



# You Disappear

*Christian Jungersen , Misha Hoekstra (Translator)*

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Mia's happy marriage is shattered when a brain tumor begins to change her husband's personality beyond recognition. As Frederik becomes more a stranger before her eyes, the revelation that he has used his position as headmaster to embezzle millions from his school's treasury turns Mia's private crisis into one that involves the community. But this disgraceful crime could become Mia's salvation: working with a defense lawyer to build Frederik's case, they wrestle with the latest brain research and the question of free will. Consumed by her new obsessions, Mia must reexamine everything she thought she knew about her marriage and herself as she too starts to change.

*You Disappear* is an unnerving and riveting psychological drama that challenges our notions of how we view others and construct our own sense of self. Jungersen's clear, spare prose and ceaseless plot twists will keep readers hooked until the last page.

## You Disappear Details

Date : Published January 7th 2014 by Nan A. Talese (first published 2012)

ISBN : 9780385537254

Author : Christian Jungersen , Misha Hoekstra (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 352 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, European Literature, Danish, Cultural, Denmark, Psychology, Drama

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## From Reader Review You Disappear for online ebook

### J says

Note to start: I won this through First Reads. Thanks Anchor Books. On with the review.

In *You Disappear* Mia as she learns about and has to cope with her family situation after her husband Frederik is diagnosed with a brain tumor that has changed his personality and possibly has led to his embezzling funds from the school where he worked. This is one of those books that is focused as much on the main character changing due to the circumstances of her marriage as it is about exploring those changes.

The first chapter was the best. It's fraught with a sense of danger and expectation. From there it went downhill and gets mired in Jungersen's attempts to explain away the problems as much as highlight the research he did just to write the novel. The translation from the Danish by Misha Hoekstra surprisingly adept and makes the book feel very much like it might have been written in English. However, there is still the sense that this book's original audience might understand more than the English speaking audience.

Mia's not the easiest person to like. She gets hung up on constantly referring to her husband's disease and blames it for all their problems at some point. She never manages the stages of grief, either, and jumps into a relationship that, from the outside, just does not completely add up. The approach is sometimes too heavy on explaining the psychology or uninteresting minutia. *You Disappear* has something to say about the way we relate to each other and justify our actions, but sometimes the author seems to have bitten off more than can appropriately be chewed. He's done his research and that shows. The narrative just never really lives up to the ideas.

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### Anna says

So this book started off really good and I mean really good. But as the story progressed I realized that I absolutely hated the main character. It ended up becoming a struggle to even get to the end of the book because every page I read, I got closer and closer to simply not being able to take another word of her self-pitying, selfishness. She actually put it best when she said that her soul "laps up egotistical pleasures and neglects my son and husband while stealing a sick woman's future."

And let's not forget the over-generalization and seemingly hatred of men and the message that the only good man clearly has to be brain-damaged.

Blech.

With how great this book started off, I now feel letdown and more than a little bit disappointed.

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### Stacie says

I received this book from NetGalley in exchange for a review. I was intrigued by the plot. A man has a brain tumor that drastically alters his personality, leaving his family to figure out how to deal with their new reality and still try to remain a cohesive unit. I really tried with this book. I made it about halfway through before I just couldn't do it anymore. I lost interest. I found the son whiny, the husband annoying and the wife a

doormat. I asked myself if I even cared what happened to any of them or how the book ended and when I realized that I didn't, I threw in the towel. This book and I were not destined to be friends.

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### **Cheryl says**

This was an interesting exploration of what defines the essence of a person. When a person's personality is changed or distorted by brain disease or trauma, which personality -- pre or post injury -- is the real one? How does that affect the person's partner and friends? The combination of neuroanatomy, chemicals and hormones result in a unique output, and disruption yields a new output -- is either one less valid or real than the other? And how does it all affect the partner's obligations to that person? Or should it? Interesting and thought provoking, and well researched.

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### **Paloma Alves says**

D. 31 Januar var jeg til Christian Jungersens release af - "Du forsvinder". Han fortalte om skriveprocessen, den omfattende research, grunden til det valgte emne og de uendelige afslag fra forskellige forlag før det lykkedes at udgive bogen. Efter han havde læst op fra bogen, var jeg sikker på at jeg skulle have den med hjem.

