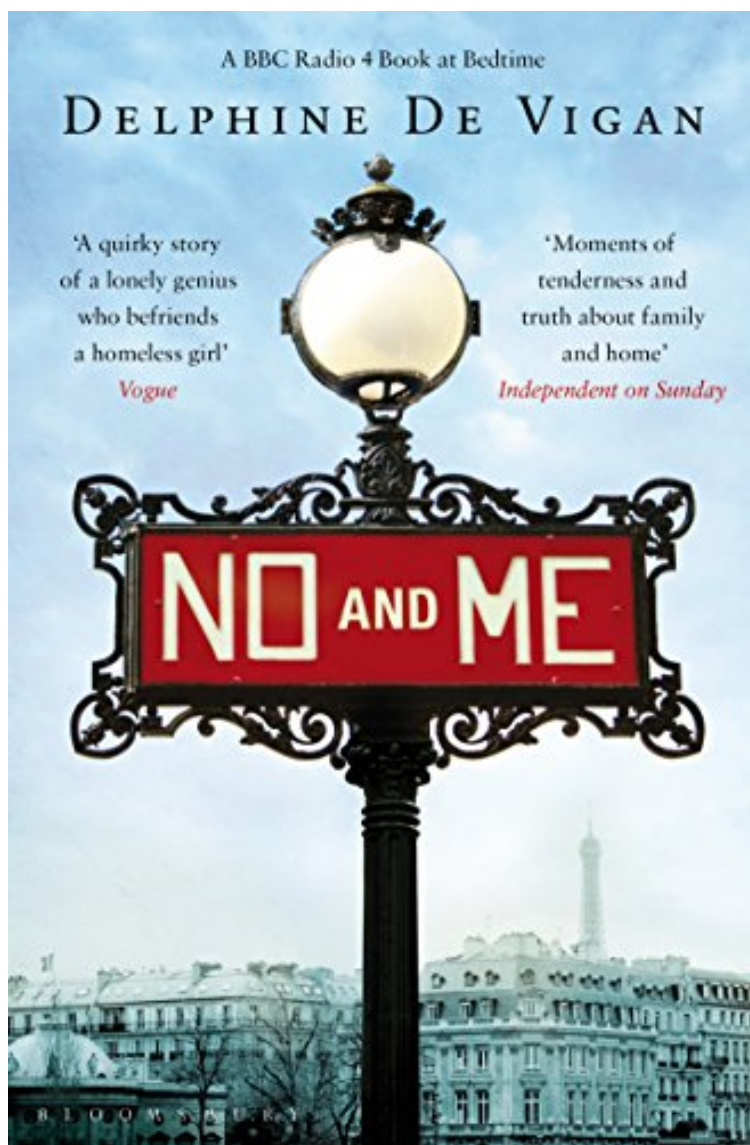


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No and Me



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le: 2010-08-02Sorti le: 2010-08-
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Lou Bertignac has an IQ of 160 and a good friend called Lucas, who gets her through the school day. At home her father cries in secret in the bathroom and her mother hasn't been out of the house properly for years. But Lou is about to change her life - and that of her parents - for good, all because of a school project she decides to do about the homeless. Through the project Lou meets No, a teenage girl living on the streets. As their friendship grows, Lou cannot bear that No is still on the streets when she goes back home - even if it is to a home that is saddened and desolate. So she asks her parents if No can come to live with them. To her astonishment, her parents - eventually - agree. No's presence forces Lou and her parents to finally face the sadness that has enveloped them. But No has disruptive as well as positive effects. Can this shaky newfound family continue to live together? A tense, brilliant novel tackling the true meaning

of home and homelessness. Extrait Miss Bertignac, I don't see your name on the list of presentations. Mr Marin is looking at me from a distance with one eyebrow raised, his hands on his desk. I'd reckoned without his long-range radar. I'd been hoping to get away with it, but I'm caught red-handed. Twenty-five pairs of eyes turn round, waiting for my answer. Brains has been caught out. Axelle Vernoux and La Germain stifle laughter behind their hands, and a dozen bracelets jingle in delight on their wrists. If only I could disappear a hundred miles under the earth, right down to the lithosphere, that would be convenient. I loathe presentations. I loathe talking in front of the class. I feel like a huge crack has opened beneath my feet, but nothing's moved, everything is stuck in slow motion, nothing's falling in. I wish I could faint right here and now. Just be struck down. Drop dead. There I'd lie, spreadeagled in my Converse Allstars, and Mr Marin would take his chalk and write on the blackboard: Here lies Lou Bertignac, top of the class, but silent and a loner. . . . I was going to put my name down. Good. What's your topic? The homeless. That's rather general. Can you be a bit more specific? Lucas is smiling at me. His eyes are huge. I could drown in them, or disappear, or let the silence swallow up Mr Marin and the whole class. I could take my Eastpak and leave without a word, the way Lucas does. I could apologise and say that I haven't a clue, I just said the first thing that came into my head. I'll go and see Mr Marin at the end of the lesson and explain that I can't do it, a presentation in front of the whole class is simply beyond me. I'm sorry, but I'll get a doctor's note if I have to: constitutionally unfit for any sort of presentation, all stamped and everything, and I'll be let off. But Lucas is looking at me, and I can tell that he's waiting for me to get myself out of this, that he's rooting for me, he's thinking that a girl like me can't make a fool of herself in front of twenty-five students. He's got his fist clenched. Any higher and he'd be brandishing it in the air, like football supporters encouraging their team. But suddenly the silence feels heavy, like we're in church. I'm going to follow the journey of a homeless girl, her life, erm . . . her story. I mean . . . how she ended up on the streets. A buzz goes through the rows. There's whispering. Very good. That's an excellent subject. Figures show that every year more and more women run away, and at a younger and younger age. What documentary sources are you planning to use, Miss Bertignac? I've nothing to lose. Or else so much that you couldn't count it on the fingers of one hand, or even ten, there is so much. Erm . . . interviews. I'm going to interview a young homeless woman. I met her yesterday and she's agreed. Thoughtful silence. On a pink sheet of paper, Mr Marin notes my name and the subject of my presentation. I'll put you down for 10th December. That will give you time to do some background research. He goes over the basic rules: don't take more than an hour, provide a socio-economic analysis, give examples . . . His voice tails off. Lucas's hand unclenches. I've got transparent wings, I'm flying above the tables. I close my eyes, I am a tiny speck of dust, an invisible particle, weightless as a sigh. The bell rings. Mr Marin dismisses us, and as I'm putting away my things and getting my jacket on, he calls me over. Miss Bertignac, a word, if I may. There goes my break. He's done this to me before a word by his reckoning equals a thousand for the rest of us. The others are hanging back, keen to hear. I wait and look down at my feet. My lace is undone as usual. How the hell can I have an IQ of 160 and not be able to tie my shoelaces? You should be careful. With your interviews, I mean. Don't meet unsuitable people. Perhaps your mother or father should go along with you. Don't worry. It's all sorted. My mother hasn't been out of the flat in years and my father cries secretly in the bathroom. That's what I should have told him. Then, with a single stroke of his pen, Mr Marin would have crossed me off his list. *Revue de presse* "Well-structured, with moments of tenderness and truth about family and home, inadequate parents and neglected children, No and Me is honest (as revealing and insightful about Lou and home life as it is about No and homelessness) but also at least partially reassuring. Lou's 'large-scale experiment against fate' might not go quite according to plan, but de Vigan shows that things really can change, albeit not always in the ways we've anticipated, and not always in ways we can control." The Independent (UK)