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Posted on 25 July 2019 By Mary Beth Keane

Lying in my bed at night, after finishing this book, I found myself unwilling audience to a seethe of clashing thoughts about the story, like watching a flickering home movie projected into a makeshift screen My mind refused to release me to oblivion, and, although the ending does bring to one s mind the setting of ones soul at ease and the wheeling of stars into alignment, I turned the last page feeling heavier with what I knew I still do So, whats this book about Brian Stanhope and Francis Lying in my bed at night, after finishing this book, I found myself unwilling audience to a seethe of clashing thoughts about the story, like watching a flickering home movie projected into a makeshift screen My mind refused to release me to oblivion, and, although the ending does bring to one s mind the setting of one s soul at ease and the wheeling of stars into alignment, I turned the last page feeling heavier with what I knew I still do So, what s this book about Brian Stanhope and Francis Gleeson are friends, but perhaps friends is an inaccurate word to use They moved into neighboring homes in the small town of Gillam with their respective new brides, Anne and Lena, but mainly were thrown together by the fact that they were both rookie cops in a tough Bronx precinct a situation which, at the time, did not seem necessarily unpropitious Francis s youngest daughter, Kate, and Brian s only son, Peter, sought true friendship in the golden harbor of each other s arms, but tragedy found them first Violence and towering rage were like a leak that stole all the air from their homes, and soon, a final invisible mooring line snapped, and Kate and Peter were both cast adrift.Years later, Kate and Peter are still

rummaging the dark, and each other, for happiness, spitting the past out behind them and throwing themselves into the future. But once unearthed, there was no containing the memories, and they are soon being hunted by all the sorrows they had collected over the years: their whole arsenal, turned against them. Kate and Peter will soon find out that tragedies do not immunize you against further tragedies, misfortune doesn't get scattered around in fair proportions, and the past could become a stone that quickly drags you to the depths when you repeat what you do not repair. The plot of *Ask Again, Yes*, for a while, has some trouble catching flight, but as the family's tragedy is dragged to the fore, the depth of the author's storytelling prowess unveils itself. There's a vicious grace and a soul-baring emotional honesty to the novel, and Keane has deftly crafted a masterly wrought diorama full of realistically rendered relationships and tensions, observations about family, the ties that bind mothers and sons even through years of separation, and the ways love ferments in the airless conditions of unaddressed trauma. The author invites us into the low-lit corners of every household at those tremulous moments in which the whole human condition is suddenly within reach, if heartbreakingly so, and the story she tells, as strange in its specificity as it is, remains universal in its familiarity. One of the novel's most poignant successes is the way Keane challenges her readers and characters by offering a myriad of angles on the events, and infusing each with enough complexity to make them lodge themselves in the reader's mind. The tragedy that has befallen the Gleeson and Stanhope families is disinterred throughout the novel, reexamined and re-discussed. Loose threads are picked out of every version and efforts are made to knit it all together in order to make a single, comprehensible tale. Keane lets every character speak for themselves, and lets the reader decide which character should capture their allegiance. She never ignores their faults, their aching human proneness to self-justification, but she also captures their longing to be kind, and despite myself, I often suffered a deep pang of sympathy for them. That's what good storytelling does, I think: it transforms a character from a tangential sketch into a human being, links us to them. *Ask Again, Yes* is irreversibly sanguine, but it isn't the easiest read. It's a dark, disturbing book, and as you read the