Først var jeg betaget af sproget, som er utrolig rigt og fyldigt. Dernæst, var jeg fascineret af hvor levende hans karaktere er, og hvor meget han er inde i hovedpersonen. Det er fiktion, men man får en fornemmelse af at karakterene eksisterer i virkeligheden. Det er som om han kender hovedpersonen bedre end han kender sig selv, og det gør historien meget troværdig.

At læse historien er som at være 100% i hovedpersons tanker og følelsesliv. Det jeg prøver at sige, er at man ikke rigtigt ved hvordan verden omkring "Mia" opfatter hende, før man når frem til slutningen.

Bogen er meget flot skrevet på den måde så man virkelig mærker hvor klaustrofobisk der er i hovedpersonen/Mia's hoved.

Efter at have nået halvvejs, lagde jeg bogen fra mig i 2-3 uger. Historien var blevet for meget for mig. På trods af min fascination over hvor dygtig en forfatter Christian Jungersen er, har det været hårdt at komme igennem siderne. Det bliver ved og ved med at gå ned af bakke for Mia, og det gør at det hele bliver meget trist og tungt, til tider uudholdeligt. Selvom den er hård at læse er jeg glad for, at have givet "Du forsvinder" en chance. Det er ikke en historie man bare lige glemmer igen.

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### **Bibliophile says**

The irrational behavior of Frederik, husband, father and private school principal, turns out to be a result of his personality altering brain tumor. He loses any empathy he might have had for his loved ones, and is arrested for having embezzled money. As their life unravels, his wife Mia hangs on to the "it's not him, it's the tumor"-explanation. Egomaniacal Mia herself doesn't have a tumor to blame for her toxic personality. She wallows in self-pity, obsesses about her teenage son's sex life and is blithely unaware of her own

culpability. She knew Frederik was liar and a cheater long before the illness, but hey, all men are. At least that's what Mia and her friends think. The way they make excuses for appalling male behaviour, you'd think every man in Denmark has brain damage. The one decent man in their midst, devoted to caring for his sick wife, seems too good to be true. Turns out he's only a nice guy because he bumped his head in the same accident that disabled his wife. Yup.

The questions Jungersen poses about free will, identity and accountability are interesting, but as a novel this didn't work for me.

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### **Julie Eilén says**

Du forsvinner handler om ekteparet Mia og Frederik og sønnen deres, Niklas, som etter en ferietur til Mallorca, får livet snudd på hodet. I løpet av turen havner Frederik på sykehus, der det oppdages at han har en hjernesvulst. En svulst som gradvis har endret personligheten hans. Familien må reise hjem og Frederik opereres. Etter operasjonen viser det seg at svulsten kan ha vært der over lang tid og plutselig må Mia sette spørsmålsteget ved det hun de siste årene har sett på som en positiv forandring i mannen sin. Mens Frederik er sykemeldt blir det i tillegg avslørt at han har svindlet skolen han er rektor for, for millioner av kroner. Hvordan skal Mia forholde seg til at mannen hun elsket er borte, kanskje for alltid? Hvem har skylden i svindelen; Frederik eller hjerneskadene? Hvor mye kan Mia ofre for en mann hun ikke lenger kjenner?

Jungersen har skrevet en annerledes og spennende bok om hvordan det er å leve med et menneske med hjerneskade. Han viser god kunnskap både om det rent medisinske og det følelsesmessige. Selv om det er nesten umulig å sette seg inn i både Mia og Frederiks situasjon, klarer Jungersen å skape et godt inntrykk. Han beskriver sorgen og frustrasjonen på en veldig god måte, stiller gode spørsmål og viser at han forstår ulike måter å takle ting på. I løpet av boka kommer han inn på mange store og interessante temaer som fri vilje, sjelen og kjærligheten. I tillegg illustreres boka fint med bilder, artikler, brev og mailer som gir den et veldig særegent og spennende uttrykk. Jeg likte boka veldig godt, selv om jeg tidvis synes den var noe gjentakende og stillestående. Den fikk meg spesielt til å tenke på hvor skjørt mennesket egentlig er og hvor raskt alt kan rives bort fra oss.

<http://overtenking.blogspot.no/2013/0...>

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### **Elaine says**

I won a copy from the First Reads giveaway.

I was intrigued by the concept. I expected a novel that mixed science and marriage; the complexities of both that are both different and wonderful and terrible and unique for each couple.

