

Faithful Place Study Guide

Faithful Place by Tana French

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Plot Summary

Frank Mackey is a police officer who has every weekend with his daughter, Holly. On a particular weekend, Frank picks up Holly as usual but receives a phone call from his sister, Jackie. Frank had left home at an early age and has cut ties with all his family except Jackie. Jackie says that a suitcase belonging to Rosie Daly, Frank's childhood sweetheart, has been found.

Frank remembers a great deal of chaos and abuse at the hands of his parents. Frank and Rosie planned to leave together. Frank waited but Rosie never showed up. Frank believed that Rosie had changed her mind but much later learns that his brother, Shay, had killed her. Shay had considered himself the protector of the younger children of the family and was on the verge of moving out when he learned that Frank was planning to leave. Shay tried to talk to Rosie, but she refused to listen, enraging him to the point that he killed her. Shay returns home, believing that Frank will give up the idea of leaving if Rosie doesn't show up. Frank finds a note that makes him believe that Rosie had changed her mind and left without him.

Frank returns to the neighborhood to decide what to do about the finding of Rosie's suitcase. He knows that she probably packed the suitcase so she could get out of the house more quietly without the extra burden. He remembers back to the night they were supposed to meet and recalls a noise that he'd heard coming from the abandoned house. Frank had, at the time, figured the noises were that of a couple in the throes of passion. On a hunch, he goes into the abandoned house, discovers a loose concrete slab and finds a body there.

Police later confirm that it's Rosie Daly and Frank sets out to find out what happened to her. Meanwhile, he's reconnecting with his family including his younger brother Kevin. Kevin calls Frank several times one evening but Frank ignores the calls. The next morning, he learns that Kevin was killed in that same abandoned house. It seems that Kevin has committed suicide out of guilt over having killed Rosie but Frank doesn't believe that theory. Meanwhile, he learns that Holly has been secretly visiting the Mackeys with her Aunt Jackie and with her mother's permission. By the next Sunday, Frank has come to the conclusion that Shay is to be blamed for the murder of both Rosie and Kevin but isn't yet certain what he's going to do with that knowledge. Frank and Holly visit the Mackeys together and Frank overhears a conversation between Holly and Shay indicating that Holly had seen a note that led her to the conclusion that Shay was the killer. Frank confronts Shay who confesses but believes the evidence won't be there to prosecute him. Frank calls a fellow officer who makes the arrest based on the evidence Frank has collected and the promise of Holly's testimony.



Prologue through Chapter 3

Prologue through Chapter 3 Summary

The story opens with a prologue in which Frank Mackey is waiting just up the street from his house for his girlfriend, Rosie Daley. The young couple has planned to run away together and Frank believes that Rosie is having difficulty slipping away. Frank eventually goes into the abandoned house at Number 16, wondering if Rosie had gotten the plans confused. There he doesn't find Rosie but does find a note that seems to indicate that she's changed her mind about leaving with him. Frank leaves the note behind and walks away.

Chapter One begins twenty-two years later. Frank is an officer in the Undercover Unit of the Dublin Police Department. He is divorced and says that his ex-wife, Olivia, finally had the sense to kick him out. He lives in an apartment on the Quays and spends every weekend with his daughter, Holly. On this particular weekend, he picks up Holly and notes that Olivia is getting ready for her date with a man named Dermot. Later, in the car, Holly says that her mother has instructed her to call him "Uncle Dermot." Holly says she doesn't but "in my head" calls him "Squidface." Frank says that he approves of that choice. Later at Frank's apartment, he sends Holly to her room with his laptop while he listens to several phone messages from his sister, Jackie, who is obviously frantic. Frank is estranged from his family with the exception of Jackie. Frank calls her back and Jackie explains that someone has purchased several of the houses in their childhood neighborhood, Faithful Place, and that Rosie's suitcase was found behind the fireplace in Number 16.

Frank calls Olivia and says that he has a family emergency. She's on a date with Dermot and is angry but he says that he has no choice and she agrees that he can drop Holly off with her. Frank says that both Jackie and Olivia have suggested that Holly should get to know Frank's family but that he won't consider it because they are all crazy.

In Chapter Two, Frank arrives in the neighborhood but parks some distance away so that his family won't see Holly's booster seat in his car. Frank enters the house and is immediately wrapped in the chaos. He sees the old suitcase in the living room and asks if anyone touched it. Frank's parents both touched it, picking the lock and then looking inside where they found Rosie's birth certificate. Frank's family are speculating what the suitcase means. The oldest brother, Shay, sums up the speculation, saying that Jackie believes that someone murdered Rosie and disposed of her body.

The five siblings go outside to smoke and talk. As the gathering breaks up, Carmel asks Frank if he's planning to come back around. Frank says that he wants to get the mystery of Rosie's suitcase cleared up and that he'll decide then. When only the three men remain, Frank is asked why he became a cop. He thinks about the fact that everyone from the neighborhood could be called a petty criminal, including himself. Frank says



that when Jackie and Kevin were ill, Carmel came home with meat from the store where she worked in order to help the youngsters gain their strength back. Even though there was no way she could have purchased it, no one asked where she got it. Frank says he was very young when he learned to turn on the gas meter so that his mother could cook a meal. He says this is the reason no officer is ever assigned to work cases in his childhood neighborhood. Aloud, Frank says only that he was enamored with the idea of the action.

Frank and Kevin sleep in the living room at their parents' house with Frank planning to talk to the Dalys the following morning. At one point Kevin says that Shay was really upset after Frank left. Frank knows that Shay hated him and that Kevin had said that to cover up what he was really thinking. Frank thinks about his movements after leaving home. He'd joined up with musicians for awhile and had spent time with the sister of one until she began to hint at marriage.

In Chapter Three, Frank remains awake and thinks about what the suitcase might mean. He believes that Rosie might have changed her mind about going with him, deciding instead to leave on her own. She might have left the suitcase because she couldn't retrieve it without his seeing her, but also knows that she would have cashed in their ferry tickets in order to pad the money she'd saved to make her escape from the neighborhood. Those tickets were still in the suitcase. Frank thinks back to the last time he'd seen Rosie before their planned meeting. She was with her friends, Imelda Tierney and Mandy Cullen and he sensed nothing wrong in her actions toward him even though they'd had to make their relationship secret because her father insisted on it.

Over breakfast, Frank catches up on neighborhood gossip, including where Mandy and Imelda are now living. When Frank sees the Dalys arrive at home, he covers the suitcase with a plastic bag and he and Kevin go to their house. Frank knows he won't be welcomed but hopes that Kevin will be able to talk his way in. Kevin does and Frank unveils the suitcase. Mrs. Daly recognizes it. Frank asks if they've ever heard from Rosie and Mrs. Daly says that they didn't have a phone when Rosie left, meaning she wouldn't know the number. She says that once they got the phone, she'd left the number with Ma, Carmel and Jackie, asking each of them to pass it on to Frank if they had contact with him, with a message to have Rosie call. Mr. Daly says that he wants to contact the police but Frank says that the case will be ignored as a cold case without even proof of a crime. He says that he can make some inquiries on his own and that's their best hope of finding answers. The Dalys agree.

