



Poppy Shakespeare: A Novel

Clare Allan

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The most extraordinary look at madness since *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Highly original and darkly funny, Clare Allan's debut novel explores the relationship between N., a patient in a mental institution, and Poppy Shakespeare, a new and disturbingly 'sane' arrival who finds herself having to feign mental illness in order to be released.

There are 25 residents at the Dorothy Fish, one for each letter of the alphabet - the 'X' chair is vacant. The day hospital sits on the bottom floor of an impossibly tall tower, stretching so high into the sky that its uppermost residents can see right round the world and back in through the window behind them. The system is simple: the crazier you are, the higher up the tower they put you.

When Poppy Shakespeare arrives, N. has already been at Dorothy Fish for thirteen years, and spends her days quietly, smoking in the common room and swapping medication with her fellow patients. But what happens in the next six months will change both of their lives forever.

In this inventive and brutally comic novel, Clare Allan captures the familiar and sometimes terrifying idiosyncrasies of a modern institution, asking the question: who is mad and who is sane? And who gets to decide? By turns hilarious and heartbreaking, *Poppy Shakespeare* is a significant achievement of voice and insight.

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