novel, it is impossible to dislodge a sense of foreboding from your mind the feeling like seeing a shark's fin vanishing beneath the waves We do not so much wonder what might happen as worry about what will happen That haunted atmosphere permeates every page, and I could feel the dread stirring in me like ash as Kate and Peter stubbornly carry the hopelessness none of them would utter before them, hoping for the other to filch it away. But *Ask Again, Yes* is than just another story about a family with little to offer but a sad history There's plenty of nuance, dimension and empathy to Keane's novel *Ask Again, Yes* provides a potently visceral portrait of what it's like to live with mental illness, while delicately probing the long lasting repercussions of its non treatment The layered narrative across the decades does a good job of showing how attitudes towards mental illness are changing for the better but we still have a long way to go. At the novel's heart also lurks the certainty that the things one is made to endure in childhood could not be undone and would steer their fates for many years to come, that the pain suffered in youth is bound to leave a rotten place, like a bruise on fruit, somewhere on one's soul The beginning of one's life matters the most, writes Keane, life is top heavy that way Even so, *Ask Again, Yes*, wades through the darkness with heart Hope makes an appearance or, if anything, the last stage before hope becomes attainable Hope that no matter how far you travel away from your loved ones, it'll come a day when you will make out each other's silhouettes again That you may have given each other wounds, but they are not always mortal Things are better now, they feel like they're getting better don't they But there might becoming This might be the least of it Have you thought about that We knew nothing about what it meant to grow up, to be partners, parents, all of it Nothing And maybe we still don't Would you have said yes back then if you'd known But I know now So ask me But he couldn't find the right words I'll give you a hint, she said, squeezing his hands until he looked up to meet her eyes Then and now, I say yes *Ask Again, Yes* is a hugely sensitive and deeply humanizing story about the never ending ache of love and loss Not to be missed [BLOG](#) [TWITTER](#) [INSTAGRAM](#) [TUMBLR](#) This review has been hidden because it contains spoilers To view it, [click here](#) Four angsty, dysfunctional, mind blowing, pushes you take a forty years journey of vivid

characters and you got speechless on some parts of it starts Questions 1 Is this book including real big problems that the characters are dealing with as like alcoholism, mental illness, parental abandonment, cheating, deadly diseases, murder attempt YESSS 2 Is it also about dysfunctional two families and your daily dramas YESSS 3 Are there also a big love story between two families children YESSS 4 Four angsty, dysfunctional, mind blowing, pushes you take a forty years journey of vivid characters and you got speechless on some parts of it starts Questions 1 Is this book including real big problems that the characters are dealing with as like alcoholism, mental illness, parental abandonment, cheating, deadly diseases, murder attempt YESSS 2 Is it also about dysfunctional two families and your daily dramas YESSS 3 Are there also a big love story between two families children YESSS 4 Are these two children, Kate and Peter, forcedly separated after a family tragedy One of them s mother shot the other s father, oh yesss, that s what I called big tragedy when they were 13, but they occasionally find each other YESSS but hmmm okay YESSS 5 are we having a great 40 years journey of those two family members YESSS 6 Did the book remind you of True Detective episodes Hmmm partly YESSS 7 Does it have a chance for nominations of Best Goodreads Fiction 2019 Oh YESSS 8 So do you recommend this book to the others DON T ASK ME AGAIN OF COURSE YESSS 5 Stars Edited after much thought to revise rating from 4.25 Stars to 5 Stars The ramifications of this novel and its ending have stayed with me Ask Again, Yes is Literary Fiction at its best This novel is an exploration of life, love, family, mistakes and the tragedies of everyday life The Stanhopes and the Gleasons are at odds Will they ever heal the rift that tore their families apart Alcoholism, friendship, forgiveness, mental illness, love and tragedy These are the themes of Ask 5 Stars Edited after much thought to revise rating from 4.25 Stars to 5 Stars The ramifications of this novel and its ending have stayed with me Ask Again, Yes is Literary Fiction at its best This novel is an exploration of life, love, family, mistakes and the tragedies of everyday life The Stanhopes and the Gleasons are at odds Will they ever heal the rift that tore their families apart Alcoholism, friendship, forgiveness, mental illness, love and tragedy These are the themes of Ask Again, Yes This is one heck of an

