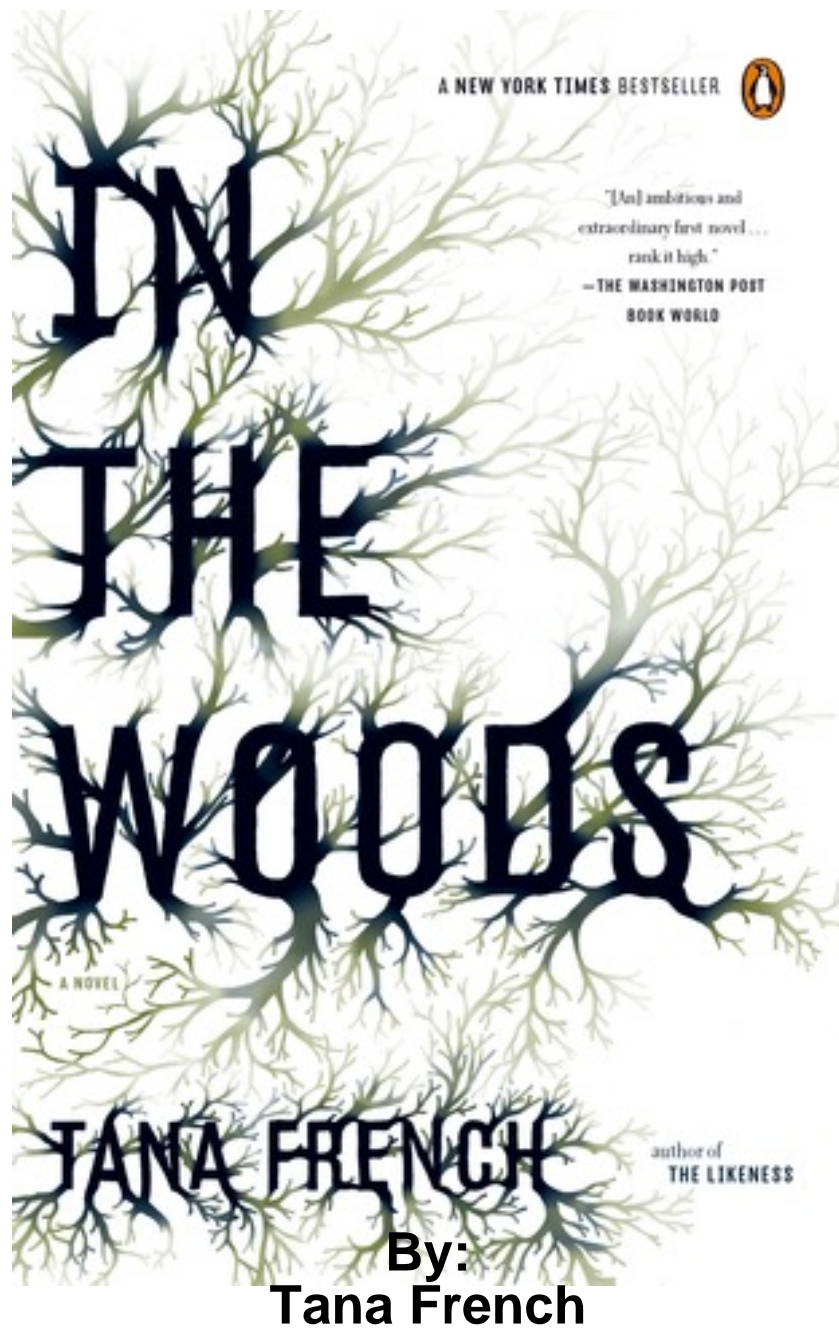


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What people Say:

Matt

If I could, I'd probably rate this at 1.5 stars-- it ultimately pissed me off, and annoyed me throughout, but it was good enough to keep me reading and I suppose that should count for something.

Maybe my opinion has been influenced by reading THE

immediately prior to this one. That book wasn't perfect, but it had characters you rooted for, didn't wallow too much in pop culture references, and most importantly IT SOLVED THE FRIGGING MYSTERY.