Prologue through Chapter 3 Analysis

Frank is the third child of the family. Shay is oldest, Carmel is one year younger and Frank a year younger than Carmel. Kevin is next and Jackie is the youngest.

It's interesting that Shay's the one who immediately cuts to the chase about what the discovery of Rosie's suitcase might mean. Jackie is making veiled suggestions but can't quite bring herself to say that it seems that Rosie was killed. Shay says it outright, but



says that it seems likely that someone killed Rosie then disposed of her body in a trash bin somewhere. Shay is the only one who already knows where the body is hidden.

The five Mackey siblings all go outside to smoke because their mother doesn't allow smoking in the house. Though they've aged and it's been more than twenty years since they were all together, they each go back to the places they held on that same stoop as children. They do some catching up with Carmel telling Frank about her children. Frank has told Jackie that she cannot tell the family about Holly but he doesn't really believe that she would have followed his instruction. When he's been there for awhile and no one says anything about Holly or asks Frank to bring her around, he begins to think that Jackie didn't tell them. It's not until Kevin's death that Frank discovers that Holly has been visiting the Mackeys regularly for about a year and everyone has been keeping that a secret from Frank.

There's division among the Mackey siblings. Jackie, Kevin and Carmel each want Frank to promise that he'll visit often now that they've reconnected. When Carmel confronts him directly, Frank doesn't make any promises. After Carmel and Jackie are gone, Shay tells Frank that if he wants to do what's right by the two girls, he'll cut the ties and never come back. Frank seems to believe that Shay is right but doesn't comment aloud. It's not clear why Shay believes this or why Frank agrees with him, especially when it becomes clear later that Shay is trying to gain a little freedom from his duties to his parents and that having Frank around more often might help accomplish that.

Frank asks if the Dalys have ever heard from Rosie and they say they haven't but make excuses for it. They say that they didn't have a telephone when she left, meaning she wouldn't have any way of getting the number. Mrs. Daly then says that her sixty-fifth birthday is near and that she's certain Rosie wouldn't let that milestone pass without contacting the family. This hope is interesting in that they have had no contact with Rosie for any other milestone dates along the way but are certain this will be the exception. There are obviously bad feelings between the two families that run deeper than Rosie's love for Frank. Another interesting point is seen when Mr. Daly walks Frank to the door after having seen the suitcase. Mr. Daly says that he'd always thought Rosie would have written to her family if Frank had allowed it. He doesn't apologize but hints that he was wrong on that point.



Chapters 4 through 7

Chapters 4 through 7 Summary

In Chapter Four, Frank begins to search the neighborhood for signs of Rosie's body. He considers the back garden of Number 16 where the suitcase was found but knows that would have put the killer out in the open. Frank goes to visit Mandy who is married with a couple of daughters. Mandy says that she hadn't known for sure that Rosie was running away but had had her suspicions. She says that Mr. Daly had a temper but doesn't believe he was physically abusive.

In Chapter Five, Frank talks with Kevin about the possible routes Rosie would have taken that night to meet him but Kevin reminds Frank about a dog that would have made one of those impossible. Frank convinces Kevin to go with him to Number 16. When they get there, Kevin recalls that there was a concerted effort to kill rats in Number 16 soon after Frank left home. He says there was a horrible smell from the house for a period of time. In the basement, Frank finds a loose slab of concrete. He calls for the Technical Bureau and says that he's received information that there might be a body in the basement of the house. They arrive and it's soon evident that they've discovered something. Frank pushes himself into the basement and sees the skeleton and dark hair in a hole in the basement. Mr. Daly is on the scene as Frank emerges from the house. He screams out, asking whether it's Rosie's body that's been discovered, but is urged to leave.

In Chapter Six, the officials from the morgue arrive and then officer Mick Kennedy from the Murder Unit, nicknamed Scorcher. No one acknowledges Frank and he says that it's because they can't be sure whether he's working in his capacity with the Undercover Unit. After Scorcher gets the scene under his control, he and Frank go to a local bar where they talk. Frank tells Scorcher what he knows about Rosie, her childhood and her friends, including the fact that Rosie was supposed to meet Frank on the night she was apparently killed. The Dalys have provided a torn piece of paper that is part of Rosie's farewell note. Frank had found that note and believed it was Rosie's farewell to him. Frank realizes that if Rosie's death turns out to be murder, he is a prime suspect.

Frank thinks back to the last time he and Rosie had met prior to the night they were supposed to leave. He also admits that in the years after he became a cop, he'd often searched for Rosie in police files, hoping that he might find her and that she might have an explanation for leaving him. He's even searched among the death reports of every unknown person.

In Chapter Seven, Scorcher has left and Frank is alone in the bar for a couple of hours before Kevin shows up. He's quickly joined by his other three siblings. The conversation indicates that even their mother had planned to come along because she is worried about Frank but that the four had talked her out of it. Frank points out that the police are going to be investigating Rosie's death and that they'll be extremely thorough in their



efforts. There are some arguments but Frank realizes that he's thankful that the four have dropped everything to be with him as he deals with Rosie's death. He says he's "just sober enough" to realize that he can't possibly put that into words.

Over the course of the evening, they talk about events from their childhood and people they'd known. Shay says that he's planning to buy the bicycle shop where he's worked for many years. Shay says he's been saving with the idea of buying the shop for a long time and that he has been given the option when the owner retires in a year. Shay believes the country is facing an economic downturn and that people will leave their cars in order to ride bikes, putting him in a prime situation to make a lot of money. The discussion then turns to the fact that, with Shay moving out of the flat above his parents, there'll be no one available to help if their father has a fall or needs someone to help him on and off the toilet.

As the conversation continues, Frank points out that he believes his family to be the reason Rosie left him. He reminds them of a fight between Mr. Mackey and Mr. Daly on the night before Frank left home. He says that Mr. Mackey went into the street, yelling at Mr. Daly and creating a scene until the children dragged him home. Frank says that Rosie must have come to the conclusion that she didn't want to be associated with the Mackeys.

Chapters 4 through 7 Analysis

Scorcher and Frank had been in police academy together and it is Frank who had given Scorcher his nickname. The two men are similar in many ways and both are very competitive, meaning they tend to clash when they're together. This doesn't mean that they don't like each other, at least to some degree. Later, Scorcher will try to do a good thing for Frank's family by saying that Kevin probably fell from a window, ignoring the fact that the evidence seems to point to suicide.

Frank recalls the last time he and Rosie had spent time together, nine days prior to the night they planned to meet and leave town together. They'd been at a bar named O'Neill's because it is trendy and they aren't likely to meet anyone from their neighborhood there. It is during this meeting that Frank gives Rosie their ferry tickets and she says that it makes their plans more real. These tickets become, for Rosie, a symbol of the opportunity for freedom. What's interesting is that when Frank finds the tickets still in Rosie's suitcase, he knows that it means Rosie didn't leave town without him as he'd always believed. For Frank, the discovery of the tickets is ominous and eliminates the hope he'd held to for more than two decades. At one point during that evening, Rosie had sensed hesitation in Frank's mood and believed that he had changed his mind. When she had asked him, he had said that he'd been sensing the same hesitation in her mood. She had balked, saying she hadn't had second thoughts at all and had told Frank that if he wanted to break off their plans, he had to do it like a man, saying so himself instead of trying to bait her into doing it. This argument had been settled between the two of them but is the reason Frank believes Rosie might have changed her mind and left without him.



