

In the Woods
By Tana French

In the Woods, Tana French's first novel, is an Edgar Award Finalist and with good reason. While you could classify it as a psychological thriller or police procedural or just a good mystery, I was most interested in her development of the main characters, Rob Ryan and Cassie Maddox, both detectives in the Dublin police force. They are recent additions to the Murder Squad but they get the nod to investigate the murder of a young girl in Knocknaree, a small development a few miles outside Dublin. Knocknaree had another big murder case 10 years before when 3 children went missing in the woods but only one child was found, the other 2 presumably murdered. Rob Ryan, the child that was found, has no memory of what happened. His family moved away from Knocknaree, and he changed his name from Adam to Rob. While Rob and his partner Cassie both know that he should come clean about his connection to Knocknaree, they both agree to keep it quiet until they learn more details about the current case.

Rob and Cassie work well as partners and spend lots of their free time together as well, as I assume many law enforcement partners do. Since this was a high profile murder of a child, the two detectives were given extra help. They requested Sam O'Neill, another young member of the squad and the nephew of one of Dublin's high ranking government officials. Sam, however, isn't let in on the secret about Rob's past.

As Rob gets engaged in the case he begins to remember more about his childhood and his two childhood friends who were lost, Peter and Jamie. He thinks about the future that the two of them lost as well as the relationship that the three of them could have had as they grew up. Rob begins to think that perhaps he can solve the murder of his friends as well and as you can expect when a detective is too closely tied to the case, he makes decisions based on faulty logic and false assumptions. Cassie also has her secrets and French does a good job of interweaving her past with Rob's.

I really like the characters in the book and I was cheering for them to do the right thing even as I understood why they wouldn't. It was like watching one of my own friends struggling with life's twists and turns and not being able to help them. The ending may not satisfy the reader's need for closure but I think French has it right. *In the Woods* is published by Penguin and is available in paper for \$14.00.