Instead, I got this:

1. Bland, trite characters I read about wayyyy too much already; a doormat of a wife married to a scum sucking adulterer that is so charismatic and witty that, of course, cheats on her not once, but, at least, twice, because, well, he's so charming so that gives him license to so thats okay, right? Are we supposed to sympathize with her? Understand why she stays with him? If the author had fleshed out his characters more, maybe I would have more of an opinion, perhaps, but he didn't so I don't like Mia. Or anyone else, for that matter.
2. Mia, the wife, mentions the rude, lewd, coarse men she's had, unfortunately, negative experiences with (a fact all women can relate to, I'm sure) so does this mention from Mia explain her rationale as to why she stays with Frederik? That all men are like this so she just sucks it up because it is what it is? It makes me even more pre dispossessed to see her as an idiot, someone who justifies her actions because she 'expects' all men to act like this because her father left her as a child and was a douche. That explains it all, of course!
3. All the pseudo scientific articles on brain injuries were interesting until it just got repetitive and started to blur in my head. I began skimming...then skipping...because I couldn't see how it related to Mia and Frederik's ongoing marital issues. Are we supposed to believe that Frederik is a philanderer because of poor frontal lobe impulses (or whatever) and all adulterers should be given a pass at their whoring ways? Does this give everyone with the penchant toward violence in all shapes and forms leeway and an excuse to claim it 'wasn't them that (insert terrible act here) and they should be rehabilitated and not jailed? Nope, sorry, not buying it.
4. Secondary and background characters like the in-laws and her best friend and husband Henning? What was that scene part? When Mia wonders why her best friend married this rude loud mouth? Does it go back to #2 above? Blame is on the brain? Or are most women stupid and make stupid choices? More brain blaming?
5. The 'affair' with Bernard is kinda funny. I don't believe it. There's no lead up; no chemistry, no slow build up as to why they suddenly get together. They're both lonely? Sure, I get that. They both have disabled spouses. I get that too. Still, I wasn't interested nor did I care about the love affair. I didn't feel the love, sadly. I also get the feeling the author was trying to pull a Jodi Picoult-like twist at the end when we find out Bernard also has brain damage but it is 'positive' brain damage as opposed to the damage suffered by the embezzling Fred and all the poor saps in Mia's support groups. I didn't gasp; I laughed. Like I laugh at an old, old episode of Jackass.
6. Then, suddenly, toward the end, Mia gets an atheistic revelation? WTF? Where does this come from? Did I miss the turn at Albuquerque somewhere? What does this mean? Okay, Mia is atheist. That's fine. But what does this mean? That Mia had her own mental breakdown and all was made clear and the universe laid bare and religion was a lie people told themselves because people of faith are delusional because we all, in some way, have brain damage and its this very brain damage that instills faith or 'lies' as the author calls it? Now, I'm no Ned Flanders but when a book starts to get preachy, I don't appreciate it.
7. I considered giving this book two stars but then I found myself slogging through the last 100 pages, painfully, I might add and realized I couldn't justify two stars. I read for pleasure; to be entertained, to laugh, to be astounded, to discover strange new worlds and new civilizations (thanks, Star Trek intro) but after reading this book, I wanted to give myself a lobotomy.

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## Jill says

It almost seems like a contradiction in terms to call a book that focuses on the human brain “too cerebral.”

Yet somehow, for this reader, the term fits. The premise is quite enticing: a Danish headmaster, Frederik Halling, is on vacation in Maorca with his wife Mia and their teenage son, Niklas, when it's discovered that he has a non-malignant brain tumor... and likely has had it for many years. The tumor, situated on his orbitofrontal cortex, coordinates emotions, modulates those all-or-nothing signals, and provides a more nuanced human expression.

Yet even after surgery (all this is at the very beginning), Frederik remains overly impulsive and indifferent. Worse, it quickly comes to light that he has embezzled from his local private school, quite probably when the tumor was in its development stage. Is he responsible for the crime? Was he aware of what he was doing? But even more importantly, who is the real Frederik? Or, as Mia muses: "Among all the thousands of chaotic little conflicts and oddities that make up everyday life in a family, what's the first episode, however minor, that I can point to and say Frederik wasn't himself?"

