

Plaguing Jake

Synopsis

In a post-pandemic world, Mary McGahern goes off to university from the small town of Leitrim Falls. Few others choose to be present physically on campus. Mary was mostly schooled at home by a self-taught, highly literate, widower farmer father, which has always made her an oddity. In her final year she attended regular high school, where she and Jim Collins fell in love. Jim has gone off to a different university. At Mary's university, uBytown in Ottawa, professor Jake Flynn, nearing retirement, despairs of contemporary higher education in English Literature, which has moved away from reading and studying the best that has been thought and written to viewing literature as valuable only to the extent that it contributes to improving the world. Mary becomes Professor Flynn's student in two courses. The English Department's rare, author-signed first edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* is stolen from a display case, and Detective Kiran Gurmeet is introduced. At Western U in London Ontario, Jim Collins develops a drinking problem, and he and Mary break up. Detective Gurmeet finds that Jake Flynn stole the rare edition of *Ulysses*, all unaware, as he suffers from kleptomania (and much else as the story unfolds). While being examined for mental competency in the Princess Diana Mental Health Center, plagued and plaguing Jake commits suicide. Jim Collins' father, drunk, causes an auto accident back in Leitrim Falls, one that entails three deaths: Mary's father, Jim's father and mother. Mary and Jim return to Leitrim Falls in an attempt to save themselves and the McGahern family farm.