



The Nobodies

Alanna Schubach

Blackstone Publishing

(270pp)

978-1-66509-577-8

The Nobodies is a compulsive psychological thriller that concerns the dark, obsessive side of women's friendships.

A childhood friend's return reawakens buried feelings in Alanna Schubach's thriller *The Nobodies*.

From their first day in elementary school, Nina and Jess were inseparable. Where one went, the other followed. Their closeness was solidified when they discovered that they could swap bodies (but not consciousnesses) by putting their foreheads together. For Nina, such swaps were a chance to be and become more. For Jess, they were a chance to experience something more stable. But their enmeshed relationship became all-consuming and addictive. Each came to want what the other had and became desperate to escape the perceived failings of her own life.

Then, five years ago, Nina and Jess had a terrible falling out. Now, Jess is back and wants to reconnect. Nina—who has issues with confidence and self-esteem, especially when it comes to communicating her needs—is cautious but willing. When Jess wants to begin switching bodies again, Nina finds herself repeating old patterns, unable to say no in the face of Jess's needs. This time, though, being each other carries more consequences, and leads to deeper betrayals, than either woman anticipated.

Even as they switch bodies, the women's truths are obscured from one another, as are their thoughts, emotions, and motivations. And the book plays the long game in establishing the transactional, manipulative, and obsessive nature of Jess and Nina's relationship. It includes intriguing insights into Nina's general state of mind, as well as her understandings, fears, and misgivings around her relationship with Jess. Jess is so secretive that Nina is left to infer what Jess does with her body, and her story is tense as a result. Jess's secretive nature becomes the novel's main source of conflict, though it is slow to reveal her jealousy.

Alternating between the past and the present and narrated from Nina's perspective, the split narrative uses a mirror effect to bridge the gaps between the timelines. From Jess's return to the first time the women switch bodies as adults, the present events precipitate a flood of memories about similar moments in the past. The story hurtles forward when the mirror images of the past and present converge, with two similar devastating events occurring. In keeping with the magnitude of these events, the final three chapters encompass a full third of the book, in which the women struggle to accept their own culpability and to understand their capacities for change.

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DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (August 1, 2022)

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