

The Searcher, by Tana French

Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy

Contemporary novelist Tana French has set each of her books in Ireland. Her Dublin Murder Squad series and *The Witch Elm* take place in Irish urban and suburban centers. In her most recent novel, *The Searcher*, Ms. French turns her attention to Ireland's rugged rural west.

The Searcher begins with Cal Hooper, a burned-out Chicago cop, settling into the ramshackle cottage he had bought in a remote Irish town. Cal acquired the long-abandoned house from an online posting "on the basis that it came with some land, there was good fishing nearby, and the roof looked sound." After 25 years on the beat and fresh from a bruising divorce, Cal is seeking some peace and quiet to sort things out.

Soon after Cal moves in, curious villagers come calling, wondering what this American cop is doing in their town. Mart, Cal's loquacious neighbor up the road, drops by with his sheepdog Kojak. Mart gives Cal an old mini-fridge, fills him in on the local gossip, and recommends the town's general store. Before long, everyone in town knows about Cal. Noreen, the store's proprietor, aims to set Cal up with her widowed sister, Lena, who, like Cal, is in her mid-40s.

Fixing up his rundown house, Cal senses that someone has been watching him. One afternoon, spotting a blur in the bushes, Cal nabs the intruder—Trey Reddy, a scruffy 13-year-old. Trey's single mother, Sheila, and her large unruly brood live in a decrepit farmhouse. It seems that Trey's older brother Brendan went missing six months ago, and the local authorities have given up searching for him. Trey, learning that Cal was a cop, wants Cal to find Brendan. Sympathetic to Trey's plight, Cal agrees to investigate Brendan's disappearance.

When Cal starts asking the townspeople about the Reddy family, he gets subtle—and not so subtle—vibes that he should back off. The once friendly lads down at the local pub make it clear to Cal that he is treading in dangerous territory. Cal, not easily intimidated, continues his investigation. The more he uncovers, however, the higher the stakes for Trey's and his own safety.

Tana French crafts a compelling storyline with interesting characters in *The Searcher*, but she takes her sweet time cutting to the chase. Her lush, lyrical descriptions of the Irish countryside often bog down the narrative a bit. All in all, *The Searcher* is a good book that could have been better.

(Note: *The Searcher* is part of the Heritage Hills Library and Somers Library collections. For a list of new books at the Heritage Hills Library, please see page 13.)