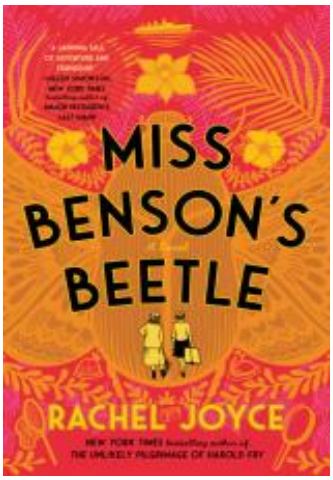
Miss Benson?s Beetle

by Rachel Joyce



About the Book

From the bestselling author of THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY comes an uplifting, irresistible novel about two women on a life-changing adventure, where they must risk everything, break all the rules and discover their best selves --- together.

She?s going too far to go it alone.

It is 1950. London is still reeling from World War II, and Margery Benson, a schoolteacher and spinster, is trying to get through life, surviving on scraps. One day, she reaches her breaking point, abandoning her job and small existence to set out on an expedition to the other side of the world in search of her childhood obsession: an insect that may or may not exist --- the golden beetle of New Caledonia.

When she advertises for an assistant to accompany her, the woman she ends up with is the last person she had in mind. Fun-loving Enid Pretty in her tight-fitting pink suit and pom-pom sandals seems to attract trouble wherever she goes. But together these two British women find themselves drawn into a cross-ocean adventure that exceeds all expectations and delivers something neither of them expected to find: the transformative power of friendship.

Discussion Guide

1. How do the various members of Margery?s family --- her father, her mother, her aunts, Barbara --- inform who she is as a person? What values and beliefs, good and bad, do they pass along to her?

2. How do Margery?s core beliefs --- about herself, about the world --- change throughout the novel?

3. When Margery stole the boots, what was your initial reaction? What do you think the boots represent to her?

4. How does Margery and Enid?s relationship evolve? How do they complement each other as characters? How do they learn from and change each other?

5. Why do you think Mr. Mundic fixated on Margery to the point that he followed her to New Caledonia? What does the journey mean to him? What similarities, if any, do Margery and Mundic share?

6. How did you envision Margery?s helmet? It has its own presence in most scenes of the book. What does it represent to you?

7. What characters did you find yourself identifying with most? Do you think your personality is more aligned with Margery?s or Enid?s? Which would you want as a friend?

8. Do you think Freya will actually go to New Caledonia? What about Margery and Gloria?s story do you think inspired her?

9. What does the golden beetle mean to Margery? Do you have a ?golden beetle? in your own life? If so, what is it and what does it mean to you?

10. What did you think was going to be in the red valise? Were you surprised when it was finally opened?

Author Bio

Rachel Joyce is the author of the international bestsellers THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY, PERFECT, THE LOVE SONG OF MISS QUEENIE HENNESSY, MAUREEN, THE MUSIC SHOP, MISS BENSON?S BEETLE, THE HOMEMADE GOD, and a collection of interlinked short stories, A SNOW GARDEN & OTHER STORIES.

Rachel?s books have been translated into 37 languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide. THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Book Prize and longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. The critically acclaimed film of the novel, for which Rachel also wrote the screenplay, was released in 2023. MISS BENSON?S BEETLE won the Wilbur Smith Adventure Writing Prize in 2021. Rachel was awarded the Specsavers National Book Awards New Writer of the Year in December 2012 and was shortlisted for the UK Author of the Year in 2014. In 2024, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by Kingston University.

Rachel has written over 20 original afternoon plays and adaptations of the classics for BBC Radio 4. She lives with her family near Stroud.

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