Frank indicates to Scorcher that Rosie's death hasn't left a particularly important mark on his life. He says that Rosie was his "first love," but suggests that makes it less important. In fact, Frank is dealing with a range of emotions and has spent his entire adult life coping with the fact that Rosie left him. Now he's suddenly faced with the information that she didn't decide to go to England without him after all.



Chapters 8 through 13

Chapters 8 through 13 Summary

In Chapter Eight, Frank catches a nap in his car as he tries to deal with the change of perception regarding Rosie. He says his entire life has been devoted to figuring out how to live with the pain of her decision to leave without him and that he's now dealing with a completely different kind of pain and the knowledge that she didn't leave him behind. He visits the coroner's office and talks to the mortician, Cooper, who is working the case. Frank learns that Rosie's skull was cracked, probably from having her head bashed against the wall while someone's hands were around her neck. While clothing is present in the hole in which she is buried, it is rotted and there's no way to be certain it had been on her or merely buried with her.

In Chapter Nine, Frank returns to Olivia's house to apologize to Holly for having had to leave her. He says that someone he knew from his childhood died and that other detectives are handling the case, meaning he and Holly have the rest of the day to make up for the lost weekend. They meet Jackie at a nearby park and the conversation turns to Frank's accusation that his family is the reason Rosie left him. He says that Rosie had heard Mr. Daly's perception of the Mackeys, that they were no better than a "troop of baboons," and that Rosie eventually believed it. Several times during the afternoon, Kevin calls and texts Frank but he continues to ignore the calls.

In Chapter Ten, Holly and Frank go skating. When Frank reaches home, Jackie calls him. She's frantic and says that Kevin has died. She's frantic and Frank says that he'll be over soon. Frank arrives and asks what happened to Kevin. His father says that Frank's arrival caused Kevin's death. Frank soon discovers that Kevin had been killed falling out the second-story window of Number 16, the same building where Rosie's body was found. Frank goes over and finds that Scorcher is there. The other half of Rosie's note is found inside Kevin's pocket. The immediate conclusion is that Kevin killed himself but Frank argues that point. He points out something in the garden below and when Scorcher bends out to look, Frank pushes him, overbalancing him so that Scorcher would have fallen if Frank hadn't caught him. Scorcher is furious but Frank uses it to point out that Kevin could have been pushed without leaving behind signs of a struggle.

In Chapter Eleven, Frank leaves the neighborhood without speaking to any of his family. He goes back to the office and asks for a few days off, a request that's readily granted. He then does a quick search of the officers assigned to Scorcher and finds a young man named Stephen Moran. Frank meets with Stephen who is essentially a floater, waiting for the opportunity to be assigned to a permanent position. Frank tells Stephen that he's noted his good work and that he'd like to help Stephen make a step toward permanency in the undercover unit. Stephen is excited until Frank says he wants a favor in return. He convinces Stephen to give him minor details from the case, including results from specific reports and tests. Stephen is hesitant but eventually agrees.



In Chapter Twelve, Frank returns to his parents' home and finds his mother is furious because Scorcher is saying that Kevin's fall from the window was an accident. Frank knows that Scorcher is trying to do him a favor by not saying that Kevin's death is suicide but his mother isn't willing to hear that Kevin was clumsy enough to have fallen. She has alternative theories including that Kevin had been hit by a car and moved to the garden. There's a wake for Kevin and Frank is present. He believes that the killer will be in the room and evaluates the people he sees there. Frank notes that some people are very cool toward him and Jackie later reveals that some are spreading the story that Frank killed Rosie and Kevin - Rosie on the last day anyone saw her in the neighborhood and Kevin soon after the first day Frank returned. The Dalys are present and Mr. Mackey gets into an altercation with Mr. Daly. Frank and Shay intervene, physically removing their father from the room.

In Chapter Thirteen, Frank calls Olivia with the news that his brother died. Olivia invites him over and Holly gets up when he arrives. She insists on knowing what's going on and Frank eventually gives in, telling her that his brother Kevin died. Holly falls apart, crying and saying that Uncle Kevin had promised to bring a particular video game next time they met. It's only then that Frank discovers that Olivia and Jackie have arranged for Holly to meet Frank's family regularly for about a year and that everyone has kept it a secret from him. When Holly is finally calm, Frank and Olivia talk. Olivia says she felt Holly had a right to meet her father's family. Frank says that his family has always been chaotic and that he was trying to protect her.

Chapters 8 through 13 Analysis

Frank recalls how he came to be reunited with Jackie. He says that a young woman named Jacinta Mackey had come into the police station to give her account of a flasher who had been seen by several people. Frank, seeing the name and believing his parents were the only ones in the world who would have named their daughter "Jackie Mackey," volunteers to take her statement. Frank says he could have ignored Jackie and gone on through his life without ever encountering any of the family. His decision to volunteer could have to do with Jackie but could also be a sign of his inner desire to reconnect with family regardless of his feelings toward them.

While Holly, Jackie and Frank are at the park, Holly asks for a pair of white boots. Frank has begun always asking her why she wants a particular thing and this time she says it's because a famous model has white boots. Frank refuses and Jackie doesn't understand, especially considering that Holly is heartbroken over her father's decision. Frank says that this model is an example of "what's wrong with the world." He says that there's a difference between reality and perception and that he wants Holly to be aware that a person who is famous doesn't exist "unless enough people are paying attention."

The second part of the note is a paper that Frank had not seen prior to the night of Kevin's murder. The note is addressed to her parents and sister. In the note, Rosie says that she's leaving with Frank, that she's marrying Frank and that they are going to live



happily together. This eliminates the last vestige of doubt in Frank's mind that Rosie was not leaving him but was leaving with him.

Carmel and Frank spend a little time recalling times of physical abuse, including a time when Mr. Mackey aimed a punch at Mrs. Mackey but missed. Shay intervened and Mr. Mackey grabbed him by the throat, slamming him into the wall hard enough that Shay blacked out.

After Shay and Frank remove Mr. Mackey from the room where he's fighting with Mr. Daly, Mr. Mackey says that he remembers a time when he'd carried Frank and Kevin outside during a storm and they'd simply stood there in the rain. Frank says that he remembers it also, but that it was Shay, not Kevin. Mr. Mackey argues and it seems that Frank might allow his father to keep the memory but he doesn't. Frank insists that Kevin was either a tiny baby at that time or had not yet been born. Mr. Mackey says that it seems Frank could have allowed him this memory of Kevin, even if it wasn't real. Mr. Mackey seems a very minor character but he probably knows what happened to Rosie and at least has some suspicion of what happened to Kevin. The fact that he puts Kevin into a scene that was really Shay seems his way of creating a moment in which he had some control over the situation. Mr. Mackey says that he believes he could have taken the two boys and left, lived in the mountains without outside interference and been happy. Frank seems unable to let go of any portion of the past. He says that the reason his father has no happy memories of Kevin is that he'd drunk himself insane by the time of Kevin's birth.



