



Faithful Place (Dublin Murder Squad, Book 3)

By Tana French

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From Tana French, “the most interesting, most important crime novelist to emerge in the past 10 years” (*The Washington Post*), the bestseller called “the most stunning of her books” (*The New York Times*) and a finalist for the Edgar Award. Don't miss her newest, *The Trespasser*, now available.

Back in 1985, Frank Mackey was a nineteen-year-old kid with a dream of escaping his family's cramped flat on Faithful Place and running away to London with his girl, Rosie Daly. But on the night they were supposed to leave, Rosie didn't show. Frank took it for granted that she'd dumped him—probably because of his alcoholic father, nutcase mother, and generally dysfunctional family. He never went home again. Neither did Rosie. Then, twenty-two years later, Rosie's suitcase shows up behind a fireplace in a derelict house on Faithful Place, and Frank, now a detective in the Dublin Undercover squad, is going home whether he likes it or not.

Getting sucked in is a lot easier than getting out again. Frank finds himself straight back in the dark tangle of relationships he left behind. The cops working the case want him out of the way, in case loyalty to his family and community makes him a liability. Faithful Place wants him out because he's a detective now, and the Place has never liked cops. Frank just wants to find out what happened to Rosie Daly—and he's willing to do whatever it takes, to himself or anyone else, to get the job done.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, July 2010: The past haunts in Tana French novels. That which was buried is brought to light and wreaks hell--on no one moreso than Frank Mackey, beloved undercover guru and burly hero first mentioned in French's second book about the Undercover Squad, *The Likeness*. Faithful Place is Frank's old neighborhood, the town he fled twenty-two years ago, abandoning an abusive alcoholic father, harpy mother, and two brothers and sisters who never made it out. They say going home is never easy, but for Frank, investigating the cold case of the just-discovered body of his teenage girlfriend, it is a tangled, dangerous journey, fraught with mean motivations, black secrets, and tenuous alliances. Because he is too close to the case, and because the Place (including his family) harbors a deep-rooted distrust of cops, Frank must undergo his investigation furtively, using all the skills picked up from years of undercover work to trace the killer and the events of the night that changed his life. *Faithful Place* is Tana French's best book yet (readers familiar with *In the Woods* and *The Likeness* will recognize this as an incredible feat), a compelling and cutting mystery with the hardscrabble, savage Mackey clan at its heart. --Daphne Durham

Sophie Hannah and Tana French: Author One-on-One



Sophie: Someone said to me recently that they found it strange we openly say we like each other's work, when we should surely regard each other as "the competition." I found this idea really weird. As far as I'm concerned, the only competition any writer ought to be interested in is the competition between good writing and bad writing. So, while I get very cross and resentful when a book that I think is terrible does well, I love it when books I think are great do well--I feel that the right side, i.e. good writing, is winning the competition, which I feel benefits me as much as anyone else, because I want to live in a world where brilliant books are valued. Also, if I think a book is better than anything I could write, then I want it to do better than my books in order to reflect that. I suppose what I'm saying is that I want there to be a meritocracy of literature. Would you agree or disagree?

Tana: I'd definitely love a meritocracy of literature--both for reasons of principle (same as you, I get jumping-up-and-down outraged if I see a good book sidelined in favor of what I consider a crap one) and for

very practical reasons. It sort of ties in with why I've never seen you as "the competition." I love what you write. I think it's good. If someone picks up one of your books and reads it and likes it, I think it'll whet their appetite for good books--and, specifically, for good psychological crime. That makes them more likely, not less, to go looking for more and wind up reading something of mine.

Sophie, is there anything you wouldn't write about for ethical reasons? I think mystery's one of the most moral genres--it's all about exploring right and wrong, finding truth, achieving justice, how these things are never black and white. We spend a lot of our time thinking about the more dangerous far reaches of morality and immorality. Any ethical lines you wouldn't cross as a writer?

Sophie: There are no subjects that I think writers shouldn't write about--anything is a valid subject for fiction, and it's possible to handle any subject sensitively or insensitively. I think the ethics are in the way a writer treats a subject, not inherent in the subject itself. Having said that, there are things I don't think I could write about because I find them too horrible--the main one that springs to mind is state-sanctioned execution. If a film or book contains legal execution, I can't watch/read it. I find it too upsetting. The other subject I find too upsetting is fatal illness, especially when the terminally ill person is the loved one of the narrator--so, I guess since I wouldn't read about those things, I wouldn't write about them either! How about you, is there anything you wouldn't write about?

