

SEAN MURPHY

Meet Sean Murphy, an award-winning author, columnist, poet, professor and executive director of the literary non-profit 1455.



BIO

Sean Murphy is founder of the non-profit 1455 Literary Arts, and directs the Center for Story at Shenandoah University. He has appeared on *NPR's "All Things Considered"* and been quoted in *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, and *AdAge*. A long-time columnist for *PopMatters*, his work has also appeared in *Salon*, *The Village Voice*, *Washington City Paper*, *The Good Men Project*, *Sequestrum*, *Blue Mountain Review*, and others. His chapbook, *The Blackened Blues*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2021. His second collection of poems, *Rhapsodies in Blue* was published by Kelsay Books in 2023. His third collection, *Kinds of Blue*, and *This Kind of Man*, his first collection of short fiction, are forthcoming in 2024. He has been nominated four times for the Pushcart Prize, twice for Best of Net, and his book *Please Talk about Me When I'm Gone* was the winner of *Memoir Magazine's* 2022 Memoir Prize.

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This Kind of Man



ABOUT

This Kind of Man offers an unvarnished look at life in 21st Century America, excavating the complicated, tender, wild truth of what it is to be a man across generations and relationships. These stories interrogate the pressures and tensions of late-stage capitalism, and the ways men grapple with them, often without success. Issues such as marriage, fatherhood, aggression, alcoholism, gender expectations, generational backlash, and the inexorable dread of death, abound.

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This Kind of Man

250 WORD DESCRIPTION

This Kind of Man offers an unvarnished look at life in 21st Century America, excavating the complicated, tender, wild truth of what it is to be a man across generations and relationships. These stories interrogate the pressures and tensions of contemporary life, and the ways men grapple with them, often without success. Issues such as marriage, fatherhood, aggression, alcoholism, gender expectations, generational backlash, and the inexorable dread of death, abound.

Many of these stories live within a slow implosion of coping, and often failing, as well as those who refuse to succumb, addressing concerns oft-discussed, or not discussed enough, in mainstream print: gun violence, the recent history of coal country Appalachia, sports-related concussions, illegal immigration (and the jobs many of these ostensibly unwelcome folks are obliged to do), homelessness, and the inability of men to honestly connect or communicate.

Far from excusing or exonerating toxic males, this collection locates their violence (toward others, against oneself) in the context of a deadening culture and the false narratives that prevail in an exploitative, zero-sum game capitalist model, where those without are encouraged to quarrel with similarly overworked and underpaid, mostly blue-collar workers. We see that our received notions of manhood and masculinity are inculcated—from the beginning and by design—to ensure willing participation in a system where the overwhelming majority are excluded from the start. We witness the way these dysfunctions are handed down like inheritance, and how every cliché, from fighting to drinking to intolerance of dissent and distrust of others, is a carefully constructed trap, preventing solidarity, empathy, and love (for others, for one's self).

This Kind of Man

ADVANCED PRAISE

This Kind of Man, a suite of dramatic monologues and meditations, seems to pick up where Raymond Carver left off: anatomizing all the ways that American masculinity finds itself adrift, with a special thought for the women in the same lifeboat. Murphy sees how we live so plainly and clearly that, in the best possible way, it hurts.

—**Louis Bayard**, author of *The Pale Blue Eye*

For those of us who powered through complicated relationships with our fathers. For those of us who still struggle with what being a man means and what it doesn't mean. Sean Murphy offers a beautiful, honest and heart-rending portrait of what it means and could mean. But, most importantly, casts the brightest light on what it means to be human.

—**Brian Broome**, author of *Punch Me Up to the Gods*

The stories in Sean Murphy's extraordinary collection *This Kind of Man* are swift, sharp, sometimes harsh, often sad, but so absolutely, transcendently honest that the final effect is thrilling, a form of liberation. I know of no other eulogy for the post-war American male that so deftly captures the mingled love and anger of fathers and sons.

—**Robert Anthony Siegel**, author of *Criminals: My Family's Life on Both Sides of the Law*

In *This Kind of Man*, Sean Murphy excavates the complicated, tender, wild truth of what it is to be a man across generations and relationships. His wistful, funny, precise honesty lights up the page and helps the reader see the complexity of the filter of maleness. An insightful and necessary book.

—**Karen E. Bender**, author of *Refund*, Finalist 2015 National Book Award

With its refreshing vulnerability, frankness, and insights, *This Kind of Man* fills a void in our literary landscape by artfully capturing both the tender and tormented sides of masculinity. Sean Murphy's courageous stories do what groundbreaking literature should do—simultaneously comfort and disturb its readers. This is an important, indispensable read for our times.

—**Whitney Collins**, author of *Big Bad and Ricky & Other Love Stories*

This Kind of Man

ADVANCED PRAISE CONTINUED

Twenty-first-century manhood is a minefield – a terrain riddled with hidden dangers. A wrong word, a long-held grudge, even a mistimed joke can easily end in disaster. Traversing such explosive territory requires tremendous skill, a bucketful of courage, and no small amount of humor. Sean Murphy's *This Kind of Man* has all three, in spades.

—**David McGlynn**, author of *One Day You'll Thank Me: Lessons from an Unexpected Fatherhood*

This Kind of Man examines the moving target of modern masculinity and asks, from multiple angles, What is a man? The discourse around this question has been shockingly absent from the literary landscape, whether due to a lack of bravery or a certain paralysis that accompanies such an inquiry. Yet Murphy dives in head-first, offering stories that explore marriage, fatherhood, aggression, alcoholism, gender expectations, generational backlash, and more with nuance, humor, and an abundance of truth. His prose thrillingly invites us to think deeply. Instead of hiding from what it means to be a man today, he gives us a broad canvas from which to take in the answers, plural, to this essential question.

—**Cheryl Della Pietra**, author of *Gonzo Girl*

From yearnings never expressed by “strong and silent” types to competitive father/son relationships, veteran misogynists and burgeoning incels, Murphy's new collection looks straight at the worst traits of the white American male with a view to the future where these men can do better, be better, think beyond themselves. A timely, gripping read by a courageous writer.

—**Courtney Maum**, author of *The Year of the Horses*