



The Witch Elm

Tana French

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Toby is a happy-go-lucky charmer who's dodged a scrape at work and is celebrating with friends when the night takes a turn that will change his life – he surprises two burglars who beat him and leave him for dead. Struggling to recover from his injuries, beginning to understand that he might never be the same man again, he takes refuge at his family's ancestral home to care for his dying uncle Hugo. Then a skull is found in the trunk of an elm tree in the garden – and as detectives close in, Toby is forced to face the possibility that his past may not be what he has always believed.

A spellbinding standalone from one of the best suspense writers working today, *The Witch Elm* asks what we become, and what we're capable of, when we no longer know who we are.

The Witch Elm Details

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Author : Tana French

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Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Adult, Suspense, Cultural, Ireland, Crime, Contemporary, Adult Fiction

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From Reader Review The Witch Elm for online ebook

Michelle says

Tana French fans and members of Edelweiss: YOU CAN DOWNLOAD THIS TODAY!!! *Happy dance*

mikhaela says

it's not a dublin murder squad installation but sign me the fuck up for anything by tana french please and thank you

karen says

these are the penguin random house offices in nyc. i am prepared to camp out in front of them until some kindly intern slips me an ARC of this.

Bailey says

screaming internally

Caidyn (SEMI-HIATUS; BW Reviews; he/him/his) says

RTC 9/10!

6/29/18

I.
GOT.
AN.
ARC!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thanks to Viking for an e-copy of this in exchange for an honest review!

Original review (6/28/18):

IS THIS A TELLING OF THE WHO PUT BELLA IN THE WYCH ELM
CASE????????????????????????????

i need it

Julia Buckley says

Viking sent me an advanced review copy of THE WITCH ELM; I had never read Tana French before.

I stayed up until 3 in the morning finishing this book; it defines suspense and good writing. I will definitely read more books by Tana French.

Melissa says

I received a copy of this from Netgalley in exchange for a review. Thanks Netgalley! You've been so kind to me this year.

Can the marvelous Tana French write a compelling book even if it does not involve the Dublin murder squad? The answer, at least for this reader, is no, not really. There is nothing exactly wrong with the story of Toby, who, in the aftermath of a devastating assault, moves into the evocative Ivy House where he summered as a child to take care of his dying uncle, and in the hands of another writer this would have been a perfectly respectable little three-star read that I didn't have vague feelings of disappointment about after finishing. But I know how good French can be and I know how happily wrecked I've been in the past after reading her books, and this just didn't get there for me. Although her writing is just as gorgeous and heady as ever, the story limps and drags through the Ivy House, and once the secret in the elm tree is discovered, Toby's meandering attempts to glean clues about it have got absolutely nothing on the sharp-edged skill of her past detectives. When the cops eventually show up, I was just despondent that I wasn't reading the book from Detective Rafferty's perspective instead of Toby's, who is exactly the type of unreliable narrator I can't stand. I did enjoy the dramatic stuff right before the ending (view spoiler) and in no world would I give up on reading French because she's one of the best ever, but I'm only devastated that this is definitely not her usual caliber of effortlessly brilliant and heart-breaking.

Em says

This is a standalone, and not part of the Dublin Murder Squad series, but don't let that deter you - Tana is still as perfect as ever.

Without spoiling anything, I can tell you that this book is about male privilege, the mutability of identity, the crushingly mundane horrors of everyday life as a human in the world, PTSD, family bonds, and, uh, owls.

What strikes me every time I read one of French's novels is how absolutely masterful she is at voice, imagery, and sense of place. What's more, she's a patient plotter, and absolutely assured in how she structures and shapes a story. I honestly can't say enough good things about her.

Tyler Goodson says

Reading Tana French means disappearing into another life for a while. Her stories aren't meant to be slick or flashy, but deliberate, intricate studies of characters and their motivations. The Witch Elm is no different, as it follows the unraveling of Toby starting the night he surprises two burglars in his apartment. As you learn the secrets and weaknesses of Toby and his family, you begin to realize that while finding out what happened is enjoyable and surprising, finding out the how and the why is even better.

Ashley says

Not a new Dublin Murder Squad=Sadface.

But new Tana French=YES.

There are many emotions inside of me at this moment.

Chandra Claypool (wherethereadergrows) says

As an avid thriller reader, it's a shock that this is my very first Tana French! I've heard great things about her as a thriller writer - I've also heard that her writing style might not be for everyone. Well, I'm here to tell you that it's definitely for me! Obviously I can't compare this to her other works but I'm actually glad that this is the case.

Have you ever met that person who always seems to have things work out for them? No matter what happens, you know if you were in that same situation, it would've panned out differently for you? This is Toby - the luckiest guy - can talk himself out of anything with minimal effort, awesome girlfriend, good job (that he mayyyy have just messed up but also is fixable), great friends, etc. Then an unexpected burglary happens and his world is flipped upside down.

