



Utterly Monkey

By Nick Laird
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Introduction

Danny Williams is a talented, upwardly mobile lawyer who has left his small-town Northern Irish roots far behind. Now in his mid-twenties, he lives in a stylish London flat and works as an attorney in a top firm. But Danny is thoroughly sick of his arrogant boss and his overly-demanding job. His only consolation is Ellen, a beautiful litigation trainee, with whom he is secretly infatuated.

Everything changes on an otherwise average Wednesday night when Geordie Wilson, a former schoolmate, turns up on Danny's doorstep. Geordie, whose childhood misdeeds haunt Danny, seeks refuge from an Irish paramilitary group that wants revenge. Set in the heart of London and in Ballyglass, a fictional town in Northern Ireland, *Utterly Monkey* takes place over an intense five-day period, and follows Danny's efforts to overcome office ennui, to save Geordie, to combat terrorism, and, most importantly, to get the girl.

Questions for Discussion

1. To what extent is Danny's dissatisfaction with his job at Monks & Turner connected to his having to work under Adam Vyse?
2. How would you describe Danny and Ellen's first encounter at work, and how does their relationship change after Danny's impromptu party?
3. How does the tragic death of Barry Hughes explain Danny and Geordie's unlikely friendship?
4. What might account for Danny and Geordie's different perceptions of themselves as Northern Irishmen in London?
5. How did the compression of time in *Utterly Monkey* -- the entire book occurs in the course of five days -- affect your experience as a reader?
6. What is the significance of the title of the book, and how did it contribute to your appreciation of the novel's themes?
7. To what extent is the agenda of domestic terrorism that Ian and his paramilitary organization seek to bring about in England connected to their feelings of political oppression?
8. How does Ellen's revelation about her affair with Adam Vyse relate to Danny's decision to sabotage his career at Monks & Turner?
9. How did the juxtaposition of comical and serious moments throughout the novel influence your reading?
10. If this novel were made into a movie, who would you choose to play the roles of Danny, Ellen, Geordie, and Adam Vyse?

About the Author

Nick Laird was born in 1975 in Northern Ireland and recently worked as a lawyer in London. A graduate of Cambridge University, Laird is the author of *To a Fault*, a collection of poetry, and the recipient of the prestigious Eric Gregory prize for young British poets and the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature. He lives in London.