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Let's go through a few of these points. First, I don't think I've ever read a mystery novel with a less likable main character/narrator. Rob (Adam) Ryan is an asshole, plain and simple. Sure, he's been warped by his childhood and circumstances, but he does just about every annoying thing you could possibly imagine-- he constantly navel-gazes and feels self pity, he sleeps with then immediately plays the stereotypical male "I don't want anything to do with you now" role with his female partner (the person we were told was his best friend, and whom he would never ever sleep with), he acts like an idiot over the 17 year old villain/ temptress/ psychopath/ whatever betraying his partner, and by the end of the book he is worse off than ever. I know that lots of detectives (esp. in hard-boiled stories) are unlikable, and have many personal issues, but this guy just took the cake. I wanted to take a baseball bat to his head. To make matters worse, French throws in this little gem towards the end of the novel:

"I am intensely aware, by the way, that this story does not show me in a particularly flattering light. I am aware that, within an impressively short time of meeting me, Rosalind had me coming to heel like a well-trained dog: running up and down stairs to bring her coffee, nodding along while she bitched about my partner, imagining like some starstruck teenager that she was a kindred soul. But before you decide to despise me too thoroughly, consider this: she fooled you, too. You had as good a chance as I did. I told you everything I saw, as I saw it at the time. And if that was in itself deceptive, remember, I told you that, too: I warned you, right from the beginning, that I lie."

As if that excused anything... and NO, she didn't "fool" me, because YOU'RE the narrator and YOU'RE the one telling the story. This paragraph probably ticked me off more than anything else in the book.

Khanh (the meanie)

Some books are written deliberately to provoke sadness. It's fucking easy to induce someone to tears when the book is about a dying cancer patient with a labrador retriever whose leg has been amputated, with one ear missing. The most effectively emotional books are the ones where you least expect it. The ones that sneak up on you.

There are differing degrees of sadness, the type that makes one curl into a ball

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There are differing degrees of sadness, the type that makes one curl into a ball, sobbing in the wee hours of the morning. I still can't pass by a bookshelf containing the book

without recalling that memory. Then there are books such as these. It doesn't make a person shudder in pain as much as it leaves one with an overwhelming sense of sadness and a feeling of unfulfillment. Of loss.

When I picked up this book, so many years ago, I never knew I was setting myself up for heartbreak. Ask anyone who's read this book. Their reply will range anywhere from MY FEELS to WHY DOES TANA FRENCH DO THIS TO US?!

The damndest thing is, this book wasn't even MEANT to be sad. It just sneaks up on you. It makes you fall in love with the main character. It makes you sympathize with him. Rob Ryan is not a bad boy. He's a lost one. He is the kind that brings out what little remnants of maternal feelings there exists inside me. He is wounded, without being a new adult asshole. Don't get me wrong, he is sometimes an asshole...while not intending to be.

He is a little boy, who behaves carelessly without intent to harm. He is imperfect, he runs the other way when the going gets tough. He is scared to face the past, he can't think about the future. All he can do is live in the present, wholly devoting himself to his work because it's the only way he can avoid his shadows.

He would make a terrible husband. He would make a horrendous boyfriend. He will break your

heart, and I don't even care.

I just want to love him. I just want to take care of him. I want to erase his hurt. I want to obliterate his pain.

Nataliya

This book is brilliantly cruel -

There's nothing "feel good" about it. If you like a book to leave you feeling warm and fuzzy at the end, it's not for you. If you like neat resolutions - it's not for you (and if you already read this book, you know exactly what I'm talking about). If you hate being left with

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I loved every page of it, every wordy paragraph, every depressing turn of the story, every soul-shattering instance, every painfully real mistake of the protagonist. I chose reading this book over sleep - a decision I almost came to regret later, having to work a 14-hour day on 3 hours of sleep (

)- but hey, we all make decisions we wish we could take back (hey, just like Rob Ryan in this book!). And it ultimately was fully worth it.