These are important questions and the author makes the wise choice in muddying the waters with the character of Mia. Not brain-damaged, Mia is hindered with a distinct lack of empathy. In fact, she's selfish and an unreliable narrator (and observer). She, too, is a changed person so other questions arise: "What about those who change as a result of being with someone who has been transformed by a brain tumor? Physiologically and emotionally, what lies at the core of our personhood?"

This fascinating plot, coupled with the obvious intelligence and research of Mr. Jungersen, should make You Disappear a runaway winner. Yet there are two things that kept me from totally connecting. The first, I suspect, is an overly literal translation. There's a certain distance in the narration that robbed me of a more emotional involvement.

The second is that Chrisitan Jungersen seems to straddle back and forth between enlightening and educating. The research he put in is too publicly on display, keeping me from immersing into that alternate world of a fictional work. For instance: "Since then I've learned that a tumor can make it harder or someone to multitask, that it can lead to monomania. Medically, it's certainly possible that it took root at the beginning of our marriage, transforming my marvelous charming husband into an unfaithful workaholic. That it then stopped growing until he earned to compensate and, for three good years, became more like himself again." Granted, Mia has steeped herself into research, but from time to time, I got the feeling I was being educated by the author; in the best of books, that educational element is seamless.

I've no doubt that this style will work for many other literary readers. The questions raised are so compelling that I recommend it, despite my own subjective reservations. (3.75 stars)

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## Anna-Sofie says

Længe siden jeg har været så meget i tvivl om en bog - Objektivt set: Jungersen skriver virkelig, virkelig godt, researchen er helt i top. Jeg kan bare IKKE lide hovedpersonen - det er selvfølgelig ikke det eneste kriterium for, om man nyder en bog, men det blev et konstant irritations-element for mig. Så tænker jeg, om det er mig, der bare ikke forstår, hvor hårdt, det er at leve med en hjerneskadet mand - men på flere måder synes jeg hun virker lige så syg som sin mand i sit fuldstændigt maniske behov for at kontrollere alting og realisere sig selv. Jeg er klar over, at hun har været "undertrykt" i lang tid, men jeg mener (jvnfr. historien selv) ikke, at det er en undskyldning.

Ergo: En roman, der sætter tanker i gang, og det er absolut positivt, men jeg blev bare så træt af det uendelige navle-pilleri...og kan kun se pessimistisk på fremtiden, hvis Mia er en prototype for kvinder i min generation (men tillader mig - optimistisk - at stille mig tvivlende!). Ingen af os ved selvsagt, hvordan vi

ville optræde i en situation som hendes, men det bliver altså lidt for stereotyp efter min mening.

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## **Allen Adams says**

<http://www.themaineedge.com/buzz/miss...>

What happens when the person closest to us becomes someone different? Do we still owe that person our feelings? What exactly defines identity? Does an unexpected and/or unrequested change in that identity alter that person's moral responsibilities? What happens when the person you know best suddenly becomes a stranger?

What makes us who we are?

These are the questions that are central to "You Disappear", the latest novel from Danish author Christian Jungerson.

Mia is a math teacher at an elementary school in Denmark. Her husband, Frederik, is a beloved headmaster at a prestigious private school; he is one of the most respected school administrators in the country. While on vacation with their son Niklas, Frederik has a fall; the subsequent trip to the hospital reveals a brain tumor – the sort of tumor that can gradually (and eventually drastically) alter one's personality. The tumor is removed, leaving Mia and Niklas to deal with a new and different Frederik, a man who bears only a superficial resemblance to the husband and father of their respective memories.

Their lives only get more complicated as news emerges that Frederik had been misappropriating school funds for years, defrauding the school of millions. But the question soon arises: was Frederik himself at fault or were the effects of the tumor to blame? The new Frederik doesn't care about any of the consequences of his previous actions, leaving his family to bear the brunt of the community's scorn and abuse. Friendships and family ties are quickly, painfully eroded away.

In a support group for spouses of the brain-injured, Mia meets Bernhard, a lawyer specializing in just this sort of case. Together, the two begin assembling a defense for Frederik – one that they hope will keep him out of prison – using bleeding edge neurological research and classical philosophical questions about the nature of free will. They undertake all of this while trying to deal with their own feelings about their injured spouses ... and one another.

There's a lot going on in "You Disappear." It's a complicated story populated by complicated characters dealing with complicated issues. That complexity is enhanced by the comparative simplicity of Jungerson's prose style. There's a spare quality inherent to the words that makes the book eminently readable, no matter how elaborate the ideas become. The nature of the soul, the meaning of free will, the brain's role in all of this – Jungerson explores these concepts cleverly and concisely.

