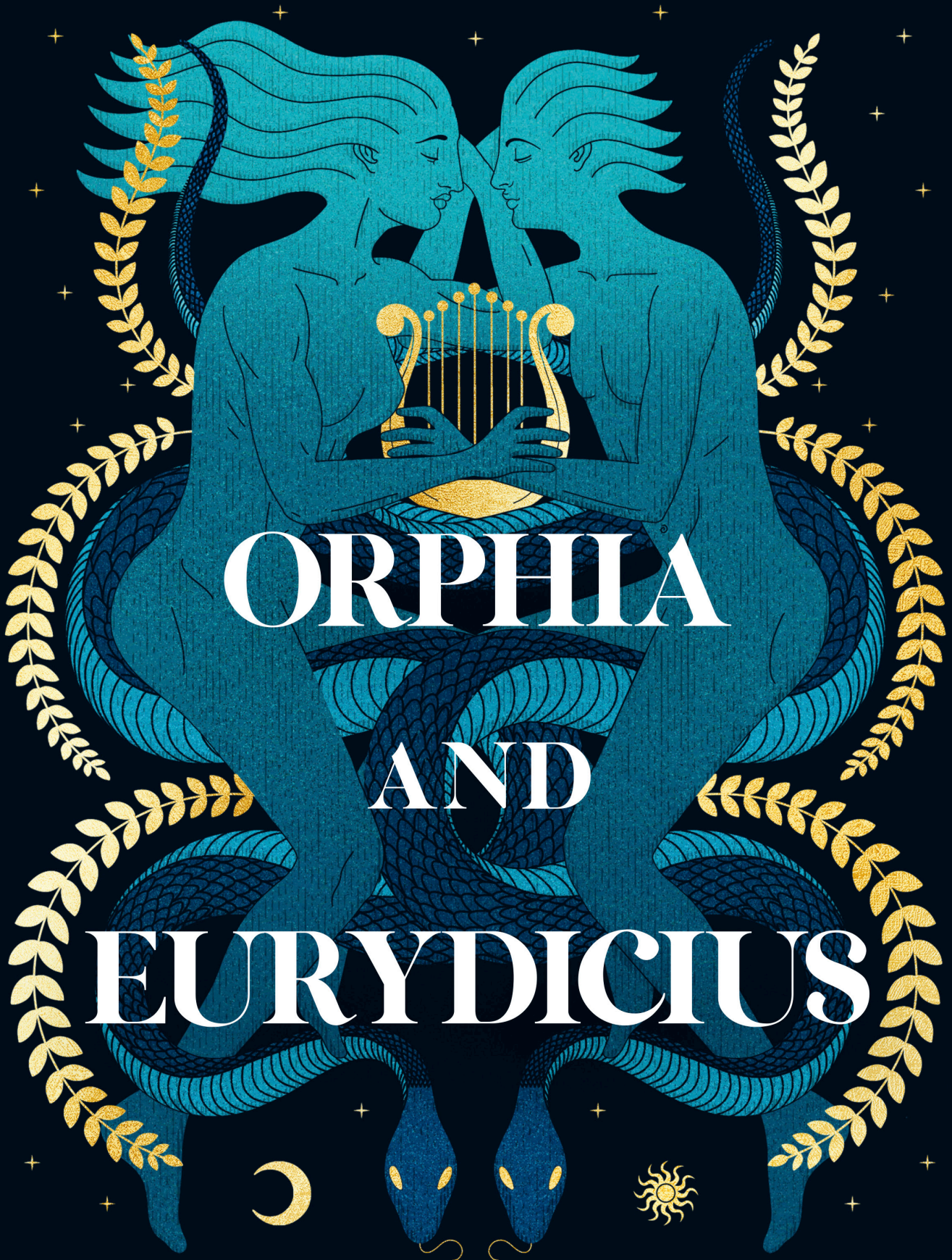


BOOK CLUB NOTES

‘Vivid, consuming, potent, and poetic’

HOLLY RINGLAND



ORPHIA

AND

EURYDICIUS

ELYSE JOHN

'If I must die, I would live, first.'

ABOUT THE BOOK

Their love transcends every boundary. Can it cheat death?

Orphia dreams of something more than the warrior crafts she's been forced to learn. Hidden away on a far-flung island, her blood sings with poetry and her words can move flowers to bloom and forests to grow ... but her father, the sun god Apollo, has forbidden her this art.

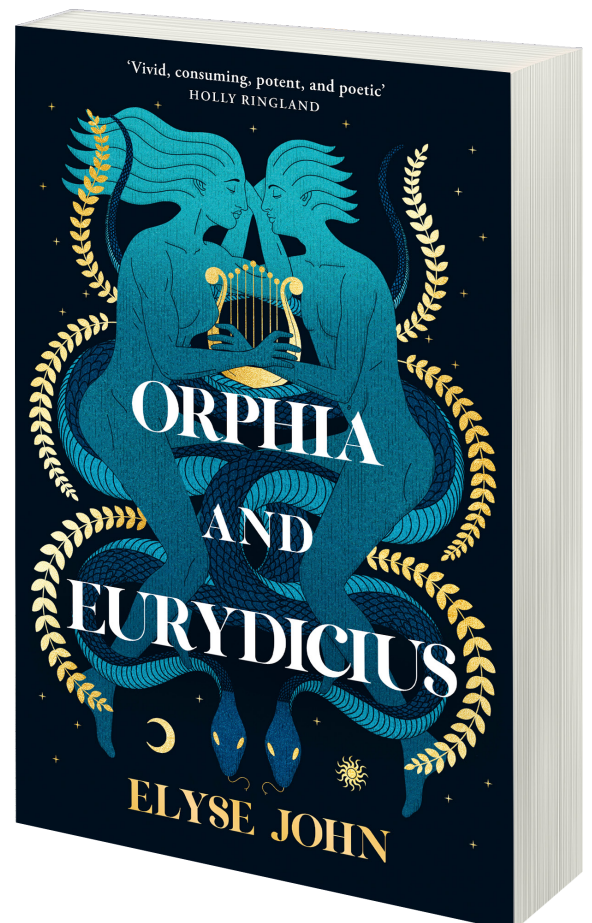
A chance meeting with a young shield-maker, Eurydicus, gives her the courage to use her voice. After wielding all her gifts to defeat one final champion, Orphia draws the scrutiny of the gods. Performing her poetry, she wins the protection of the goddesses of the arts: the powerful Muses, who welcome her to their sanctuary on Mount Parnassus. Orphia learns to hone her talents, crafting words of magic infused with history, love and tragedy.

