



The Guards: A Novel (Jack Taylor Series)

By Ken Bruen

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Still stinging from his unceremonious ouster from the Garda Siochana--The Guards, Ireland's police force--and staring at the world through the smoky bottom of his beer mug, Jack Taylor is stuck in Galway with nothing to look forward to. In his sober moments Jack aspires to become Ireland's best private investigator, not to mention its first--Irish history, full of betrayal and espionage, discourages any profession so closely related to informing. But in truth Jack is teetering on the brink of his life's sharpest edges, his memories of the past cutting deep into his soul and his prospects for the future nonexistent.

Nonexistent, that is, until a dazzling woman walks into the bar with a strange request and a rumor about Jack's talent for finding things. Odds are he won't be able to climb off his barstool long enough to get involved with his radiant new client, but when he surprises himself by getting hired, Jack has little idea of what he's getting into.

Stark, violent, sharp, and funny, *The Guards* is an exceptional novel, one that leaves you stunned and breathless, flipping back to the beginning in a mad dash to find Jack Taylor and enter his world all over again. It's an unforgettable story that's gritty, absorbing, and saturated with the rough-edged rhythms of the Galway streets. Praised by authors and critics around the globe, *The Guards* heralds the arrival of an essential new novelist in contemporary crime fiction.

The Guards is a 2004 Edgar Award Nominee for Best Novel.

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- Sales Rank: #75608 in Books
- Brand: Minotaur Books
- Published on: 2004-01-19
- Released on: 2004-01-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.18" h x .3" w x 5.57" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

There's something about the job that leads (fictional) cops and PIs to drink, which is why booze always seems to be a minor character in the genre. This is certainly the case in Ken Bruen's debut thriller about melancholy Irishman Jack Taylor, whose luck at finding things keeps him in beer money after he's kicked out of Ireland's Garda Siochana. When the mother of a young suicide victim asks him to investigate her daughter's death, Taylor discovers that Sarah Henderson isn't the only teenager to take a long walk off a short Galway pier. His search for the perpetrator gets his best friend killed, destroys his nascent relationship with his client, and sets him up for a final betrayal few readers will see coming. This promising writer doesn't need all the tricky punctuation and excess quotations from other writers to punch up his sharp, lyrical prose, but these are minor quibbles--he's a newcomer to watch. --*Jane Adams*

From Publishers Weekly

Bruen flaunts genre clichés (the tough cop who loves books; the beating victim who insists on checking himself out of a hospital too soon) on virtually every page of this outstanding debut mystery. He gets away with it thanks to his novel setting, the Irish seaside city of Galway, and unusual characters who are either current or former members of the Garda Siochana, the Guards, Ireland's shadowy police force. Bruen, a teacher of English in schools in Africa and Japan, has a rich and mordant writing style, full of offbeat humor. "You don't know hell till you stand in a damp dance hall in South Armagh as the crowd sing along to 'Surfing Safari,'" says Jack Taylor, kicked out of the Guards for various booze-related infractions and now working sporadically as a "finder." An attractive woman pays him to look into the supposed suicide of her teenaged daughter, and Taylor manages to stay sober long enough to do it, after a fashion. There's a tendency toward cuteness (three-line lists dot the already sparse narrative), and Bruen is determined to tell us just how well read and well listened his hero is by dropping in dozens of references to writers and musical groups. But these are minor failings. With the recent accidental death of Mark McGarrity, the American who wrote (as Bartholomew Gill) about a top Dublin cop, Bruen now has a chance to become that country's version of Scotland's Ian Rankin--and perhaps the standard bearer for a new subgenre called "Hibernian Noir."

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From Library Journal

Jack Galway's life is spiraling downward. Dumped from the Garda Siochana ("the Guards"), Ireland's elite police force, he now passes his days drinking in a friend's bar. Enter Ann Henderson, a woman searching for her missing daughter. Jack agrees to take on her case, learning about Ann's daughter as well as other young women who have recently disappeared. Soon, he becomes personally involved with his client and her plight and works toward resolving it despite a strange sense of hopelessness that hangs over the action. While there is ultimately some form of resolution, first novelist Bruen makes no effort to tie everything up in a neat and happy ending. The writing is less hard-boiled than lyrical, with a definite edge that perfectly fits the story. This one should be popular in public libraries with fans of crime fiction, especially those who appreciate the art of good writing.

Craig Shufelt, Lane P.L., Oxford, OH

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Margaret Williams:

Do you have favorite book? If you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or maybe goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time to read a book. They can be reading whatever they get because their hobby will be reading a book. Think about the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, person feel need book if they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you should have this The Guards: A Novel (Jack Taylor Series).

Kathryn Mullins:

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Jacqueline Ramos:

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Isaiah Owens:

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