engrossing novel I truly felt for the characters of Peter and Kate. The trials and tribulations of two families; your heart will literally be pulled in two, feeling bad for each, at certain points in time, almost feeling as if you are betraying the other. Admittedly, parts of this novel totally shocked me. I felt as though I should have understood certain things from the get-go and didn't, and when things came to light, I was like, "oh." Then there is the ending; yes, tears sprung to my eyes, some of you are like, "yeah, big surprise, you old sap." Seriously though, I simply couldn't help myself. If you love literary fiction, fiction, or are just looking for a great read, grab this and read it. You will not be disappointed. This was a buddy read with Kacey; I loved reading this one with you, Kacey, and was so glad that you ended up liking this one too. Thank you to NetGalley, Scribner, and Mary Beth Keane for an ARC of this novel in exchange for an honest review. Published on NetGalley and Goodreads on 4.7.19. Will be published on Amazon and Twitter on 5.28.19. Book of the Month selection June 2019. The thing is, Peter, grown-ups don't know what they're doing any better than kids do. That's the truth. You've seen this book around before. You know the one I'm talking about; it's got an aesthetically pleasing blue-green cover, boasts of domestic drama and in-depth character study of the darker side of families, while promising the reader that they will experience a grand range of emotion by the time the final page is turned. These books are one thing, Book of the Month selection June 2019. The thing is, Peter, grown-ups don't know what they're doing any better than kids do. That's the truth. You've seen this book around before. You know the one I'm talking about; it's got an aesthetically pleasing blue-green cover, boasts of domestic drama and in-depth character study of the darker side of families, while promising the reader that they will experience a grand range of emotion by the time the final page is turned. These books are one thing, pure and simple book club bait. While I always fall for the cover, the inside of such books rarely leaves a long-term impression on me, because it is truly difficult for a book that follows the same procedure and format as every other in its genre to attain a memorable status in my internal hard drive. Yes, this book did follow that formula, remaining fairly predictable, but for some reason these characters were quite enticing, and the author did leave an impression that kept me thinking about these

characters well after finishing their story. I can't help but loosely compare this book to the likes of Liane Moriarty, because I had a similar reading experience while working through *Ask Again, Yes* as I did when I picked up *Big Little Lies* years ago. I joined an online bookclub with my sister and the first month we participated, we were discussing *BLL*. It was long, and I was intimidated, and the beginning portions were incredibly slow, so much so that I almost tossed the book and told Irina she was on her own. I'm really glad she encouraged me to stick with it, because once I was fully invested in the characters, I began to breeze through and consider it one of the first books to help me embrace the lighter side of the mystery genre. *AAY* has a very similar setup: slow burning intro while we get acquainted with the characters, and then we steadily speed up once a few things begin to happen. There are many, many emotional aspects to this story, and for the most part it's very sad and mildly heavy, but the ending was done so well that it kept my final verdict as hopeful, while teaching me where to be grateful. The characters of both families suffer tremendously in various ways over the years, and some of the reasons are based on their choices, but most of the outcomes are results of unexpected circumstances, which gave a tense, straining sensation as the story unfolds. If you enjoy family sagas that feature coming of age in less than ideal circumstances, you may want to give this one a try for yourself. Some of the buzzworthy topics included are mental health, addiction, cancer, and how tragedy affects all sorts of relationships, such as married couples and parents/children. Those are some tough issues to cover, but this book does so in very mild ways, with little to no graphic content, and mainly just in being referred to prior to an event or as a memory. The possible discussions that will spur from reading this book are endless, and I cannot wait to see how the general public reacts to *Ask Again, Yes* once it's released. Many thanks to the publisher for providing my review copy.

