



The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark

Muriel Spark

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark

Muriel Spark

The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark Muriel Spark

I aim to startle as well as please," Muriel Spark has said, and in these eight marvelous ghost stories she manages to do both to the highest degree. As with all matters in the hands of Dame Muriel her spooks are entirely original. A ghost in her pantheon can be plaintive or a bit vengeful, or perhaps may not even be aware of being a ghost at all. One in fact is the ghost of a man who isn't even dead yet. Another takes the bus home from work, believing she is still alive, though she is haunted by an odious tune stuck in her head (which her murderer had been relentlessly humming), and distressed by a "feeling of incompleteness." And a reflective ghost recalls her mortal days of enjoying "the glory of the world, as if it would never pass. Spark has a flair for confiding ghosts: "I must explain that I departed this life nearly five years ago. But I did not altogether depart this world. There were those odd things still to be done which one's executors can never do properly." In her case the odd things include cheerily hailing her murderer, "Hallo George!" and driving him mad. The remarkably nonchalant stories here include some of her most wicked and famous "The Seraph and the Zambesi," "The Hanging Judge," and "The Portobello Road" and they all gleam with that special Spark sheen, the quality *The Times Literary Supplement* has hailed as "gloriously witty and polished."

The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark Details

Date : Published October 17th 2003 by New Directions (first published January 21st 2003)

ISBN : 9780811215497

Author : Muriel Spark

Format : Paperback 135 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Horror, Paranormal, Ghosts, Fantasy, Supernatural, Ghost Stories

 [Download The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark Muriel Spark

From Reader Review *The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark* for online ebook

Elizabeth Kadetsky says

I love these—I gave them four stars and not five because they seem like minor works in the context of her overall writing. I'm also not a huge fan of the collection compiled from the retrospect of an author's life including works spanning dozens of years. A great story collection is to me like a great rock album (each of PJ Harvey's or the obvious *White Album* etc by the Beatles), with a theme reverberating in each of the individual pieces, a set of concerns and obsessions that repeat and reveal an artist at a particular moment in time and emotional state. That said, the anchor story in this collection (*Portobello Road*, the last one) is haunting and reveals Spark as a great among the post-war authors of Europe whose fixation on death reveals the world at that moment of confusion and irrationality. Her style, simple sentences packed with more meaning than you are prepared for by their apparent ingenuousness, speaks to me the way Carver does.

Colin says

'*The Ghost Stories of Muriel Spark*' is a slightly misleading title. The stories contained in this book are not ghost stories in the (M. R.) Jamesian sense; they do not (apart from one) feature vengeful revenants destroying the equanimity of an otherwise ordered world, and some do not contain ghosts at all. What these tales do have in common is a supernatural element that just seems to be an organic development of the plot, but that's about as far as it goes. This is an entertaining and varied collection of stories, with some wonderful lines of classic Spark: 'it was my ambition to write about life, which I first had to see', or this bravura opening sentence of *The Portobello Road*: 'One day in my young youth at high summer, lolling with my lovely companions upon a haystack, I found a needle'. Odd, unexpected, sharp: the stories in this collection may not show Spark at her absolute best, but were a very satisfying way to spend a couple of days of my reading life.

David says

Eight of Muriel Spark's stories, all with ghosts. The first four are all very good, (*The Girl I Left Behind Me*, *The Hanging Judge*, *The Seraph and the Zambesi*, *The Leaf-Sweeper*) but the last four are even better. (*The House of the Famous Poet*, *Another Pair of Hands*, *The Executor*, *The Portobello Road*)

Spark has a way of hooking you from the first sentence. After only a few lines the story is set up, characters fully formed, and you as a reader are completely invested in the outcome. This is no small task, especially in short stories where it is of vital importance, and Spark does it so effortlessly, with wit and casual elegance.

If you only read one, read *The Portobello Road*, but please stick around for the others. You won't regret it.

Blair says

This hard-to-get-hold-of New Directions paperback contains eight short stories. I had read two of these – 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' and 'The Leaf-Sweeper' – in anthologies, and found both intriguing but flawed: the former gives away its whole plot in the title, and the latter hinges on an underdeveloped concept. I was interested to explore more of Spark's ghost stories. It turns out I actually find them kind of exhausting, and reading one after another only served to highlight their most offputting features.

