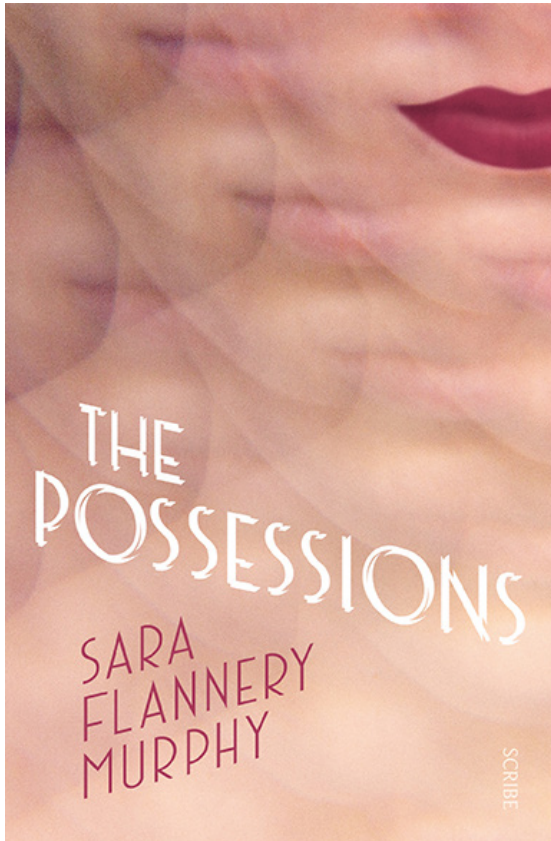


The Possessions

SARA FLANNERY MURPHY



BOOK DETAILS

Format: Paperback

ISBN: 9781925321913

RRP: \$32.99



AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Sara Flannery Murphy was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, and now lives in Oklahoma with her husband and son. Her shorter work has appeared in journals including *Storyglossia* and *Tammy*. *The Possessions* is her first novel.

Who will prevail – the woman or the ghost?

For five years Edie has worked for the Elysian Society, a secretive organisation that provides a very specialised service: its clients come to reconnect with their dead loved ones by channelling them through living ‘Bodies’. Edie is one such Body, perhaps the best in the team, renowned for her professionalism and discretion.

But everything changes when Patrick, a distraught husband, comes to look for traces of his drowned wife in Edie. The more time that Edie spends as the glamorous, enigmatic Sylvia, the closer she comes to falling in love with Patrick ... and the more mysterious the circumstances around Sylvia’s death appear.

As Edie falls under Sylvia’s spell, she must discover not only the couple’s darkest secrets, but also her own long-buried memories and desires — before it’s too late.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Each of the bodies has a different approach to their strange line of work. Edie is obsessive; Dora is curious; Lee focuses on his clients; Ana is a rule-breaker who doesn’t take things seriously. Do you think one approach might work better than the others?
2. The bodies are required to use fake names when at work. Why do you think this is important? Do you think it is more helpful for the clients or for the bodies?
3. The bodies’ names are taken from Greek mythology. Does your own knowledge of mythology change your reading of the characters?

REVIEWS

'*The Possessions* might be the most affecting, riveting novel about love and obsession I've read in a decade. Sara Flannery Murphy possesses the dystopian imagination of Margaret Atwood and the keen feminist incisiveness of Heidi Julavits, but the haunting, seductive prose is all her own. This is a literary ghost story for a whole new generation.'

CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN,
AUTHOR OF *ORIENT*

'I was totally immersed in the strange, beautiful world of Sara Flannery Murphy's *The Possessions*. A gripping, chilling read that's part love story, part mystery, and completely original, it's sensuous, scary, and utterly thrilling. I've never read anything quite like it.' **ANTON DISCLAFANI,** AUTHOR OF *THE YONAHLOSSEE RIDING CAMP FOR GIRLS*

'An enthralling meditation on grief and memory cloaked in suspenseful psychodrama, *The Possessions* dissolves the boundaries of past and present and artfully, heartbreakingly maps the consequences of transgressive desire. Sara Flannery Murphy has written the best kind of ghost story.' **ROBIN WASSERMAN,** AUTHOR OF *GIRLS ON FIRE*

4. Patrick's past marriage to Sylvia complicates his relationship with Edie. Generally, do you think that past relationships tend to haunt new ones?
5. In your view, is Patrick truly in love with Edie? Is Edie truly in love with Patrick? What would have to happen for them to have a true romance?
6. Patrick seeks out the Elysian Society as a way to communicate with his wife, but Edie realises that the couple may not have been honest with each other during Sylvia's life. Do you think Patrick walks away with any closure or insights at the end of the book?
7. Many of Edie's decisions are driven by a desire to move on from the past. Do you feel that Edie's guilt is proportionate to her actions? Do you understand Patrick's reaction when he learns about her past?
8. Mrs Renard excuses some of the decisions she makes by claiming she's providing a valuable service for grieving people. On page 288, she says, 'Weigh all the good the Elysian Society has done over the decades ... and then weigh it against this. One casualty.' In your opinion, have Mrs. Renard and the Elysian Society helped the community?
9. If you knew that an organization like the Elysian Society existed, would you consider trying its services? How would you feel if you learned that a friend or family member was visiting the Elysian Society?



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