French has this way of patiently bringing the story together. Sometimes this type of writing can get wayyyy to descriptive for me and my attention span. However, while some parts may have dragged just a bit, the way she did it really brings the atmosphere of the book straight into your brain. You feel the house, the many intricate characters and we have questions... LOTS of questions about more than one mystery at hand.

As a thriller lover, I find myself trying to figure things out as I read them - by the time I got to chapter 4, I thought for sure I knew.. or had an inkling of where it was going. Now, you say, "Chapter 4.. really girl?" But chapter 4 was already 140+ pages in! LONG CHAPTERS. I was actually completely wrong. However, the reveals that came wasn't overly shocking but the delivery was impeccable. She builds up the story and somehow keeps tracks of every detail that it comes together seamlessly.

My first Tana... certainly not my last!

Thank you Viking Books for this copy!

Tammy says

Lucky, genial Toby meets the guys for a night out to celebrate his circumvention of a potentially career-wrecking incident at work. Afterwards, he is nearly beaten to death by intruders and his life changes dramatically. He lands at Ivy House to care for his terminally ill uncle and to recover from his own serious

injuries. A skull is found in the Wych Elm which takes this finely crafted novel into the events of the past as experienced by the participants looking back from the present day. Impaired and confused (or is he?), Toby begins to try to unravel the mystery of the skull which leads him to question who he was, who he believes himself to be, as well as, who he has become. His familial relationships are equally as distorted. This book crackles with realistic characterizations. At times, I felt as if I was listening to my husband and his friends good-naturedly jab at each other including that eye roll inducing middle school mentality that tends to resurface when they are together. While a mystery exists, this book is more of a deep dive into the human psyche and an exploration of the perception of events from different points of view. I was transfixed.

Catie says

3 1/2 stars

Tana French is still an absolute genius – this one just wasn't my favorite. The writing is incredible – immersive, detailed, and rich. Characters are built flawlessly through dialogue, action, and appearance, so much so that they may as well be alive. Even the plot, while occasionally slow, is pretty compelling. I think, in the end, I can chalk this up to a major case of: it's not you; it's me.

Toby is a "lucky" man – tall, blond, and successful, things just seem to fall into place for him. He has a solid job doing PR for a small gallery, and he's been checking out larger firms with an eye to the future. His sugar-sweet girlfriend, Melissa, is absolutely devoted to him, and he comes from a tight-knit family that still manages to get together each Sunday for lunch.

He's been so privileged in his life that he can't really fathom that others may have it differently. He's the kind of person who would, with genuine concern and kindness, say, "Why don't you get a job?" to a homeless person on the street and not really comprehend why that might be difficult. "Why didn't you just call the police?" he might say to his black neighbor without ever stopping to think about the potential complications inherent to that suggestion. It's not that he's an asshole per se; he just has no ability to see beyond his own experiences.

Naturally, it comes as a bit of a shock to him when his home is burgled late at night and he's beaten almost to death, leaving him with gaping holes in his memory, a droopy eye, a limp, and slurred speech. After he moves in to "The Ivy House" – a childhood haunt rife with memories – a human skull is found in the backyard, and his entire past, identity, and relationship with his family begins to unravel.

I can always trust Tana French to give me the most immersive, realistic characters and then break down their psyches to nothing with brutal efficiency. Toby is no different, but in this case, I really *wanted* him to break down. In the current political climate, I don't exactly have a lot of sympathy for overprivileged white men, and it was with a bit of glee that I watched Toby realize that perhaps the world wasn't as gracious and forgiving as he always thought it was. However, at the end of the novel, I still felt unsatisfied. Toby's breakdown is a grand one, but society still steps in to rescue him from downfall most of the way. Although this was probably a realistic outcome, it felt unsatisfying.

Another aspect that I disliked was Tana French's decision to center this story around a victim instead of a detective. Her skill in writing fast-paced investigations is extraordinary, and I felt miffed every time a detective showed up in this story, wishing that I could follow him instead of Toby. It was clear that there was a twisty investigation going on in the background, and I really wanted to be a part of it instead of with Toby's fractured memories and angst.

However, I am still a Tana French fangirl for life and will purchase everything that she writes. I'm hoping that the next book returns to the world of the Dublin Murder Squad!

P.S. Fellow Tana French fans, is Detective Rafferty from any of the previous books? He shows up in this novel, and it made me wonder if we'd seen him before.

Emily says

I'M GONNA DIE BEFORE THIS BOOK COMES OUT!!!!!!

Hamad says

A Standalone by Tana French and I have an ARC???
Are all my dreams coming true?