**A Profoundly Moving Novel About Two Neighboring Families In A Suburban Town, The Friendship Between Their Children, A Tragedy That Reverberates Over Four Decades, The Daily Intimacies Of Marriage, And The Power Of Forgiveness** How Much Can A Family Forgive? Francis Gleeson And Brian Stanhope, *Rookie Cops In The NYPD*, *Live Next Door To Each Other Outside The City* What 4.5 stars I have

always enjoyed reading family stories that take me on their journey across time This is a story of two families over several decades and how their lives intersect in a tragic way as well as one that is filled of love and ultimately forgiveness Two NYC police officers, living next door to each other in the suburbs, connected mainly by the friendship of their two young children Abruptly the things going on in one of the families impact the other in a way that changes everyones 4.5 stars I have always enjoyed reading family stories that take me on their journey across time This is a story of two families over several decades and how their lives intersect in a tragic way as well as one that is filled of love and ultimately forgiveness Two NYC police officers, living next door to each other in the suburbs, connected mainly by the friendship of their two young children Abruptly the things going on in one of the families impact the other in a way that changes everyone s life and the two young friends are separated In less capable hands, this book could have been melodramatic, but it wasn t The author addressed some tough, realistic issues mental illness, alcoholism, parental abandonment and the effects on these characters, who I was vested in throughout, felt for throughout This could never be a happily ever after story because the things that happened to these characters are burdens that while can be lightened by that love, loyalty and forgiveness, they can never fully be erased An ending that was satisfying and provided realistic closure Highly recommended. This was a monthly buddy read with Diane and Esil. I received an advanced copy of this book from Scribner through Edelweiss and NetGalley The cover of this book is remarkable and behind the cover is a remarkable book At first glance, the cover appears to be an example of a painting technique known as impasto I think Closer scrutiny reveals a typical suburban neighborhood that could be Anywhere, USA And so it is with this novel At first glance, Ask Again, Yes seems to be an American dream or coming of age novel and in some ways it is but beneath these obvious themes lie much A violent act leaves two families forever The cover of this book is remarkable and behind the cover is a remarkable book At first glance, the cover appears to be an example of a painting technique known as impasto I think Closer scrutiny reveals a typical suburban neighborhood that could be Anywhere, USA And so it is with this novel At first

glance, Ask Again, Yes seems to be an American dream or coming of age novel and in some ways it is but beneath these obvious themes lie much. A violent act leaves two families forever changed and another event leaves them forever linked. You will live the decades of these characters' lives right along with them. Mental illness, stoicism, alcoholism, achievement, love and forgiveness mark this marvelous novel and the author treats her characters with great tenderness. You won't forget them.

**NOW AVAILABLE** This is one of those books that, as I pondered writing this review, I have changed my rating from a 4 to a 5. The I thought about it, the I realized how incredibly strong the characters in this book are, I finished it last week and I'm still thinking about them., all of them. If you love strong character driven books, you will love this one. I had a bit of believability issues with one of the main characters but it doesn't take away from the entire body of work.

**From NOW AVAILABLE** This is one of those books that, as I pondered writing this review, I have changed my rating from a 4 to a 5. The I thought about it, the I realized how incredibly strong the characters in this book are, I finished it last week and I'm still thinking about them., all of them. If you love strong character driven books, you will love this one. I had a bit of believability issues with one of the main characters but it doesn't take away from the entire body of work.

From the blurb you know that this novel is about two neighboring families, both husbands are policemen who started out as rookies on the NYPD force. The book is told from several points of view which I think greatly improved my understanding of how the individuals felt and acted.

Francis Gleeson has had a great career, he is strong willed, intelligent, diligent and yet with his family he has an incredible soft touch. He is the first to move to this new suburb, he, his wife and two daughters are doing well individually and as a family, although Lena is at times lonely and would like a larger life outside the home. Within months Brian and Anne move in next door to the Gleeson's. Brian and Francis are not close friends at this point, but they are friendly. Anne is quite a different matter, she does not go out of her way to befriend the Gleesons and keeps to her house much of the time. Later, both Anne and Lena have children only six months apart, Peter and Kate, who are immediately bonded to each other even as little friends. Their story will play a huge part in the novel. A terrible