Chapters 14 through 19

Chapters 14 through 19 Summary

In Chapter Fourteen, Olivia wakes Frank who has spent the night in her spare bedroom. She suggests that Frank talk to Holly before Holly leaves for school. Holly questions Frank about Kevin's death and he admits to himself that he wouldn't have a problem lying to most people who ask if it was an accident but finds that he can't lie to Holly. He says that no one's sure yet and she asks if he's going to find out. He promises that he will. Frank then talks to Holly about keeping secrets and says that it was wrong of her to hide the fact that she'd spent time with his family. Holly says that she has fun with her grandmother and cousins, a fact that Frank finds surprising. Frank expected that his mother would have made fun of Holly for her accent and clothing, but decides that she must be softer with a grandchild than she ever has been with her children.

Frank locates one of Rosie's childhood friends, Imelda Tierney, who lives on Hallows Lane. Frank notes that Imelda has not aged well and that she's initially cool toward him. He soon charms her as he would have when they were children so that she warms up, makes tea for him and tells him about her three daughters. Frank asks Imelda if she helped Rosie prepare to run away and she admits that she did. She says that Rosie's father had taken Rosie's key and was watching her closely. Imelda had helped Rosie pack then took the suitcase out of Rosie's house and left it in number 16, just where it was found. Imelda asks how Rosie was killed and Frank says that he doesn't know. Frank asks if Imelda told anyone else that Rosie and Frank were leaving. She becomes furious and says that she didn't.

In Chapter Sixteen, Frank receives a text from Stephen suggesting that they meet. Stephen has some preliminary information, including the fingerprints that were on the suitcase. Stephen says that Kennedy has a theory that Kevin had a crush on Rosie, found her leaving with Frank and killed her out of uncontrolled jealousy. Frank asks Stephen for his theory and Stephen is initially taken aback at being asked for his personal opinion. He then says that he doesn't believe Kennedy's theory holds up to scrutiny because of the note. There were no fingerprints on the note in Kevin's pocket. Stephen says that even if Kevin kept it all these years and took it out to use as a suicide note, he wouldn't have taken time to wipe it clean of prints and his fingerprints would have been on it. Frank praises the thought process. They talk about the method of death and Stephen points out that there's a great deal of difference between Rosie's death and Kevin's. Frank realizes that if they find out who Kevin talked to over the weekend, they'll find the killer.

In Chapter Sixteen, Frank goes to the Daly house and waits outside the back door for an opportunity to talk to Nora. While he's waiting he thinks back to the night Rosie told him that she was leaving. She had said that her father had announced that someone was retiring from the Guinness plant and that Rosie would be offered the position. She had said that if she took that job, she'd never be able to leave and so she'd be leaving



before it was offered. Frank had thought about it only for a moment before agreeing to go with her.

Frank finally gets Nora's attention without attracting the attention of her parents and she comes outside to meet him. Nora says that she's thought about Rosie over the years, wishing she could share specific things with her sister, but had barely thought about her in recent years. She says that now that she knows Rosie is dead, she can't stop crying and that her husband doesn't understand. Frank asks what has caused such hard feelings between Mr. Daly and Mr. Mackey and Nora says she believes the animosity is because of a woman, but that she can't be sure. They kiss and the touch seems on the verge of turning into more but Nora breaks away and goes back inside.

In Chapter Seventeen, Frank goes to visit his mother the following day. She has every piece of silver she owns spread out on the table to be polished. Frank pitches in to help though his mother is critical of his efforts. The conversation turns to Holly and Ma says that she's the first granddaughter with the Mackey name. Ma expects that Frank will put a stop to Holly's visits now but he doesn't say either way. They talk some more and Frank asks if his father had been involved with Theresa Daly before she married Mr. Daly. Ma confirms it, saying that Theresa and Pa had gone out together and the car broke down, leaving the two stranded overnight. Theresa's father was furious and her reputation in tatters but she was very pretty and married Mr. Daly anyway. Mr. Mackey was on the verge of a job at the Guinness plant but Mr. Daly's family objected and he wasn't hired. Frank realizes that to his father's way of thinking, which was skewed by alcoholism, Mr. Daly was living the life Mr. Mackey deserved and was the cause of all the problems in the Mackey household. That animosity explains the reason Mr. Daly was furious over Frank's relationship with Rosie.

In Chapter Eighteen, Frank believes that his father is Rosie's murderer and that he has two tasks: find the proof and then decide what he's going to do with it. He imagines how word might have gotten to Mr. Mackey. He knows that Mr. Mackey had sometimes slept with Imelda's mother. Frank knows that Imelda might have told her mother about Rosie's plans in a moment of mother-daughter bonding time, or she might have told Mr. Mackey in an effort to hurt him for sleeping with her mother.

Frank goes to Imelda's house planning to talk to her but she calls the police and Kennedy arrives. Kennedy says he's putting Kevin's death down as an accident. Frank is furious but Kennedy says the other option is to mark it as a suicide. While Frank says he doesn't care, Kennedy points out that the rest of the family will be devastated by a ruling of suicide. Frank insists that someone else is responsible for Kevin's death but Kennedy refuses to listen. Kennedy says that Imelda has provided information that Kevin had a crush on Rosie and was very upset that she didn't return his affection. Frank pretends to accept Kennedy's information and they part but Frank then goes directly to Imelda's apartment. They argue and Imelda admits that she had told Shay about Frank's plans. The argument grows heated and Frank breaks Imelda's television which is very large and up-to-date compared to everything else in the room. Frank points out to Imelda that her story had had dire consequences and leaves.



In Chapter Nineteen, Frank recalls an evening when he and some of his siblings had been at home and heard an argument from the Daly's house. Rosie had come out later and told Frank that her father had insisted that she break up with him. She had said that she wouldn't do that but they agreed that they'd make it look as if they were no longer a couple. Each memory Frank has of Rosie makes him angrier at Shay. He calls Stephen for another meeting. There, he tells Stephen to drop the investigation which makes Stephen furious.

Frank next goes to pick up Holly for the weekend. Olivia asks about Rose and Frank guesses that Jackie has shared information. Olivia says that she didn't need Jackie to tell her that "some woman" had hurt Frank deeply and that he's spent his entire life trying to get over it. Olivia tells Frank that at some point he's going to have to accept that she didn't leave him and find a way to be happy with his life. Later, Holly asks about Rosie and Frank says that his relationship with Rosie had been prior to his meeting Olivia. Holly says she's glad Rosie died because otherwise she would never have been born. Frank says that he's certain Holly would have found a way into existence, regardless of what he'd done. Holly says that she's heard about weekends at the Mackey house though she's never been there except on a weekday because her weekends are spent with Frank. She says that she wants desperately to go share a Sunday with her grandparents and cousins and Frank agrees. Frank says that, looking back at Holly's insistence and their conversation, he should have known that there was something on her mind other than just the weekend with the family.

Chapters 14 through 19 Analysis

Holly turns the conversation to the lack of wealth she's seen in her grandparents' lives. She points out that they don't have a computer or a car. When she outright asks if they are poor, Frank says it's a relative issue and that compared to when he was a child, they are very well off. When Holly asks for details, he says that they never went on a holiday, that they had to "save up" in order to have money for a movie and that he always wore Shay's outgrown clothes while his clothes were then passed down to Kevin. Holly is amazed and quotes a school friend who has a derogatory name for poor people. Frank says that the friend's family "crawled out of the gutter" a generation earlier than his own and that they have "airs." After they talk a little more, Holly says that she believes her friend is "stupid." Frank says that "if there was a worldwide shortage of stupid," there would be enough in this friend's family to fix it.

