



Disappearing Act: A Mother's Journey to the Underground

Sharon Murphy

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"I heard drawers and closet doors open and close as the policemen continued their search in the bedrooms. My files were stacked in the office. Those papers could connect my name and my face. My picture albums were piled on the floor. If the officers opened them, they'd see that I was the mother they were looking for. I thought of everything they might find to bring my charade crashing down around me." With the intensity of a mystery novel and the heart of a true life drama, this heartbreaking memoir details Murphy's years spent on the run with her young son. *Disappearing Act* is a gripping story that reveals the saga of an ordinary woman's struggle against the influence of her ex-husband's powerful mother, famed author Maya Angelou. With extraordinary honesty, Murphy recounts her marriage to Angelou's charismatic son, Guy Johnson. Guy becomes violent, but not before the author gives birth to their son Colin. To protect Colin, Sharon pursues a divorce. But money, power, and influence put Colin in Guy's custody, despite his violent behavior. Realizing that neither she nor her son would ever live in peace and safety, Murphy makes the controversial decision to kidnap her own son. *Disappearing Act* chronicles the harrowing years Murphy and Colin spent on the run, as Guy and Angelou attempt to track them down. Eventually Sharon is caught and Colin is returned to his abusive father. Her subsequent incarceration and release are recounted in painful detail. The author has found an astonishing emotional truth about these events that both scarred and defined her family. As the years pass, Murphy comes to recognize and identify the hopes, fantasies, weaknesses, and family patterns that led to the decisions she made. The issues that she brought to her marriage, and to her relationship with her son begin to crystallize and provide a kind of platform from which to move on with her life. Entangled in a situation she did not understand, Murphy reflects in *Disappearing Act* on the choices she made that turned out to have consequences beyond her imagination. An intensely personal story, this memoir ultimately describes a universal journey of love, acceptance, and redemption. Praise for *Disappearing Act ~ A Mother's Journey to the Underground* "Sharon Murphy has written a gripping, all-too-real memoir about her custody battle and her flight "underground". Murphy is both bold and humble as she confronts an abusive husband who is also an abusive father and his formidable mother, the writer Maya Angelou. Her scenes with both Angelou and with the writer's son ring true. They are chilling, informative, dramatic. Brilliantly, Murphy managed to protect her child for five years. When she is found, Angelou herself came to collect her grandson, and returned him to his father. "This is a writer's book. It is also a mother's book. Murphy had strong sisters who helped her and a network of supportive women, including feminists and lesbian feminists. Murphy was also turned in by a woman. As the author of, *Mothers on Trial. The Battle for Children and Custody* (1986, 2011) and *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman*, (2002, 2009) I can assure you that Murphy exaggerates nothing." Brava, Sharon! Phyllis Chesler Ph.D is an Emerita Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies at City University of New York. She is a best-selling author, a legendary feminist leader, a psychotherapist and an expert courtroom witness. "Disappearing Act is a story of a woman's fierce bravery and tenacity, and her refusal to be destroyed in the face of experiences that might so easily have crushed her. I love the pluck and humor and above all the big heart of this woman, and her willingness to reveal not only her moments of rare courage but just as much so her failings, as she fights not only for her son but for her own survival against extraordinary obstacles." Joyce Maynard Joyce Maynard is the author of fourteen books, including *Labor Day* now a major motion picture.

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