Ambiguity abounds in this novel. Whether he is addressing the positive and negative attributes of his characters or the bigger concepts of identity and free will, Jungerson is happy to freewheel about in the gray area, never allowing the reader to come down in the realm of black or white. The Frederiks of both then and now are infuriating, albeit in different ways. Mia – with whom we should sympathize – often runs cold; she also makes her share of questionable decisions. And yet, despite the fact that they may not actually deserve it, we still want Frederik and Mia to find happiness. Of course, in that regard, they are their own worst enemies.

Bring it all together – the lean prose, the twisting plot, the big ideas – and the end result is a book that is fascinating and compelling and heart-wrenching. “You Disappear” is a powerful tale told by a noteworthy talent. Jungerson is one of Denmark’s most celebrated contemporary authors; this book is a wonderful illustration of why.

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## Ms.pegasus says

Is there such a thing as free will? It's a philosophical question that assumes heightened urgency with each new revelation in neuroscience. Empathy, the unconventional connections that comprise wit and a sense of humor, behaviors and expressions that define our uniqueness, and even memories, in short, all the traits we apprehend as personality, can be parsed into a flow of chemicals, and electrical impulses stimulating various regions of the brain.

Author Jungersen selects as his subject orbitofrontal damage, caused by a tumor, in the brain of Frederik Halling, the brilliant and committed headmaster of a small elite private school. Interspersed throughout the story are explanatory texts on neuroscience. These are the texts Mia, Frederik's wife, from whose viewpoint the story is told, uses to educate herself about her husband's tumor and the effect it has on his neural functioning. The tone of these texts is clinical: *“Orbitofrontal damage results in the injured person losing the unique, personal way he modulates his emotions....It is characteristic of frontal-lobe syndrome that the person who suffers from it mistakenly believes he is healthy and completely unaffected. No test or argument can convince him otherwise. The absence of empathy for others, and of a sense for when he is about to make a poor choice, often leads to a radically altered way of life for a person with orbitofrontal damage – even one whose injuries are so minor as to be undetectable by conventional psychological tests.”*

The tumor is discovered by chance when Frederik has an accidental fall while the family is vacationing in Majorca. Mia recounts their history together. The last three years of the marriage have been idyllic. After years of dedication to the welfare of the school and its children, Frederik had finally taken more time off to spend with the family. That decision coincided with a traumatic episode in their lives. Mia discovered Frederik had been having an affair (not for the first time), and she threw Frederik out of the house. Then, their teen-aged son Niklas discovers her passed out on the floor next to an empty bottle of vodka, and she wakes up in the hospital, after having her stomach pumped. Frederik is there when she wakes up, and resolves to be a better husband. Since then, their marriage has felt perfect. It is a shock she can scarcely endure that this period of happiness might end so soon, and so abruptly.

The trajectory of the story up to this point appears predictable. Mia struggles with her fears of being a caretaker to an invalid for the rest of her life. She is convinced that Frederik will never fully recover, and is appalled by his symptoms of alternating rage and indifference to her, and his own inability to admit that the malady has changed him. Her feelings of loyalty and obligation are mixed with rage and guilt. The needs of the caretaker in this situation are given scrupulous coverage by Jungersen.

(view spoiler)

Jungersen's novel succeeds in approaching the question of free will obliquely. Of far greater interest to him are the infinite permutations and ongoing processing of experience as it affects the human brain. There is no static self. Instead, the chemistry of our brains shapes and synthesizes experience. Without such a belief, the resulting conclusion of chemical determinism would be unbearable.

(view spoiler)

This is a thought-provoking novel, very accurately described as a psychodrama. The prose alternates between outbursts and studied self-consciousness. The result is disturbing when the author forces us into unexpected perspectives. One could easily imagine it being equally effective performed as a play.

NOTE: This book was translated from the Danish by Misha Hoekstra. Surprisingly, that information is not on the main entry of the book, so I thought I'd add that here.

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### **Helene Jeppesen says**

This book is so hard for me to rate, because even though I did find the story very enthralling and very much interesting, I also found the writing style a bit odd at times. And even though I understood the main character Mia and felt for her in her struggles, I also despised her and her reactions at times. I think you need to be in this situation yourself to truly understand it.

