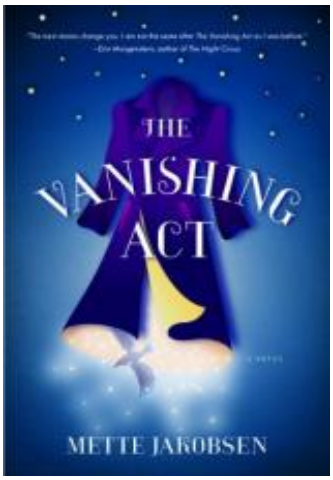
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The Vanishing Act

by Mette Jakobsen



About the Book

On a small snow-covered island --- so tiny that it can?t be found on any map --- lives 12-year-old Minou, her philosopher Papa (a descendent of Descartes), Boxman the magician, and a clever dog called No-Name. A year earlier Minou?s mother left the house wearing her best shoes and carrying a large black umbrella. She never returned.

One morning Minou finds a dead boy washed up on the beach. Her father decides to lay him in the room that once belonged to her mother. Can her mother?s disappearance be explained by the boy? Will Boxman be able to help find her? Minou, unwilling to accept her mother?s death, attempts to find the truth through Descartes? philosophy. Over the course of her investigation Minou will discover the truth about loss and love, a truth that THE VANISHING ACT conveys in a voice that is uniquely enchanting.

Discussion Guide

1. Each of the characters has a personal philosophy that colors how they view what happens in their lives. How do those philosophies explain who each of them is?

2. Why does the author choose THE VANISHING ACT as her title?

3. At the beginning of the story, Minou and her father find a dead boy. How does his presence help Minou and her father? How does he come to mean more to them than an unknown person?

4. Discuss the setting of the island. Why did the author decide to set her novel there?

5. Mama and Papa had different experiences during the war. What effects did their lives at that time have on them?

6. What is the significance of the lighthouse? Why does Papa keep the light off?

7. Minou?s grandfather sends many postcards to Papa. What message is the grandfather sending Papa and why does he send ones exclusively with the same art?

8. Theodora is the founder of the island and has become a legend for the people who live there. How does her story affect each of the characters?

9. Why did Mama disappear? What happened to her?

10.Are reason and magic compatible? How does Minou integrate both in her life?

Author Bio

Mette Jakobsen was born in Denmark in 1964. She holds degrees in philosophy and creative writing and is the author of several plays. THE VANISHING ACT is her first novel. She lives in Sydney, Australia.

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