



Summary

For the past five years, Ryan Richardson has relived that terrible night. The car door ripping open. The crushing blow to the head. The hands yanking him from the vehicle. His girlfriend Ali's piercing scream as she is taken.

With no trace of Ali or the car, a cloud of suspicion hangs over Ryan. But with no proof and a good lawyer, he's never charged, though that doesn't matter to the podcasters and internet trolls. Now, Ryan has changed his last name, entered law school, and put his past behind him.

Until, on a summer trip abroad to Italy with his law-school classmates, Ryan gets a call: Ali's car has finally been found, submerged in a lake in his small Midwestern hometown. Inside are two dead men and a cryptic note with five words written on the envelope in Ali's handwriting: If something happens to me...

Then, halfway around the world, the unthinkable happens: Ryan sees the man who has haunted his dreams since that night.

As Ryan races from the rolling hills of Tuscany, to a rural village in the UK, to the glittering streets of Paris in search of the truth, he has no idea that his salvation may lie with a young sheriff's deputy in Kansas working her first case, and a mobster in Philadelphia who's experienced tragedy of his own.



About the Author

Alex Finlay is a bestselling novelist who has been hailed as “one of the genre’s most exciting voices” (E! News) having “earned a reputation for producing suspenseful, fast-paced thrillers” (Associated Press).

His novels regularly appear on "best of the year" lists, have been translated into twenty-five languages, and are optioned for film and television. Every Last Fear is in development for a major limited series.

Alex writes under a pen name and is a prominent Washington, D.C. lawyer who has represented clients in more than 40 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Courtesy of authors website
<https://alexfinlaybooks.com/about/>

Discussion Questions

- Alison reinvents herself in attempts to escape her past as a childhood bully. Can one truly break free from past mistakes, or do you think they inevitably shape and define a person indefinitely?
- Parents in the novel make extreme sacrifices for their children. Are there limits to parental love, or should parents go to any lengths to protect their children, even if it involves crossing moral boundaries?
- Shane O'Leary and Chaz get caught in violent cycles that go back generations. Is it possible for someone raised in a violent environment to escape these cycles, or is it something they're doomed to repeat?
- The novel's characters often hide behind false identities to shield vulnerabilities. Is adopting a different identity an effective way to move on from past trauma, or does it cause more harm than good?
- Characters like Michael and Shane interpret violence as a means of protection. Do you feel violence can ever be justified in the defense of loved ones, or does it always perpetuate more harm?
- Ryan's life takes a drastic turn from being a basketball star to being labeled as "Killer," yet he eventually finds redemption. In what ways can society's rush to judgement impact an individual's identity and choices? Is it fair to expect Ryan to completely move past his past experiences?
- Poppy struggles with being underestimated due to her appearance and past. How important is perception in shaping one's professional and personal identity? Can a person truly escape labels, whether self-imposed or given by others?
- Michael Harper transforms from a mild-mannered accountant into someone willing to kill to protect his daughter. Is this transformation a natural consequence of parental love, or does it suggest deeper, perhaps darker, layers within Michael? What does this suggest about the potential for inherent violence in all of us?
- In seeking vengeance for his son, are Shane's actions justified, or could there have been an alternate path for him?

Discussion Questions

- Alison, having assumed multiple identities throughout her life, embodies the theme of personal identity's illusory nature. To what extent are our identities flexible, and how much do circumstance and self-perception contribute to one's true self?
- Ryan is frequently influenced by the nicknames given to him by others, like "Dodge" and later "Killer." How do nicknames in the novel serve as both a mask and a mirror for personal identity?
- The novel involves true crime social media shaping public perceptions and influencing real events. Do you think these platforms have a responsibility to prioritize facts over entertainment, and how might this affect the individuals involved in such stories, both victims and suspects?

Book reviews

Finlay (*What Have We Done*) returns with a tightly coiled spine tingler about a law student under suspicion for his high school girlfriend's disappearance. Five years ago, while Ryan Richardson and his girlfriend, Alison Lane, were on a date, Ryan fell unconscious and Alison vanished. After Ryan woke up, he recovered vague memories of being attacked by a man with a missing finger, but the residents of Leavenworth, Kans., quickly came to suspect him of killing Alison. Now, Ryan has changed his name and fled Leavenworth for law school. He's on a summer trip to Italy when he learns that Alison's car has been discovered in a Kansas lake—but her remains are nowhere to be found. Instead, the waterlogged vehicle contains the skeletons of two unknown men and a cryptic note from Alison. In Tuscany, Ryan catches a glimpse of a man who resembles his and Alison's possible attacker and ends up chasing him across Europe. Meanwhile, back in Kansas, the deputy who recovered Alison's car traces the case to unexpected corners of Philadelphia. As in Finlay's previous novels, relentless pacing, impressive characterizations, and the author's knack for surprise combine to produce top-shelf entertainment. This is a smart, unpredictable winner.

Courtesy of Publisher's Weekly