Tana: The one huge ethical issue, for me, is making sure that I give murder and murder victims the weight they deserve. I don't ever want to write something where the victim is simply a prop that's necessary in order for the story to get under way. Murder, taking another human being's life, is so earth-shatteringly huge: it doesn't just take one life, it affects everyone who comes into contact with it--families, friends, detectives working on the case, people who knew the killer.... I feel like using something so immense as a throwaway plot point would be unethical and cheap. I've got a responsibility to show that immensity, as far as possible.

I can't see myself ever writing about child abuse, but that's partly because it became so common in mystery books for a while there--either child abuse was the big secret that was revealed at the end, or else it was the killer's reason/excuse for murder. It got cheap. Apart from that, though, I'm not sure I can see myself avoiding a subject (not permanently, anyway) simply because it wrecks my head too badly. One of the reasons I write crime is in an attempt to understand things that I simply can't get my head around--how one human being can kill another, or deliberately damage another (like the sociopath in one of the books). So I tend to come back to the things that horrify me most, trying to understand them by writing about them.



People ask me a lot where I get the ideas for my plots, but someone recently asked me for the first time where I get the ideas for my characters. I thought that was a very cool question, so I'm passing it on. Where do yours come from?

Sophie: I agree with you absolutely about giving the crime the weight it deserves. Which is why I write books that some readers find upsetting. People should be upset about crime! The good thing about crime fiction (usually!) is that it attempts to deal with the worst things that can happen in a way that is uplifting--either because justice is done in the end, or because the light of understanding is shed upon the darkest

corners of the human psyche. Even if all you do is understand why a monster behaves monstrously, it helps. I almost think understanding something does more good than fighting against it.

To answer your question, my characters come from the plot idea, always. I always start with an intriguing or mysterious situation, and then I work out how that plot starting point could develop. Usually, in order for it to develop as well as it can, it requires a certain kind of character. For example, in my novel *The Dead Lie Down* (published as *The Other Half Lives* in the UK), the opening mystery is that a man appears to be confessing to the murder of a woman who isn't dead. His girlfriend, to whom he confesses, knows that this woman isn't dead--and she's the one who keeps pursuing this until she finds out the truth. I needed her, therefore, to be the sort of person who wouldn't say, "Hang on a minute, you're a nutter, I'm off to find a sane boyfriend." So I thought, "What sort of woman would stay with a man she believed to be deluded?" And that was how the character of Ruth, the heroine, came into being--I gave her a past trauma that explained why she would cling to this man that loves her, even though he's driving her crazy and talking apparent nonsense. So I suppose what I'm saying is, plot comes first for me, and character follows shortly afterwards. Which comes first for you?

Tana: I'm with you on understanding it--I don't think it's possible to fight against evil unless you understand it or at least work to understand it. Otherwise, you're shooting in the dark. There's also the fact that I think the root of all real evil is lack of empathy--the inability to believe at any deep level that other people, people who are different from you, are still real. If I don't accept that people who do evil are real, if I see them as two-dimensional and don't at least accept the possibility of empathizing (not sympathizing, obviously) with their motivations and drives, then I take a step towards evil myself.

Plot and character--I work the other way around: I start with the character of the narrator and with a very basic premise, and then I dive in and hope to God there's a plot in there somewhere. With *Faithful Place* (my third book) I started out with the image of a battered old suitcase I'd seen thrown away outside a Georgian house that was being gutted--it made me start wondering where it had been found, and what if someone had hidden it there and meant to come back for it and never got the chance.... I had that, and the character of Frank Mackey--he showed up in *The Likeness*, as Cassie's undercover boss, the guy who'll do absolutely anything, to himself or anyone else, to get his man. I started thinking about the two things together--what if it was Frank's first love who had hidden that suitcase, what if they had been about to run away together, what if he always thought she had dumped him, and what if the suitcase resurfaced...

Sophie: I read a really interesting book recently about human evil. It's called *People of the Lie*, and it's by M. Scott Peck. Its subtitle is "Towards an Understanding of Human Evil." It's a superb book, and Peck's theory is that evil people are not necessarily those who do great harm, but those who cannot face the reality of their own faults, who have to lie to themselves and pretend they are always good, always in the right--thus making everyone wrong and worse. Peck believes that it's those who constantly lie to themselves about their own undiluted goodness, and sweep all the evidence of their moral flaws under the carpet of their own consciousness, who are truly evil. He sees the lying as a crucial part of the evil. So he would see someone who says, "Yeah, so I killed her? So what?" as less evil than the person who says, "I killed her because she's bad and I'm good, and so it was right to kill her." A lot of "baddies" do harm and don't care--which is obviously terrible, but Peck would say the people who do harm and believe it's good are worse--so people like Hitler, Saddam Hussein. Gordon Brown...just kidding!