incident occurs which changes the lives of everyone in both families, it is tragic, horrific and probably could have been avoided. The Stanhopes are forced to move away. I would not spoil this novel for anyone by giving away anything. This is a book that I couldn't wait to get back to and finished in two days. This story hits all the emotional buttons, happiness, extreme sadness, frustration, hope, love and forgiveness. We are taken through the lives of these families who handle the tragedy in very different ways. The plot flows very well and is extremely well thought out. We really get to know these people, this is the first book this year that has touched me in this way. Buy the book, read it, ponder what you would do in this situation and you won't be disappointed. As an afterthought, I did read *The Walking People*, by this author many years ago and it was excellent, so if you enjoy this one, go back and read the other. I received an ARC of this novel from the publisher through Edelweiss, oooh, Goodreads Choice Awards semifinalist for BEST FICTION 2019. What will happen heads up to whom it may concern. This book is primo book club bait in general, the best book club choices are ones with juicy conflicts at their centers which inspire strong, differing, politely expressed opinions from your assembled booknerds and the best of these have an extra component: they allow the reader a sort of peripheral empathy taking recognizable, relatable issues like illness, marital job stress, oooh, Goodreads Choice Awards semifinalist for BEST FICTION 2019. What will happen heads up to whom it may concern. This book is primo book club bait in general, the best book club choices are ones with juicy conflicts at their centers which inspire strong, differing, politely expressed opinions from your assembled booknerds and the best of these have an extra component: they allow the reader a sort of peripheral empathy taking recognizable, relatable issues like illness, marital job stress, disputes with the neighbors, etc, and then dramatically inflating them into situations one hopes never to have to live through, providing that there but for the shiver the publisher's synopsis seems to want to keep its secrets, so I'll play along and summarize in the broadest terms: it's about two families and one very bad night that changes the course of their lives for decades to come and the specifics of this dramatically inflated situation, and all of its ripple effects, are sure to inspire some wide-ranging booknerd opinions. It has

all of the things that breed discussion nuanced characters with complicated relationships given years to develop and adjust, and to confront life's myriad challenges infidelity, addiction, mental illness, abandonment, loneliness, regret all of the meaty woes of life but it's also a first love story, with a bit of a Romeo and Juliet edge, although in this case, the Capulet's disapproval of their kid's romantic choice is totally legit awkward

Thanksgivings for sure it's an engrossing and insightful story of human relationships and growth and forgiveness, but it's not schmaltzy and sentimental like so many books of its kind I liked it maybe your book club will like it but don't take my word for it there's actually a literary litmus test for IS THIS A BOOK CLUB BOOK IS THIS A BOOK CLUB BOOK does it look like this it does does it look like this it does I THINK IT IS A BOOK CLUB BOOK come to my blog

contemporary fiction I keep forgetting how much I love this genre I always find myself amazed each time I pick up a book that perfectly showcases how ordinary people can be extraordinary this story doesn't rely on gimmicks there's no shying away from difficult topics it's just me, falling in love with simple characters doing the best they can there was no predicting where life would go there was no real way for a person to try something out, to see if he liked it, because you try it and try contemporary fiction I keep forgetting how much I love this genre I always find myself amazed each time I pick up a book that perfectly showcases how ordinary people can be extraordinary this story doesn't rely on gimmicks there's no shying away from difficult topics it's just me, falling in love with simple characters doing the best they can there was no predicting where life would go there was no real way for a person to try something out, to see if he liked it, because you try it and try it and try it a little longer and next thing it's who you are I love stories which remind me that, even though we have different struggles in life, we all have them and that commonality, that bond, can go as deep as we allow it regardless if it's with our neighbour, our mother, or our husband this book shows us how, in the wake of tragedy, a bond has the ability to form because of it tenderly written and honestly told, this story is one of humanity, forgiveness, determination, and love I'm so impressed with this 4.5 stars