When Eurydicus joins her, Orphia struggles with her desire for fame and her budding love. As her bond with the gentle shield-maker grows, she joins the Argonauts on their quest for the Golden Fleece. Facing dragons, sirens and ruthless warriors on the voyage, Orphia earns unparalleled fame, but she longs to return to Eurydicus.

Yet she has a darker journey to make - one which will see her fight for her love with all the power of her poetry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elyse John is a writer and a poet. She studied literature, writing and French at university, completing a PhD. Her poetry nominations include the Pushcart Prize and several major Australian prizes. She has published a collection of poetry and her poems feature in journals in Australia, Europe and Japan. Inspired by her late brother, she creates work in his memory. She lives in Melbourne, Australia.





PRAISE FOR *ORPHIA AND EURYDICIUS*

‘Like all enchanted books, the story of Elyse Johns’ *Orphia and Eurydicius* is vivid, consuming, potent, and poetic. This gender-flipping, feminist retelling is not just a love story for the ages, but a moving, magical ode to the power of using our voices, and of being who we are in the world.’ HOLLY RINGLAND, author of *The Seven Skins of Esther Wilding*

‘As I read, I imagined the muses beside Elyse John, focusing her mind and guiding her hand. The writing is poetic and evocative, and the story will thrill readers who have long suspected something is missing from the classics of Greek myth.’ PIP WILLIAMS, author of *The Bookbinder of Jericho*

‘This book hooked me from its opening lines ... Music and poetry, art and magic are woven together in this dazzling fable which ultimately asks: how far are we willing to go for the ones we love? Elyse John has taken one of the most beautiful and tragic love stories ever told and infused it with a modern sensibility. Readers will swoon.’ LAUREN CHATER, author of *The Winter Dress*

‘A timeless story told in rich, poetic language ... a book for lovers of myth, passion and transporting historical fiction. John brilliantly reimagines the past while crafting a moving tale of love that challenges outdated gender roles, and of grief drawn from the depths of experience. The mesmerising landscapes, the journeys of sea and fire, encircle this very human story in the evocative realm of legend.’ KATHERINE BRABON, author of *The Shut Ins*

‘A beautiful, poetic ode to Greek myth, love, and the sheer power of women’s art and women’s voices.’ TASHA SURI, author of the *Burning Kingdoms* series

‘Spins a bewitching tale of courage, love, and defiance, giving voice and agency to the women in Greek tales who are so often defined by the men they are associated with. Orphia’s poetry may bring the gods to tears; John’s words have the same effect on us mere mortals. Tragic and triumphant, a must-read!’ ANDREA STEWART, author of *The Bone Shard Daughter*

‘Elyse John has written that rare novel, one that has heart and wisdom, adventure and poetry, and all the while it pulses with a great political purpose. It’s a marvel.’ NIGEL FEATHERSTONE, author of *My Heart is a Little Wild Thing*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. In *Orphia and Eurydicus*, Orphia finds her creative voice and works at becoming a better storyteller. Her poetry creates magic, drawing nature to her. Have any stories been magical in your life? And what do you think is the power of stories?
2. Throughout the story we get snippets of Orphia's poetry. Which poems made an impression on you, and why?
3. Eurydicus is a shield-maker in the novel. What does this symbolise, with regards to his personality and how he fits (or doesn't fit) with the expectations and norms for men?
4. Orphia leads the way in her romance with Eurydicus. Did you find this interesting? Could you relate to it or connect with it?
5. In an intimate moment, Orphia and Eurydicus discuss their romantic history, sexuality, and preferences. How do these elements feed into their romance and their dynamic together?
6. Women's communities and traditions are a theme in the novel. What role do they serve in the story?
7. The author based some of the descriptions of Mt. Parnassus and Mt. Olympus (and specific places on the mountains like Delphi, Dion, the slope of Mt. Olympus and the summit of Mt. Parnassus) on her own experience visiting and observing these places in Greece. How did the descriptions of these locations add to the story? Did any of them evoke feelings for you, or carry symbolism?
8. Orphia refuses to "let go" or "move on" from the death of someone she loves. What do you think about the way she grieves? How does it compare with what you learned about death and loss growing up? Do you think that different ways of grieving are well supported in society?
9. Why do you think poetry and nature are connected in the story? Why do animals, plants and the elements respond to Orphia's poetry?
10. If you could take any of the supporting female characters in the novel as your mentor – Calliope, Hera, Medea, Atalanta, Erato, Clio, Melpomene, Gaia, Mnemosyne, Persephone, etc. – who would you choose, and what would you seek to learn from them?