Rob Ryan is a detective in the (imaginary) Dublin Murder Squad, assigned to investigate a senseless murder case of a 12-year-old ballet dancer Katy in a little town of Knocknaree. What his supervisors don't know is that 20 years ago he was among the three children who went to play in the woods near Knocknaree, and was the only one to come back under unbelievably strange circumstances, wearing shoes full of blood, and with no memory of what happened to his best friends who forever disappeared in the woods. The investigation forces Rob to revisit the place that has such painful associations for him,

And it's not the murder story (stories?) but Rob's despair, mistakes, pain, and downward spiral and self-destruction that makes this book so painfully real and fascinating to read. It is a reminder that our worst monsters ultimately do live within ourselves, and that we are our own worst enemies even without ever meaning to be.

The heart of this book is the story of a friendship between Rob and his partner Cassie Maddox

. Rob and Cassie start off enjoying that incredible, intense and yet easy, all-forgiving and natural closeness of a friendship I think every person in the world (non-sociopathic, to be exact) longs for.

Emily May

Though the isbn is the same as the one pictured, my edition of this book has a much creepier cover and tagline:

Needless to say, I was completely expecting something a bit dark and twisted, a creepy psychological murder mystery with an outcome I never would have seen coming. And I got that. But I never expected this book to leave me feeling so... sad. And you know why? Because I cared. Ms French carefully builds up a complex personality for each of her characters, complete with a past, a sense of

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Having now read all her other works, I can confirm she isn't just a one trick pony. I also feel more forgiving of this book's ending, which I know bothered many other readers. In hindsight, frustrating as it is, I find it oddly perfect.

is a deeply psychological read that explores the nature of psychopaths and memory - or lack of. The story is narrated by Rob Ryan, a detective on the Dublin murder squad, who is sent back to his home town in hopes of unravelling the case of a local child murder. A young girl found dead in the very same woods in which Detective Ryan played as a child. But Rob Ryan has a secret. Years ago two of his friends disappeared whilst playing in those woods and whilst he was with them and a witness to whatever happened, he retains no memory of the events. His friends were never found. The question is: will this new case bring back old memories? Is there some piece of evidence that's waited twenty years to be found in those woods?

A case like the one Rob and his partner - Cassie - face would leave a very personal mark on

anybody, you cannot investigate the murder and sexual assault of a child and keep it just business as usual. As the investigation progresses and leads the pair in a number of directions only to meet with dead end after dead end, it begins to take its toll on the two detectives, they come out of it very different people from those we knew at the beginning. It seemed a very realistic and rather sad progression.

I'm not saying that every wordy paragraph in this beautifully-written novel was needed, but I personally didn't want them to be taken out. I think the main reason I enjoyed this novel so much was because it is about far more than a murder mystery; it's about all the people involved and how they are affected. And I was honestly on the verge of tears after reading the ending and then reading friends' reviews of the second book in this series and discovering that we never get to hear more from Rob.

There's a touch of love in this book, just a touch, not enough to be called romance. No descriptive sex. No sweet-nothings. Nothing like that. And yet, it still fucking broke my heart.

|

Monique Bos

I was disappointed in this novel, which seemed so promising at the beginning. The central mystery not only remains unsolved, but a disproportionate amount of the plot is spent on what seems, in the end, a total red herring.

The narrator appears at the beginning to be a sympathetic, introspective figure, but by the end of the novel he's revealed himself to be whiny, a lousy and disloyal friend, and an inept detective. I found nothing redeeming or engaging about him, and the fact that his negative

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My main problem with this novel, however, was that I just couldn't suspend my disbelief enough to buy major elements of the plot. These cops are, frankly, idiots who overlook obvious clues and leads. The psychopath is too contrived to be believable, and her motive for murder too facile to work

well as fiction. (I have yet to read an interview with a real-life psycho/killer who's this glib and silly.) The female detective's ability to spot a psychopath from a mile away rings a bit false, and the heavy-handed foreshadowing leaves readers waiting for major revelations that never really materialize.