When Stephen and Frank are discussing the case, Stephen points out that a person doesn't change their fundamental actions and reactions. He is basically saying that a person who slammed Rosie's head into a wall hard enough to kill her would have been reacting to the situation and that slamming her into the wall was a normal reaction for that person. Frank's mind immediately goes to his childhood memories. He recalls his father grabbing Shay and slamming Shay into the wall that same way. Frank's reaction to that thought is evident on his face though Stephen doesn't know what caused it.



Imelda hadn't been trying to cause problems for Frank and Rosie when she told Shay about their plans to elope. Instead, she was looking for approval from Shay. Imelda was apparently something of a wild child as her mother had been. She'd told Shay in an effort to win his approval and attention.

Frank tells Imelda that she is not to share the information that she'd given him with anyone else. He says that she's helped ruin Kevin's life and that he won't have her ruining Shay's reputation but it seems evident that he's really going to try to figure out what to do with the information. Frank is devastated that Imelda sold them out and that her attempts to gain Shay's attention cost Rosie her life. It seems unfair of Frank to think that Imelda could have foreseen the sequence of events though it's hinted that Shay was always somewhat violent.



Chapters 20 through 23

Chapters 20 through 23 Summary

In chapter twenty, Holly and Frank are at the Mackey house. Frank says that everyone is on edge but that Mrs. Mackey seems to be trying very hard to create a pleasant afternoon. Frank says that he would have commended his mother for her efforts but that she then tells him that his face is going to "look like tripe," making him realize that she will never really change. He pays special attention to Shay and says that Shay looks as if he's running a fever. There's a Christmas tree and several get it decorated. Jackie's husband, Gavin, seeks to leave the main body of the family alone for a few minutes by taking Carmel's husband and the children for a walk. Ma snaps about it but the two men and the children leave.

Frank and Jackie go outside to smoke and he confronts her about bringing Holly around behind his back. She expects a huge fight and is surprised when it doesn't materialize. Frank says that when Jackie has children, he'll buy them "a drum kit and a Saint Bernard puppy." Jackie, realizing that Frank's going to let the situation go, says that she'll give them Frank's address when she kicks them out of the house. Ma yells at Frank and Jackie to come back inside but doesn't press the issue and Frank says it's because she doesn't want to risk having Frank take Holly and go home. Carmel joins them and asks Frank if he'll be spending more time with the family or if he'll at least let Jackie continue to bring Holly around. Frank makes no promises. While the conversation continues around him, Frank thinks about his revenge on Shay. He says that once Kennedy has moved on to another case he'll be able to take as much time as he wants to deal with Shay. The conversation turns to Kevin. Shay makes a rude comment about Kevin being "thick," which makes Carmel cry and Frank asks about Kevin's last hours.

Later, Da sends for Frank. Frank goes to the bedroom and sits down to talk to his father. Da asks for a cigarette but Frank refuses, saying that he's too afraid of his mother to provide it. Da tells Frank to let go of what he's planning. Da says that there's no reason that Ma should have her heart broken and that he wants Frank to stop and think about the rest of the family before he takes any action. Da then tells Frank to have Ma send in some tea. Frank says that he'll see his father the following week but Da says that Frank should leave and never return.

In Chapter Twenty-one, Frank goes back to the living room to discover that Holly is upstairs with Shay. He rushes to Frank's flat but stops outside the door when he hears a conversation between Holly and Shay. Holly is talking about Rosie and says that she believes Frank was going to marry Rosie. Shay agrees that was the case. Holly then asks if someone killed Rosie because she and Frank were going to marry. Shay asks if that's Frank's theory but Holly says that she hasn't asked Frank for a reason. Holly then asks if someone killed Kevin. Shay again asks what Frank has to say about it and Holly again says she hasn't asked him. Shay says that Kevin had always believed the world



would be whatever he wanted from it and that he'd "wandered around" in a derelict house without any light to see by, had fallen out of a window and that there was nothing more to the story than that. Holly's questions continue and Frank suddenly realizes that Holly has given Shay information that she didn't get from Frank. Frank urges that Holly return to her math homework but she instead asks if he can remember a day when he'd left to answer the phone and she'd opened a drawer. He seems to realize what she's saying and asks if she'd found something there. She apologizes but reveals that she'd seen the half sheet of paper with Rosie's note on it. Shay asks if she's told anyone else and she assures him that she hasn't.

Shay tells Holly that if she tells anyone, Shay will get the blame for Rosie's death. He assures her that he did nothing wrong but says people won't believe that. Shay then points out that if she does tell anyone, Frank will take her away from the Mackey family and she'll never see any of them again. Holly says that she won't tell anyone and Shay asks her to promise. Before Holly can make that promise, Frank steps into the room, making noises as if he'd just come up the stairs. Frank sends Holly downstairs and remains to talk to Shay.

Frank reminds Shay of the time Shay had locked Kevin and Frank in the basement of number 16. Frank says that their father was fired that day, that he'd come home threatening to kill the children and that Shay, as the oldest boy, had hidden Frank and Kevin in an effort to keep them safe from their father. Frank isn't moved by the story and says that Shay could have sent them to a neighbor but Shay says that would have put their family argument out for the neighborhood to see. Shay then says that he'd spent most of his life planning a way to escape. He says that he had felt it was his duty to take care of the younger children and that he'd just saved enough money to get a place of his own, leaving Carmel to help take care of the three younger ones when Carmel announced that she was getting married. Shay says that Carmel deserved to get away and that he didn't begrudge her that though it meant he'd have to remain for awhile longer to help keep Kevin, Frank and Jackie safe from their father's tirades. It was just when Frank was old enough to take over that duty that Shay learned that Frank and Rosie were eloping. Shay says he'd gone to talk to Rosie, knowing that he might talk her into staying but would never convince Frank. He says that she refused to listen and that he'd grown angry, slamming her against the wall until he killed her. He'd hidden the body and gone back home but Kevin had woke in the night, realizing that both Frank and Shay were gone, and Kevin had noted Shay's injuries the next day which finally led him to the conclusion that Shay killed Rosie.

Shay says he kept half of Rosie's note in case he ever needed it, and that Kevin's death had been an accident. Frank says he might have believed that except for Shay's putting the note in Kevin's pocket means he intended for Kevin to take the blame. Shay says that there's no difference between what he did and what he and Frank had planned to do. Frank then recalls that the two boys had considered the possibility of killing their father when he'd gone through a particularly violent time, making it look like an accident. Frank says the difference is that he didn't go through with it.



Shay then tells Frank that their father is almost bedridden and that there's a need for constant help in the Mackey household. He says that if Frank doesn't want to stay around to help "this time," he can simply walk away. The two men then scuffle and Frank pulls a gun on Shay, explaining how he plans to write the report so that it appears Frank confronted Shay about his suspicions and Shay attacked, forcing Frank to shoot. Shay initially says that Frank won't do it because he doesn't want to explain to Holly. Frank hits Shay with the butt of his gun then phones Stephen. Frank says that he has Rosie's murderer but that someone else should make the arrest. Frank warns Stephen that it's not an open-and-shut case but that he's willing to give it to Stephen and Stephen says he's on his way. Frank makes arrangements on timing so that Holly won't see Shay arrested.