I like how this story is supported by pictures, fragments of articles, science reports and the like, but I didn't feel like they became truly realistic because of the writing style - the writing in the article didn't feel like the writing of an article with its odd vocabulary and structure.

All in all, I have a hard time rating this book. I'm between 3 and 4 stars, but that's all I can say :)

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### **Usha Bisht says**

I won this book in the Goodreads lucky draw :)I began the journey of you disappear sometime back and it felt the narration just started out of no where,without any context what so ever. This book took sometime to interest me. With diminished interested I kept on turning the pages. I was not really impressed by the introduction and the conclusion of the story, but the in between plot kept me hooked to it. I really enjoyed the core idea that the book dealt with.

The fundamental idea of the book is to make us think. How would I treat a criminal if I knew that he cannot help himself but commit those crimes as his brain cannot differentiate between whats good and whats bad.I was intrigued by the impact our neurological health can have on our psychological health. It can really happen with us and our near and dear ones. There really is a world hidden from ours day to day life that deals with the victims and families of the brain damage. This book is an honest insight into that life.

Fredrick is the character whose illness due to brain damage grew gradually and his entire persona changed. He

became a responsible and caring husband and a loving father. He also managed to coup his school of huge amount of money and gradually he became the worst nightmare of his family and his own self. How could he have helped any of these changes in him. He took the money as he thought he could get more money and benefit his school better. Provide his family better comforts. Sure what became of him after wards would have been too much to deal for anyone. The abusive, loud, lewd and self centered stranger, who was a constant remainder of loss, deceit, sadness and lament for his family and friends. Post his surgery he gradually improved but do you ever becomes your complete self with some part of you ripped out of you?

Mia has been described as the lonely, supportive, loving, caring and selfless wife who alone deals with the misery of her diseased husband, moody son Niklas and nosy in-laws.After reading the complete narration, I

cannot say with full confidence that she was a kind hearted soul. Sure she suffered a lot and supported Fredrick through his illness and without doubt she had been through a lot. But she didnt support her husband because she wanted to she supported him since she was expected to. I do not deny that severe changes in the personality of your spouse wouldnt make you bitter, but asking for help and admitting that you are not able to deal with it wont hurt anyone. Keeping all the angst inside and heading towards martyrdom seems so pretentious. She was attracted to Bernard. Both of them had spouses suffering from the brain damage and both had almost broken marriages where in they were both the bearers of suffering of living a married life without actually a partner. I do not despise the choice here. What I didnt like is Mia trying to replace Bernard's wife. Though she kept convincing herself that she was not. In the end she also chose to be with Bernard whose personality had been tremendously altered due to the accident and he himself was affected by brain damage.

We all can judge the characters and the story as we please. But they are all honest. The characters and the story alike. I kept on thinking what would have I done if I were to fill in the shoes of these characters and I kept on realizing, I might have done most of the similar things.

The best part of the book is the research involved and information shared via short articles and excerpts about the neurological and orbitofunctional disorders in people. I learned a lot after reading those articles and excerpts.

The book would have been a gem had the ending been more conclusive. So many threads were left just hanging. Throughout the book the characters were preparing for the hearing of Fredrick's case, but the narration ends the day before it. There are so many questions left unanswered. What came of Niklas, his love life, Helena and her life, the support group, was Fredrick convicted or did the jury agree that it was due to the disease that he committed the fraud, did he get accepted in his group of friends, did Mia finally find solace with Bernard the alteration of his brain damage of did she at a later stage again face issues again as she got tired of the perfect person she desired and craved some spontaneity, What became of Bernard's wife and kids.

There are many times when a narration left with lots of questions unanswered gives the readers a chance to use their imagination. But I believe this one narration needed to give the closure a direction by answering the questions left behind.

This is a good book to inspire the thinking of our brains to a entirely new reasoning we never give thought to. Its a good one time read!

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## **L'Artiste says**

I won this book in a goodreads giveaway, and I LOVED it! It is unlike any book I have ever read. I was deeply connected to the main 3 characters, while wound up in what was going to happen to them after the husband suffers a traumatic brain injury. I was enthralled by the story, but also LEARNED so much. It was much more than just a novel, and I always appreciate when a book can teach me something. Kudos to the author!!! I would love to read more by him.

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