

“Faithful Place” by Tana French. Viking Adult, 2010. \$25.95, 416 pages.

It’s been twenty-two years since undercover detective Francis Mackey stood in the dark at the top of the hill at Faithful Place waiting for Rose Daly and for the rest of his life to start. At nineteen, “old enough to take on the world and young enough to be a dozen kinds of stupid” Frank and Rosie were intent on leaving Ireland for England to escape a future that held nothing more promising than a job at Guinness and disapproval of their relationship from both their families.

But Rosie never came that night, leaving only a vague note of apology behind, and Frank has spent the last twenty-two years wondering what became of his first love and imagining her new life in England without him.

When his younger sister, the only member of his family with whom he’s had any contact since that night, calls with the startling news that Rosie’s suitcase has been found hidden in the chimney of the long abandoned number 16 Faithful Place, still holding the ferry tickets to England, it becomes clear to Frank that Rosie might not have walked out on him after all. And when her body is soon discovered in the basement of 16 Faithful Place, Frank is determined to uncover the truth of what happened to his childhood sweetheart so many years ago.

Returning to his old neighborhood and his family for the first time in twenty-two years, Frank is drawn back in to the drama and pettiness of the Mackey family and Faithful Place. If he is to solve Rosie’s murder, he must reconnect with long forgotten acquaintances and friends that are reluctant to help a police officer even if, or perhaps because, he was once one of their own.

When all is said and done, Frank’s past and his present, two things he has worked very hard to keep separate, are mixed together in a jumble of heartache and regret, and he has learned firsthand that Thomas Wolfe was right when he said “You can’t go home again.”

“Faithful Place” is a captivating book, beautifully written and expertly plotted. Tana French has a gift for creating characters so real that it seems completely plausible that they might walk off the page at any moment. Reading her dialogue is like eavesdropping on real conversations, and her descriptions of the places and people of the blue collar neighborhood of Faithful Place work their way into your mind and won’t let you go.

As the third book in French’s loosely connected Dublin Murder Squad series, following “In the Woods” and “The Likeness” both of which are excellent reads, “Faithful Place” can stand on its own as a compelling story that is so much more than a straightforward mystery. It is a novel that will stick with you for long after you’ve read that last page.

Rebekah Scott is a reference librarian at May Memorial Public Library. Visit us on the web at www.alamancelibraries.org.