Tana: Ooh. Interesting. The idea that evil isn't only in the action itself, but in the distortion of the surrounding reality, the destruction not just of people but of truth. ("We just sexed up the dossier...") That definitely ties in with mystery writing, where everything spins around the deep human impulse towards truth--the whole arc of the books is the movement towards truth, through various obstacles.

Sophie: Do you have a favorite of your books, and, if so, is that the same one as the one you think is the best? I can never decide which of mine I like best--I like them all in different ways, and I think they're all best and worst in different ways!

Tana: I'll probably always have a soft spot for *In the Woods*, simply because that was the first one and that was the one where, in some ways, I was taking the biggest risk--I put so much time and work and heart into it, I actually turned down acting work to finish it (if you know any actors, you know that turning down work is a HUGE deal, actors are the only people who always want to be working more)--and it was all just on hope, without any reason to think that this book would ever go anywhere except under my bed. I can't be objective enough to have any clue which one's the best, though. I don't think it helps that (maybe because of the different narrators) they're all very different in stuff like pace and tone. Apples and oranges. With the first two, by the time I'd finished all the copy-edits and proof-reads etc, I never wanted to see the bloody book again. That lasted till I saw the advance copies and was so stunned by the fact that this was a real book that I stopped hating the sight of it very fast! With *Faithful Place*, though, I've finished the proof-reads, haven't seen advance copies yet, and I still don't hate it. I'm hoping this is a good sign. Are there stages in the process when you like/hate yours?

Sophie: My favorite of yours would have to be *In the Woods*, but I think the best one is *Faithful Place*. Which means I should like it best, right? But there was one particular thing in *In the Woods* that I loved--Rob and Cassie's relationship and the way he ended up behaving. I've never come across such a good analysis in any other book of the way commitment-phobic men behave! I love my books when I have the idea, when I write the first hundred pages, and then again when they're in book form with their nice covers on! I hate them between page 100 and when they're finished--because that's when I'm laboring over them, and wondering whether I can make them fulfill the promise of the initial idea--and the end isn't in sight yet, so I feel weary. How important are titles to you? I can't start writing until I've got the title--it's a central part of the inspiration. My American titles are generally different, but I love them--I love all my titles. I hate thriller titles that just sound generic, like *Dead Kill* or something like that!

Tana: My favorite of yours is probably *Hurting Distance* because I love the fact that it doesn't focus on a murder. When rape comes up in mystery books, it's usually as an adjunct to the "real" crime of murder, rather than being the crime itself. I also think, without giving away too much, the angle on evil in that one is different from anything I've ever seen explored anywhere else. My favorite of your titles is *A Room Swept White*, though. I'm truly awful at titles--*Faithful Place* is the only one I came up with myself, I'm not even going to tell you what the first two books were called when they were living on my computer. I hate the generic wordplay-type titles too, but what I come up with if I'm left to my own devices isn't much better.

Tana French is the bestselling author of *In the Woods*, which won the Edgar, Barry, Macavity, and Anthony awards, and of *The Likeness*. She grew up in Ireland, Italy, Malawi, and the United States, and trained as an actor at Trinity College, Dublin. She lives in Dublin with her husband and daughter.

Sophie Hannah is an award-winning poet and crime fiction writer whose novels are international bestsellers.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. French's emotionally searing third novel of the Dublin murder squad (after *The Likeness*) shows the Irish author getting better with each book. In 1985, 19-year-old Frank Mackey and his girlfriend, Rosie Daly, made secret plans to elope to England and start a new life together far away from their families, particularly the hard-drinking Mackeys. But when Rosie doesn't meet Frank the night they're meant to leave and he finds a note, Frank assumes she's left him behind. For 22 years, Frank, who becomes an undercover cop, stays away from *Faithful Place*, his childhood Dublin neighborhood. When his younger sister, Jackie,

calls to tell him that someone found Rosie's suitcase hidden in an abandoned house, Frank reluctantly returns. Now everything he thought he knew is turned upside down: did Rosie really leave that night, or did someone stop her before she could? French, who briefly introduced Mackey in *The Likeness*, is adept at seamlessly blending suspenseful whodunit elements with Frank's familial demons.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

As in her previous crime novels, French explores love, loss, and the powerful sway of memory in modern-day Dublin. Critics diverged, however, on aspects of *Faithful Place*. A few thought it French's best to date, with its deft portrayal of sibling rivalry, class conflicts, memories of romance and violence, and, not least of all, her sharp portrait of the "new Ireland." Others, however, commented that *Faithful Place* was more a psychological and emotional thriller than a detective story. But all praised the novel's deep characterizations and unpredictable twists and turns--and look forward to French's next offering. After all, notes the *New York Times Book Review*, "Tana French's mysteries are like big old trees: the deeper their roots, the more luxurious the foliage they wave in your face."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kathy Vaughn:

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