'The House of the Famous Poet', for instance, is a bizarre story that initially appears to be quite straightforward and then takes a sharp turn for the surreal. I should have loved it, but it felt to me like a clever idea for the sake of a clever idea, something that *appears* meaningful but isn't constructed with enough depth to actually *be* meaningful. Others, like 'The Portobello Road', are saddled with irritating characters and choppy narratives. While discomfort is surely the goal, I just couldn't get on with them. The exception, and my favourite from the collection, is the really rather shocking 'The Hanging Judge'.

Nothing here matches the darkness and power of Spark's novella *The Driver's Seat*. Diverting, but certainly not the author's best work, and these are the type of short stories better enjoyed at intervals than read in quick succession.

[TinyLetter](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Tumblr](#)

Anna Powell says

Not at all what you imagine ghost stories to be.

Sarah says

Not sure that the stories in here quite deserved to be collected in a separate 'ghost stories' collection. Several weren't even really ghost stories.

I love Muriel Spark's writing but I was a bit underwhelmed by most of these. Portobello Road was pretty good, but what made the entire book worth it for me was 'the House of the Famous Poet' (apparently based on a real event in Spark's life) which I thought was tremendous and harrowing in that sly Muriel Spark way.

Gina says

I picked this up on a whim, intrigued by the price (50 cents) and the fact that it was so short. I liked this book well enough, but I guess it just wasn't really my cup of tea. Most ghost stories leave me a little bored, but I liked her style of writing enough that I picked up another of her books at the library.

Dustin says

[the twist is given away by the title of the collection (hide spoiler)]

Thomasin says

Obviously I love the collection because I love Spark. Not spooky, but still ghostly.

Claire Gordon-Bouvier says

I'm used to a more gothic style of ghost story, so I felt like there was something missing in these. There were some very interesting ideas and concepts, but the stories lacked atmosphere. I don't think ghost stories necessarily need to be scary; in fact I think some of the best ghost stories are not scary at all, but they still have a certain atmosphere and tension.

I was going to give this two stars, but I decided to add an extra one for *The Leaf-Sweeper*, which for me is the one that really stands out as a brilliant story. I absolutely love the following sentence: "And a few months later I heard that poor Johnnie was in a mental home, because he had Christmas on the brain and couldn't stop shouting about it." and also "The ghosts of the dead may be all right, but the ghost of mad Johnnie gave me the creeps." That is some truly great writing. And I really like the idea of having the ghost of a living man, too.

As for the other stories in the collection, I don't think any of them were bad as such, but they were rather forgettable. I don't think I can even remember what half of them were about now.

Maureen Lo says

1st and last story - my favourite.

Tammy says

This collection of "ghost stories" isn't watching-a-horror-film-through-your-fingers scary but is reminiscent of a ghost story told around a campfire.

But the writing is superb: "He looked as if he would murder me and he did." To be able to craft a single sentence that fine.

There are some amazing stories in this collection - *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, *The Executor*, and *The Portobello Road*.

Charles Dee Mitchell says

Anyone who grew up watching *The Twilight Zone* or remembers some of the spookier episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* will be onto the twist ending of "The Girl I Left Behind Me" within the first few pages. I was disappointed with this opening tale and thought that perhaps ghost stories were simply not Spark's

métier. But two pages into the second story, Sir Sullivan Stanley, a distinguished, elderly judge, hears the guilty verdict announced in the capital murder case he is hearing and experiences a spontaneous orgasm. We are in capable hands after all.

Muriel Spark has said of her writing, "I aim to startle and to please." In these eight ghostly tales she does just that. The settings include London during the blitz, a white enclave in Africa, and the Portobello Road. Her ghosts may be mournful or mischievous, and they intrude into the lives of the living in sometimes subtle but always unsettling ways. These polished tales hark back to a time when novelists like Edith Wharton, Henry James, and E. F. Benson turned on occasion and with great effects to the supernatural. Set them aside for a dreary winter day.

Christopher says

Thin, trite, predictable short stories with supernatural or magic realism elements. The prose is clean and precise, but the resolution in each case is foreshadowed much too clearly or never really strays from the initial premise. Along the way, there's an image or two of mild interest, and I almost liked "The House of the Famous Poet" for that.

Walter says

Comfy collection of spooky stories. Muriel Spark is so offhandedly assured in her writing that I imagine you will be quite please with any time you might choose to spend with her.
