

Synopsis

***Hatching Secrets** is a contemporary, literary novel with a twist of magic realism. It explores how relationships tangle and develop over time and how bubbling beneath, lie a range of secrets that inevitably break to the surface. During the Eighties Janet left London for a remote village in the West of Ireland. Exactly why she made this move is what Janet, her ghostly visitor, her ex-boyfriend, all investigate until finally the child she used to take care of, now grown up, discovers what may have been the biggest secret of all.*

In a tiny, damp village, Janet locks herself up inside with her pack of cards, the photos she preserved of an earlier life. As she sifts through them, remembering and forgetting, a stranger appears beside her. Down the pub Janet has her group of local admirers, above all Donnelly. Back in the house she is discovering she is not alone either, and that her spectre is surprisingly carnal. Janet is caught between an isolated present and memories of a brother who cannot leave her in peace. She realizes it is not that easy to run away.

In London, Ray begins to understand he is Janet's ex-boyfriend. Her skills with computers have left her rich and under the scrutiny of the police. As they question him Ray realizes how little he knows about her, how much he has to learn.

While Janet whiles away time down the pub with the locals, or in bed with her ghost, Ray continues to uncover secrets in England. Little by little he is forced to realize that Janet was somebody he had never really known. Her best friend Sue, had accepted that long ago. Somehow, it seems only natural when she and her daughter Jane move in with Ray.

Ireland begins to fray as the real and the imaginary blend. Janet visits Donnelly in the mental home, awfully aware it was she who may have sent him there. A flying visit to England is an attempt at reconciliation. She spends a night babysitting Jane as she had done so often in the past. Thatcher is still winning elections, hearts and breaking them as she pouts. It is time to move once more. Janet begins her final journey and her ghostly companion accompanies as they move down through Europe into the bowels of Spain.

Vaguely encouraged by Sue, Ray continues his investigations starting with Janet's fleeting sojourn in University where she first showed her computer skills by faking her qualifications. The trail finally leads to the North and an encounter with the parents she hadn't visited for years. It is there he is first told of the accident, of Janet's brother drowning on the lake as they celebrated her birthday. Janet's father has never forgiven himself for not being there to save them. Her mother bears a different guilt.

Janet's birthday approaches. Her parents have explained to Ray their only contact: the postcards that slip through the letterbox silently, once a month. Following the most recent postmark, Ray convinces Sue and they pack up Jane and head somewhat recklessly towards Spain. Sue has her arm draped over his

headrest, stroking silently. A haunting figure looms through the windscreen into Ray's face, blocking his vision, his reflexes. The car crash sends her arm flying through the window, to follow her head.

Across the sands Janet leaves everything finally behind. She remembers the lake. Her mother losing control, heaving her children into the water. She was trying to kill. Janet couldn't reach his tiny hand. Time to fade, as she wanders off with the camel train. Even her ghostly companion finally understands and leaves her in peace.

Years later, Ray realizes there are still secrets to be released. Finishing university, Jane encourages him on one last adventure. She has been receiving the pictures from Janet all through the years. She takes Ray to Ireland. They visit the house, the pub and even speak with Donnelly. Having brought him this far Jane was no longer sure of how much she could confide in Ray, or rather, how much he still needed to know. As he drives through the rain, her arm settles on the back of his neck. He twitches in memory of another limb, extended, executed. Beneath a heavy raincoat Jane strokes her tummy. Another child she needs to tell Ray about. There is always one more secret waiting to hatch. No hurry. Janet had taught her there was always lots of time, no rush, no escape.