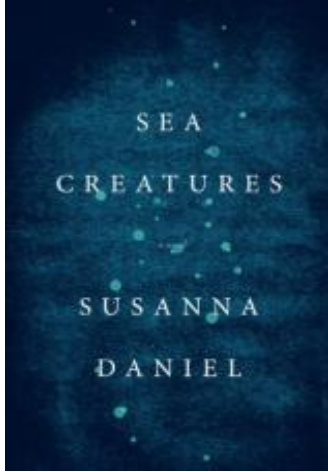


Sea Creatures

by Susanna Daniel



About the Book

When Georgia returns to her hometown of Miami, her toddler son and husband in tow, she is hoping for a fresh start. They have left Illinois trailing scandal and disappointment in their wake: Graham's sleep disorder has cost him his tenure at Northwestern; Georgia's college advising business has gone belly up; and three-year old Frankie is no longer speaking. Miami feels emptier without Georgia's mother, who died five years earlier, but her father and stepmother offer a warm welcome—as well as a slip for the dilapidated houseboat Georgia and Graham have chosen to call home. And a position studying extreme weather patterns at a prestigious marine research facility offers Graham a professional second chance.

When Georgia takes a job as an errand runner for an artist who lives alone in the middle of Biscayne Bay, she's surprised to find her life changes dramatically. Time spent with the intense hermit at his isolated home might help Frankie gain the courage to speak, it seems. And it might help Georgia reconcile the woman she was with the woman she has become.

But when Graham leaves to work on a ship in Hurricane Alley and the truth behind Frankie's mutism is uncovered, the family's challenges return, more complicated than before. Late that summer, as a hurricane bears down on South Florida, Georgia must face the fact that her choices have put her only child in grave danger.

SEA CREATURES is a mesmerizing exploration of the high stakes of marriage and parenthood, the story of a woman coming into her own as a mother, forced to choose between her marriage, her child, and the possibility of new love.

Discussion Guide

1. At the book's opening, Georgia remarks, "It seems to me that what worries us most . . . is least likely to happen, while what is most likely is some unimagined event, and how do we prepare for that?" How would you answer this question?
2. Talk about Georgia and Graham's marriage. Are they happy? Could they ever be happy? Was it fair of her to have a child with him? While they are on vacation by themselves, Georgia calls Graham reckless. Is he?
3. Consider the men in Georgia's life: Graham, Charlie, Frankie. Each has a distinctive characteristic. How does this particular aspect of the character influence Georgia and their relationship?
4. What draws Georgia to Charlie? Might events have turned out differently if she'd never met him or would her marriage to Graham have changed anyway?
5. How would you cope with a child like Frankie? Is Georgia doing the right thing by using sign language? Compare Frankie's interaction with Charlie and with Graham. Why won't Graham sign with his son?
6. When Georgia meets Dr. Sonia, her new pediatrician, she tells her that she spends every waking minute with Frankie, and the doctor asks her why. Were you surprised at this question? Is a hovering parent necessarily a good parent?
7. What impact does receiving Charlie's mermaid sketch have on Georgia? Were they in love? Could anything have worked out between them?
8. In thinking back over the events that occur involving Graham and Frankie's accident, Georgia asks, "Did I betray my own son?" What do you think? Could Frankie's accident have been prevented? What about Graham -- was his fate choice or an accident?
9. Were you satisfied by the ending? Did it all work out the way it should have? Could it have been any different?
10. What is the significance of the title SEA CREATURES?

Author Bio

Critical Praise

"A captivating, haunting novel about the complexities of the human heart and its attachments, terrain as slippery and beautiful and disaster prone as Daniel's South Florida."

? Abraham Verghese, author of CUTTING FOR STONE

"Susanna Daniel's powers of creation are so vast, and the South Floridian landscape she describes so vivid, that this life-long Manhattanite briefly thought of hurricane-proofing her own windows. But what I found most stirring in *SEA CREATURES* is how deftly Daniel exposes one of the most agonizing realities of parenthood: that no matter how hard we try, or how endless our love for our children may be, we are hampered by our own limitations, sometimes even tragically."

? Helen Schulman, author of *THIS BEAUTIFUL LIFE*

"Susanna Daniel brings an uncommon intimacy to her characters' lives, and also to the landscape where those lives unfold—a cartographer not only of the shore and the ocean but of the passions, bruises, joys, and insufficiencies of the human heart."

? Kevin Brockmeier, author of *THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEAD*

"Daniel returns to Stiltsville's South Florida in a second novel filled with domestic upheaval, difficult choices, and far-reaching consequences. Daniel's verdant descriptions of salt and sea continue to shine, as does her portrayal of a mother struggling to protect her son."

? *Publishers Weekly*

"Don't confuse the waterfront setting with light beach reading; this is substantive domestic drama—readers interested in families coping with disabilities will find Frankie particularly compelling as he navigates changing relationships and obstacles."

? *Library Journal*

"A tender tale of a woman navigating the responsibilities and risks of parenthood."

? *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

"An intelligent page-turner (that is, the dream combination) about, among other things, South Florida, art, insomnia, and marriage."

? Curtis Sittenfeld, author of PREP and SISTERLAND

"Daniel's writing is rich in description ? of both its lush Florida settings and her characters' emotional landscapes ? that draws the reader in."

? *Isthmus*

" SEA CREATURES is perfect for summer reading, a more literary offering than your usual beach fare. Author Susanna Daniel crafts beautiful, dreamy descriptions of ocean life that threaten to lull readers into a sense of complacency."

? *The Daily News Journal* (Tennessee)

"There?s a charmer at the heart of SEA CREATURES?.Almost like an action-filled, emotional memoir?.Gripping."

? Associated Press

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