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## Mister Max: The Book of Kings

by Cynthia Voigt, Iacopo Bruno

**Price: \$19.99**(Hardcover)

Published: September 08, 2015

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**From the Publisher:** In Act III of Newbery Medalist Cynthia Voigt's Mister Max trilogy, the solutioneer sets off to rescue his missing parents! Ever since Max's parents were spirited away on a mysterious ship, he has longed to find them. He's solved case after case for other people in his business as "solutioneer." And he's puzzled out the coded messages sent by his father. He doesn't know exactly what's happened, but he knows his parents are in danger—and it's up to Max to save them. Max and his friends (and a few old foes) don disguises and set sail on a rescue mission. It will take all of Max's cleverness and daring to outmaneuver the villains that lie in wait: power-hungry aristocrats, snake-handling assassins, and bombardier pastry chefs. And behind the scenes, a master solutioneer is pulling all the strings.... Has Max finally met his match? "Immensely appealing."...

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## What We Say

Apparently, I need to catch up on my Cynthia Voigt. This excellent conclusion to her Mister Max trilogy has left me a little gobsmacked, if I'm honest. Did she plan the ramping up of the complexity and emotional depth the way it played out? I read all three books within a few weeks so perhaps that helped me appreciate the arc even more. Anyway, I suppose you could read the third book alone, but why would you? It's a trilogy and meant to be read that way. In Book One, Max lives in a quaint sort of turn of the century kingdom with his parents who run a theatrical troupe. Max loves them and the theater but it's not quite his thing. Exactly what his thing will be, this 12 year old boy isn't quite sure about. His parents are lured to a far-away country to establish a new national theater company and Max is accidentally left behind with his librarian grandmother. They realize the parents have been kidnapped and worry and worry and worry. To maintain his independence, Max becomes sort of a detective, though he insists on calling himself The Solutioneer. (Why the books aren't called The Solutioneer remains a mystery to me.) There's also a girl that annoys Max with all her questions and a boarder in Max's home who has a mysterious past and other dangling threads. So there's the set up. At first, Max solves rather mundane or obvious problems like finding a lost dog. In Book Two, however, Voigt takes a quantum leap forward: Max is now solving problems of the human heart and showing a great deal of insight. In Book Three, Max and his friends head off to rescue the boy's parents in the Latin American dictatorship they're trapped in. The final volume is especially good, with remarkably complex passages depicting that awkward moment when a child sees their parents as people, flaws and all, not to mention some completely earned but still bravura changes that make clear the pattern Voigt was creating from the very start. Read Book One alone and -- like me -- you might consider it a pleasant diversion, with so-so mysteries but appealing characters. Book Two is much better and Book Three deepens the entire work. It's like a magic trick the way she suddenly reveals the life Max was intended for all along. I plan to read more Voigt right away. Highly recommended. - Michael Giltz P.S. I'm convinced we'll see more of Mister Max and his eyes, which are an odd sort of grey, perhaps the grey of a computer screen when you've just powered it down and the energy seems to be draining away or perhaps the grey of a London fog when you don't quite know where you're going and there's no other light around except the dull glow of street lamps that haven't been cleaned in a while, a murky sort of menacing but perhaps not really dangerous grey. Something like that.

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