In Chapter Twenty-two, Frank collects Holly and leaves the house though she's angry about leaving early. In the car, he tells her that he knows about her conversation with Shay and that they both know Shay has done something wrong. Frank points out that if Holly hadn't known that, she wouldn't have gone to such lengths to get Shay alone for their discussion. Frank then says that Holly will have to tell Stephen about the conversation and she reluctantly agrees. At home, they eat though neither is hungry. When Frank later tells Olivia about the situation, he warns her that neither of them can talk to Holly about the case. Frank as a police officer and Olivia as a prosecutor would be accused of coaching Holly's testimony if they talked to her at all. Olivia is upset at the situation but agrees. She also tells Frank that she's no longer seeing the man she'd been dating and they agree to go out on a date together.

In Chapter Twenty-three, Frank makes contact with Jackie after a little time has passed. Jackie says things are difficult for their parents because Shay had done so much for them. At Frank's question, she recommends that he stay away from the family for awhile and is skeptical that Holly will be welcomed back after she testifies against Shay.

Frank returns to Number 16 and thinks about the day he'd been with several of his friends, including Rosie, Imelda and Mandy. The youngsters were flirting and talking and all had eventually left with the exception of Rosie and Frank. They'd connected and Frank had held his arms out to her. When she'd come into his embrace, he realized how lucky he was. As the memory fades, Frank leaves the house behind, finally ready to move on with his life.

Chapters 20 through 23 Analysis

Da doesn't elaborate on what he believes Frank knows, but seems to be talking about Frank's belief that Shay killed Rosie and Kevin. Da doesn't spell it out and doesn't say how he's come to any of these conclusions. He is all but bedridden and it's interesting to see that he has figured out what's going on in his home even when he is often out of the main stream of the interaction. It's interesting that Da seems to know that Shay is the murderer but has never said anything. It could also be that he's only recently figured it out, as Frank has. There's an interesting aspect to the conversation between Da and Frank because Da says that Frank shouldn't do something that will "break your mother's



heart." Frank notes that Da has never been very worried about Ma's feelings and can't understand why his father might start now. This seems an example of a coming of age theme on the part of Da who has come to realize that his useful years are past and that he no longer has the power to correct anything that's wrong.

The ending is disappointing on several levels but it's also appropriate for the characters. These people believe in loyalty above all else. When Frank decides to return to Imelda's house to apologize for breaking her television, he takes a large television as a gift and an apology. Imelda and her children are living in poverty and they probably won't be able to replace the television set on their own without significant saving and sacrifice. But Imelda won't let Frank in and her daughter refuses to take the gift, citing the fact that Frank has turned in his own brother. In their minds, Shay's guilt over Rosie's death is something less than Frank's guilt of not protecting his brother.



Characters

Francis Mackey

Known as Frank, Francis Mackey is Holly's father, Olivia's ex-husband and the middle child of the Mackey family. Frank left his childhood home and plans never to return. Frank becomes a police officer and breaks off almost all contact with his family until Rosie's suitcase is found. Frank had agreed with Rosie's plan to leave the neighborhood without giving the idea more than a few minutes' consideration, which is a statement of his desperation to leave. Frank is a strong person who realizes at an early age that he doesn't want to be anything like his parents and has something akin to hatred for his parents. At the same time, once he's among his family, he realizes that he has missed the connection. Frank wants desperately to be a good father and believes that it's his job to protect Holly from everything he possibly can. He also wants to ensure that she learns the things that are most important in life. Toward that end, Frank has kept Holly away from his family and is willing to make her angry in order to teach lessons he believes to be important. Frank has lived most of his life believing that Rosie left him and that belief has left a scar on him. Frank is a member of the Undercover Unit where he is often called on to skirt the rules of police action. He says that the officers in the Murder Unit are never called on to rush into the home of a suspect to face down a dangerous criminal one-handed as are the officers in the Undercover Unit.

Rosie Daly

Rosie dies at age eighteen on the night she and Frank had planned to run away together. Rosie is the daughter of a man who works at the Guinness plant, a job that puts the family in a more secure financial situation than most in the neighborhood. Her father feels that Rosie should not be spending time with Frank and forbids their relationship. Rosie refuses to abide that order but does pretend to obey. Rosie's father tells her that she'll be offered a job at the Guinness plant upon the retirement of a particular employee. The job offer is imminent and Rosie tells Frank that she'll be trapped in Faithful Place if she takes it. She says that having that job means she'll never be able to leave. Rosie's attitude on this point is derived from having seen so many other young people who spend their entire lives in the neighborhood. Her fear is borne out by two of her friends who remain in the neighborhood more than twenty years later. Rosie asks Frank to consider the plan to leave and Frank immediately agrees. Rosie's plan is to leave home for England and to find a job with a band. Rosie is confronted by Shay on the night she's planning to elope with Frank. Shay says that he tried to reason with her, making her see that Frank has responsibilities to his family and that he cannot leave home. Rosie refuses to change her plans and Shay kills her.



Holly Mackey

Daughter of Frank and Olivia, Holly is nine as the story opens. Holly has been cut off from her father's family for most of her life but has spent the past year visiting them though she has kept that fact from Frank. She is a bright girl and figures out that a letter she had seen in Shay's apartment is the key to Rosie's murder. With that knowledge, she seeks out Shay's account, apparently hoping that she had misunderstood what she saw.

Olivia Mackey

Olivia Mackey is Frank's ex-wife and Holly's mother. Olivia says that she never knew who Rosie was but that she did know that Frank had a past love who stood between them and happiness. Olivia is a strong character though she obviously cares about Frank even after their divorce. Olivia helps to arrange for Holly to visit Frank's family though Frank has forbidden it. When confronted, she points out that Holly has a right to know her family.

Seamus Mackey

Known as Shay, Seamus Mackey is the oldest son of the Mackey family and is Frank's older brother. Shay wants to get away from his family and hates the fact that Frank and Rosie are planning to run away together. Shay's selfishness toward that end prompts him to kill Rosie. Shay even kills his younger brother Kevin when he realizes that Kevin will reveal Shay's role in Rosie's murder. Shay is arrested as the story comes to an end.

Kevin Mackey

The youngest boy of the Mackey family, Kevin is only fifteen when Rosie is killed but when her body turns up, Kevin is the first who realizes that Shay is likely her murderer. Kevin is then killed by Shay before he can reveal his suspicions.

Jackie Mackey

Jackie is the younger sister of the Mackey family and the only one of the family in touch with Frank prior to the discovery of Rosie's body. Jackie and Frank meet by accident when she's called on by police for an identification of a suspect. Jackie and Frank spend time together but Jackie also takes Holly to visit the Mackey family without Frank's knowledge. Jackie is devastated by Kevin's death and then by Shay's arrest.



Ma Mackey

Frank's mother is called Ma Mackey. Ma is scarred by a lifetime of abuse and poverty. She demands respect from her children but has none for herself and doesn't understand how to live any way other than by mental and physical abuse. Frank is amazed to see that she's gentler with her grandchildren than she'd ever been with anyone else though she doesn't care if they hear screaming matches among the adults.

