

# A Photograph

You've got to see the whole picture if you really want to know what's going on



Charles Sweeney is a high-octane manic young lawyer, revelling in the delights of recently being made the youngest partner at his firm. Charlie really doesn't understand and only occasionally wonders why his woefully neglected social world consists only of everyone's nightmare of a best friend, Kane Joffre. Kane, a man who lacks Charlie's drive and intelligence, has spent their post college years embarking on one ineffective moneymaking scheme after another. And it is Charlie's lack of moral fibre and consequent lack of any other true friends that places him with Kane the night of his victory and sends him through an experience that will bring him close to madness.

For Kane, who now believes he has the talent to become a photojournalist, forces Charlie to accompany him into inner London's midnight underworld on a misguided attempt at snapping up the urban misery and human decay.

Fear of the unforgiving surroundings and Kane's cavalier attitude to their danger push Charlie's tolerance to the limit. Wound up in knots with frustration, Charlie is hardly aware of the vicious beating a young homeless boy is receiving in the gutter by his feet.

As Kane hungrily sucks in the violence with his amateur photographic skills Charlie chases off the boy's attackers then cradles him in his arms as he lies dying.

The hard-nosed Charlie, so used to backstabbing deals and company crucifixions, is not prepared for the anguish of staring into the eyes of a child and watching the life slip away. The harrowing incident in the dirty London street comes to leave scars upon his soul in more ways than he could ever have imagined.

Charlie's grief, however, turns to a more sickening distress when he wakes the following morning to discover a gaggle of frenzied press pounding at his door.



More by luck than judgment, in the split second before Charlie noticed the brutal attack, Kane had captured an image of him, business suit attire, hands thrust deep in pockets, eyes cast down, literally and figuratively looking the other way as he passes by a destitute teenager's lonely violent death.

The image is so profound and expressive of a soulless era that even Kane immediately realises its' importance and, after selling it to a national paper, it goes on to seep into the country's psyche and become an iconic image of a cold and heartless age, pricking a collective subconscious like nothing before it. The photograph proves an irresistible temptation to the national press who descend upon Charlie without regard to his life or the truth.

Charlie, now close to being the most hated man in Britain, mournfully accepts how quickly his so-called friend has made a sacrifice of him. After losing everything because of the current notoriety Charlie, broken and haunted, decides to end his own life.

The world, it seems, is not ready to let go of Charlie just yet and he is literally pulled back from the edge by enigmatic businessman Obadiah Lawson, a man with more layers than the proverbial onion. Obadiah's chauffeur carries Charlie like a broken doll to his limousine and transports him to his rambling mansion on the tiny, sparingly populated island of Small Haven.

In the cold sober light of morning, with hysteria subsided, the island takes on a hue of ethereal frightening beauty. The more Charlie sees of the place and its' inhabitants, all outwardly normal, inwardly strange, and all living under Obadiah's domineering influence, the more everything about it seems slightly askew.

The one positive asset for Charlie is the residents' apparent lack of knowledge of the notorious photograph and his national infamy.

Obadiah, the strangest denizen of all in Small Haven is a man with the confident tone of a monster who's calmly aware of the brutality coiled up inside him, always leaving a lasting impression of an evil intelligence in his wake. He insists on Charlie staying on at his dark and moody mansion, imploring him to defend his only son Matthew in a bizarre self conducted island trial. Charlie takes on the role with the misguided belief that a victory will restore his dignity and self worth, especially as Lawson's beguiling young son, with his callow face and haunted stare, is a polished near replica of the dead boy from the photograph.



As Charlie throws himself headlong into the case an undeniable air of nastiness pervades the proceedings. At his every turn his efforts are thwarted in a variety of ways and his hopes of being able to save the boy in this “second chance” scenario fly drastically out of control.

As Charlie desperately tries to keep news of his dire ineptness from Obadiah’s ears he grows increasingly consumed by the young Matthew. Still laden with guilt, he becomes obsessed by the idea of “saving” the boy at this trial and his dedication to the case seems more about satisfying some deep-seated need in his own life. The situation draws them together as a noose is drawn tight and during their strange and stilted relationship they begin to pity and care for one another – Matthew seeming almost vaguely aware of Charlie’s wounded life – his pain, his loss, the trap he’s in – the boy’s compassion and normalcy bringing a sense of control to Charlie’s current mad existence.

Without knowing it Charlie tries to mould Matthew more and more into the dead boy from the infamous photograph – making the hope of the expectant salvation all the more pertinent. However, that salvation never comes, in its stead tragedy looms again for Charlie, but this time in an even more harrowing and unforgiving of ways.

Yet, as a traumatised Charlie prepares to flee from Small Haven, he happens upon something that puts all his anguish on the moot island into a dizzying perspective.

Regaining strength, and an audacious cunning that once prevailed within him, Charlie travels to London and pulls a few punches of his own before returning to the island one last time with a sly little game-plan that will hopefully change the way the world sees him once and for all and allow him to answer the age-old calling that every man becomes the man he was born to be, eventually.