Pa Mackey

Frank's father. Pa is a bitter and abusive father and husband. The bitterness apparently dates back to an affair with a young girl when he was a young man that ended in a sort of ostracism from a wealthier segment of the community. The result is that Pa is unable to get a job that he desperately wants and never holds steady work after that. Pa tells Frank that he'll kill himself before he goes to a nursing home.

Theresa Daly

Theresa Daly is Rosie's mother. Theresa was known as Tessie as a child and she was very beautiful. She and Pa Mackey went out together and the car apparently broke down, leaving them stranded overnight. Though they claimed that Tessie slept in the back seat and Pa in the front, Tessie's reputation was ruined. She later married Mr. Daly and Pa married Ma.

Mick Kennedy

Known as "Scorcher," Mick Kennedy is a detective in the murder division. Scorcher and Frank have a rivalry that causes some animosity. Scorcher becomes the lead detective when Rosie's body is discovered and is also involved in the investigation into Kevin's murder. He is very proud of the percentage of cases he solves and obviously feels superior to the officers in Frank's division.

Stephen

A young police officer who is working his way up, Stephen is selected by Frank as someone who will feed him information from the case. Stephen is smart and doesn't initially believe that filling Frank in on details is ethical. He eventually comes to agree with Frank's assessment of the case and works with him. When Frank calls Stephen off the case, Stephen is furious. Stephen steps up when Frank arrests Shay and takes Shay into custody, taking the lead on the murder case.



Objects/Places

Faithful Place

Faithful Place is the fictional setting of Frank Mackey's boyhood home.

Number 16

Number 16 is the house on Faithful Place where Rosie's body and Kevin's body were discovered.

Dublin

Frank lives and works as a police officer in Dublin.

Undercover Unit

Frank works in the Undercover Unit.

The Quays

Frank has an apartment in The Quays .

The Guinness Plant

The Guinness Plant is where Mr. Daly works and where he plans to help Rosie get a job.

Hallows Lane

Hallows Lane is where Imelda lives as an adult.

The Great Barrier Reef

Kevin had dreams of going on a vacation to the Great Barrier Reef.



O'Neill's

O'Neill's is the bar where Frank and Rosie met for the last time prior to their planned departure to England.

The Ferry Tickets

A symbol of the freedom Rosie craves, ferry tickets become a symbol of foreboding when Frank finds them still in Rosie's suitcase.



Themes

Duty to Family

Shay Mackey's duty to family drives the plot in this story. Shay wants to escape the duty he feels to his family and is nearing that goal when Frank and Rosie make plans to run away together. Shay has saved enough money to get a place of his own and believes he can leave because Frank will be there to take care of the younger two children in the family. When Shay realizes that Frank is leaving, Shay's own feeling of duty to the family is such that he doesn't feel he can leave. Shay kills Rosie and hides the body, believing that Rosie's absence will be enough to make Frank stay to do his duty to the family. By the time the younger two children are gone, Shay feels completely trapped by the needs of his parents. His desire to buy a bicycle shop is almost a reality but is being challenged by the fact that his father is unable to tend his personal needs such as getting on and off the toilet. Shay has taken this duty seriously if to some extreme. He tells Frank about an episode in which their father had come home drunk and threatened to kill the younger two children - Frank and Kevin. Shay, in an effort to save the little boys from their father's wrath, had locked them in the basement of an abandoned building. Frank says that he and Kevin had been terrified but Shay had seen it as his way of keeping Frank and Kevin safe without sharing their family's plight with the neighbors. An interesting point is that Shay doesn't understand why everyone else doesn't share this sense of duty.

The Desire for a Better Life

Several of the characters in the book have a desire for a better life and see their ties to the neighborhood as standing in the way of those desires. An example of this is seen with Rosie and Frank. Rosie has learned that her father is about to secure her a position in the Guinness plant. Rosie believes that once that happens, she'll never be able to leave the neighborhood. She wants more for herself and decides that she'll leave. Frank takes only a few minutes to consider the situation before deciding that he'll go with her. Ironically, there are some in the neighborhood who believe that the opportunity for a job at the Guinness plant is a dream come true. Frank's father is one of those and he has spent most of his life bemoaning the fact that he couldn't get a job there. Shay's dream of a better life drives him to murder. Shay believes that he's done his duty to his younger siblings and that it's his turn to leave home. But then his sister Carmel marries and Shay accepts that she also deserves the opportunity for a better life. When Shay discovers that Frank is also leaving, he becomes angry. In Shay's mind, this means that he'll be trapped with the family until Kevin and Jackie become old enough to care for themselves. Shay murders Rosie in an effort to keep Frank from leaving but Frank leaves anyway. When Shay realizes that Kevin has figured out his role in the murder, Shay knows that he's about to lose another chance at a better life - his opportunity to buy a bike shop. Shay murders Kevin in his effort to achieve that better life again.



Grief

Frank's grief over losing Rosie stays with him for all his life though he finds some closure when Rosie's body is discovered. Frank believes that Rosie changes her mind about leaving with Frank and that she'd simply decided to leave on her own. That grief hurts him, in some ways, more than the grief that Frank feels when he learns that Rosie was killed. Rosie's family also experiences grief over her disappearance but holds to the idea that she is happy and healthy, living in England, and that she'll contact them someday. Rosie's younger sister, Nora, grieves when Rosie's body is found. Nora says that her husband doesn't understand her grief, especially considering that Rosie has been missing for so many years. The family also experiences grief when Kevin's body is found. Holly is immediately devastated which initially surprises Frank who hadn't realized Holly had met Kevin. Frank helps Holly work through her grief. There are other kinds of grief as well. Shay grieves over his inability to escape his duty to family. Pa grieves over the knowledge that his life is nearing an end and that his family is about to be faced with even more tragedy. Frank grieves over the fact that his daughter has been hurt by the tragedies in the family.



Style

Point of View

The story is presented in first person from Frank Mackey's point of view. The perspective is appropriate and reasonable to the story and allows the author to present the information in such a way that the ending is at least something of a surprise. The perspective is limited to Frank's knowledge, which is also appropriate. For example, the reader doesn't know what happened to Rosie until the moment that Frank learns of her fate, after the body is found. The reader's knowledge is also limited to Frank's perspective. For example, Frank recalls a night when Shay locked Frank and Kevin in the basement of a neighboring house. In Frank's mind, Shay had locked them in to torture Frank and Kevin, who were younger. But Shay reveals his version of the events that night and says that their father had come home drunk and threatening to kill all the children. Shay had locked Kevin and Frank in the basement in an effort to keep them out of their father's reach. Shay had done what he felt was necessary to keep his younger brothers safe while keeping their family business private from the neighbors. Frank's anger at Shay remains even after he learns the drive behind it. This perspective is also seen in the reactions of Frank and Holly when Frank tells Holly that Kevin has died. Holly is heartbroken and Frank doesn't realize why until Olivia admits that Holly has met the entire family.

Setting

The majority of the book is set in a Dublin neighborhood in the early 2000s. The neighborhood is called Faithful Place and the author explains in a footnote to the book that a neighborhood by that name once existed. According to the author, she moved the neighborhood to the opposite side of the river and recreated many of the details from her own imagination. She wrote that her reason for doing so was an effort to avoid belittling any of the real histories of those neighborhoods by creating a largely-imaginary setting. The setting is believable as a mixture of the older families holding on to the past and the younger generations settling in to build a future. The neighborhood overall is a mixture of renovated houses and buildings that have been long-abandoned and in need of demolition. There are some other settings, including Frank's apartment which is well away from the old neighborhood, Olivia's house and a park. Only Olivia's house is described in much detail. Each is believable and appropriate to the time. The time setting is supported by the use of modern cars and technology, such as cell phones and big screen televisions. There are flashbacks that are of a time more than twenty years in the past in the same neighborhood. The settings of that time period are also appropriately described and seem reasonable for the time and place.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in a fairly straight-forward style though there are words and phrases that are specific to the region that may be unfamiliar to some readers. For example, the word "yous" is used frequently in the dialogue. A common greeting is "howyis," apparently meaning "how you is." There is also a great deal of foul language, some of it as slang.

The overall tone of the story is dark and hopeless though there are underlying tones of hope and optimism. Many of the characters feel that they've been trapped into their lives by circumstances beyond their control. An example of this is seen in the life of Imelda who has three young daughters and tells Frank that one of them is pregnant, meaning she'll have to raise a grandchild. Shay feels that he's never been able to live his life as he hoped because he has always been responsible for his siblings or his parents. Once Rosie's suitcase is found, the immediate conclusion is that something happened to her and that she's probably dead. That dark foreshadowing continues throughout the book. An example of the hopeful undertone is seen in Rosie's mother, who has always believed that Rosie is likely living in England and is happy and healthy. Frank has also had that hope and has occasionally run through records in the hope of finding Rosie. Her mother has never given up the idea that Rosie would call someday. Kevin has lived his life as he wants, seeing several girls at one time and keeping the idea that he will someday be vacationing on a beach. Frank has lived on the edge of hope, believing that he's managed to escape the life his parents lived but fearing that any contact with them will drag him back into that life. Toward that end, Frank has tried to isolate his wife and daughter, keeping them from knowing his family at all.

Structure

The book is divided into twenty-three chapters. The chapters vary in length from less than twenty pages to more than thirty. The chapters are identified by number only and there are no titles to indicate what the reader should expect in each chapter. The story is presented in a chronological order beginning from the moment of the discovery of Rosie's suitcase and going through the discovery of Shay's motive for killing her. There are many flashbacks along the way that give the reader the necessary background to understand the relationship between Rosie and Frank. These are presented as stories in and of themselves though they could be Frank's memories. The flashbacks are not identified as such and the only way readers can tell that they are flashbacks is by the introduction of specific characters, including Rosie, into those scenes. The first few chapters involve the introduction of the main characters, flashbacks explaining the relationships between those characters, and overviews of the settings. The middle section of the book involves Frank's efforts to find out who killed Rosie, Kevin's death and Frank's subsequent efforts to find out how and why Kevin died. The final chapter is the showdown between Frank and Shay, a final conversation between Frank and Jackie, and Frank's efforts to come to terms with his own shortcomings in order to reconnect with his ex-wife.



Quotes

"If you want to get technical, everyone I grew up with was probably a petty criminal, one way or another, not out of badness but because that was how people got by. Half the Place was on the dole and all of them did nixers, specially when the beginning of the school year was coming up and the kids needed books and uniforms." Chapter 2, Page 31

"Six gardens. Seven counting the Daly's. Rosie could still be waiting for me in any one of them." Chapter 5, Page 67

"I looked at him, standing there in his Ralph Lauren logos and his snazzy watch and his slick upmarket haircut, all full up with righteous indignation and looking a thousand miles out of place. I thought of him as a skinny cowlicky kid in my patched hand-me-downs, running wild in and out of this house without ever realizing it wasn't good enough." Chapter 5, Page 72

"They might be a spectacularly messed-up bunch and what they felt about me was anyone's guess, but the four of them had dropped whatever they could have been doing this evening, put down their lives at a moment's notice and come in here to walk me through this night. We fit together like pieces of jigsaw, and that felt like a warm gold glow wrapped all around me; like I had stumbled, by some perfect accident, into the right place." Chapter 7, Page 119

"I would have no difficulty in stating under oath that I believe this to be Rose Daly." - Cooper, Chapter 8, Page 140

"Holly skates like a fairy and I skate like a gorilla with neurological issues, which is of course a bonus for her because she gets to laugh at me when I smack into walls." Chapter 10, Page 159

"'You get on to him and you tell him our Kevin wasn't a bleeding spastic and he never fell out a window in his life.' And here Scorcher thought he was doing a favor for a mate, smoothing a suicide into an accident." Chapter 12, Page 183

"If he had spent a little more time getting an education and a little less getting an alcohol habit, my da could have been a contender." Chapter 12, Page 197

"You don't meet my family, you open hostilities. You bring a flame-thrower and a full set of body armor." Chapter 13, Page 207

"I had known since I was a tiny kid that I wanted something more than what the teachers told us we were meant for, factories and dole queues, but it had never hit me that I might actually be able to go out and build that something more with my own hands." Chapter 16, Page 253



"I wondered if Ma and Da had signed some kind of treaty about Sunday afternoons or if she just crushed a few happy pills into his lunch and then locked him in the bedroom with his floorboard naggin for company." Chapter 19, Page 310

"When I was a kid, before I copped that he was a world-class (foul language), he was the smartest man in the world; he knew everything about everything, he could beat up the Hulk with one hand while he bicep-curved grand pianos with the other, a grin from him lit up your whole day. And if ever I had needed a few precious pearls of fatherly wisdom, it was that night." Chapter 20, Page 330

"I knew London had to be your one Rosie's idea. I knew I could ask you to stay till I went blue in the face, and you'd still go anywhere she told you to." Chapter 21, Page 347

"She marched up the Place with her lips pressed shut and her chin at a mutinous angle that told me I was in big trouble as soon as we got ourselves some privacy." Chapter 22, Page 371



Topics for Discussion

Who is Frank Mackey? What is his relationship with his parents? His siblings? His daughter? His ex-wife? Examine the motivations behind each of these relationships.

There is a long-time feud between the Mackeys and the Dalys. What is the source of that feud, is it justified and how does Frank learn about it?

How and why was Rosie Daly killed? How does her fate impact Frank? What was the motivation behind her murder? What was the impact of her murder on the neighborhood, including her own family and Frank's family?

What is the most important theme of this book? List at least three examples of this theme and how it impacts the various characters.

Who is Cooper? Imelda? Stephen? Olivia? Theresa? Mick Kennedy? What is the role of each in Rosie's death and the investigation into her murder?

Why does Frank plan to leave home? Why does Rosie plan to leave home? List at least three other characters who want to leave the neighborhood but are unable to accomplish it. What are the motivations behind leaving? List at least three characters who seem happy in their lives in the neighborhood. What are the differences behind those who want to leave and those who want to remain?

Describe how Frank comes to be reunited with each of his siblings. Which of the bonds are stronger and why? Describe the first evening the five are together at home. What happens when they step out to the porch and what does this say about their relationships? Are Frank's feelings toward his family believable? Support your answer with examples from the book compared to what you consider to be human nature.