



## Hell to Pay

*Garry Disher*

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**A modern western set in an isolated Australian bush town with a soaring crime rate, where a local constable with a troubled past must investigate the death of a teenage girl whose murder threatens to set the dusty streets ablaze.**

Constable Paul Hirschhausen—"Hirsch"—is a recently demoted detective sent from Adelaide, Australia's southernmost booming metropolis, to Tiverton, a one-road town in rustic, backwater "wool and wheat" country three hours north. Hirsch isn't just a disgraced cop; the internal investigations bureau is still trying to convict him of something, even if it means planting evidence. When someone leaves a pistol cartridge in his mailbox, Hirsch suspects that his career isn't the only thing on the line.

But the tiny town of Tiverton has more crime than one lone cop should have to handle. The stagnant economy, rural isolation, and entrenched racism and misogyny mean every case Hirsch investigates is a new basket of snakes. When the body of a 16-year-old local girl is found on the side of the highway, the situation in Tiverton gets even more sinister, and whether or not he finds her killer, there's going to be hell to pay.

**Paperback edition found under the title *Bitter Wash Road*.**

## Hell to Pay Details

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# From Reader Review Hell to Pay for online ebook

## LJ says

First Sentence: On a Monday morning in September, three weeks into the job, the Tiverton policeman took a call from his sergeant: shots fired on Bitter Wash Road.

Paul Hirschhausen (“Hirsch”) has been demoted to Constable, and sent to back-of-beyond Australia where he’s mistrusted and berated by his “fellow” officers. Internal Investigations in Adelaide is still after him, trying to convict him of something and willing to plant evidence to do it. In the meantime, even in his remote locate, there are crimes to be solved, including the body of a 16-year-old girl found by the side of the road.

If one ever read Rhys Bowen’s “Hamish Macbeth” series, Hirsch’s posting will remind one of that. However, that is the only similarity. Disher takes us about as far as possible from Hamish’s Scotland, down to Southern Australia, but acquaints us with the area with wonderfully visual descriptions...”October gathered its skirts and raced past.”

Disher provides very good backstory on Hirsch. The inclusion of his inquest was both interesting, but allows for his speculation as to why some cops go bad. We also see the frustration of a good cop working for, and with, bad cops; the blindness of “the thin blue line, and how corrupting that can be. On the other hand, it is interesting to see the diversity of calls to which a rural cop must respond and the relationship he must maintain with the community.

Disher does a wonderful job building up the suspense and tension. One can’t help but appreciate the source from which Hirsch’s rescue comes.

“Hell to Pay” is an excellent read; an extremely well-written book dealing with very timely issues.

HELL TO PAY (Pol Proc – Const. Paul Hirschhausen-Adelaide, Australia-Contemp) - Ex  
Disher, Garry – Standalone  
Soho Crime – June, 2014

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## Toby says

Quite easily my favourite Australian noir, Garry Disher's Bitter Wash Road is a tense drama of rural life from the point of view of an outsider, in this instance Hirsch, a potentially bent copper, demoted to patrolling a small town in South Australia.

Hirsch is dropped in to a fairly typical murder mystery plot - dead body, many suspects, coverups etc - and in true genre fashion misses clues, asks the wrong questions and jumps to conclusions BUT Disher gives the story so much more than that including a few nice red herrings. His strongest work is in his evocative prose, bringing life to the place, people and situations that Hirsch runs up against, most notably the paranoia that affects Hirsch from the opening paragraph; he's been tarnished with many brushes, a bent copper and not just that, a bent copper who snitched on his mates according to the department assumptions and now his life is under threat, not just from the colleagues he apparently sent away but from his new colleagues who don't

appreciate having to work with a maggot who dishonored the badge.

It all makes for a tense and atmospheric read that would surely be selling bucketloads more if he wasn't an Aussie, it's comparable to the best of the modern genre from anywhere in the world as far as I'm concerned.

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### **Josh says**

The initial attraction for me to Bitter Wash Road was the fact that it is set near my hometown of Adelaide. I love reading books where the setting is familiar (which doesn't happen all that often unfortunately).

The small country town feel is omnipresent, personified by the one man police station, working and dilapidated farmsteads, and the 'everyone knows everyone' characteristics of rural life. This gives Bitter Wash Road a distinct and unique feel to the common lone-wolf police procedurals

On the surface, outcast cop Hirsch, a former metro police officer displaced after turning informant on the crooked cops at Paradise Gardens, seems to have been relegated to a sleepy country town where nothing much happens; working a one man station far removed from the cops he helped bring down. What lies beneath is a different story.

Author Garry Disher has written a well crafted and perfectly executed country cop tale with an endearing protagonist who has the odds stacked against him in everything he does. Forget about investigating serious crimes, the locals and near town cop station where Hirsch reports to, hinder everyday policing. Word of the 'dog' spreads fast and Hirsch feels every inch of his honesty obstructing him from doing his job.

Bitter Wash Road is excellent and a must read for any fan of crime fiction. 5 / 5 stars.

<http://justaguythatlikes2read.blogspot...>

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### **Phrynne says**

I am really enjoying reading my way through this author's work, and luckily there is plenty of it so I will be busy for a while!

Bitter Wash Road tells the story of a whistle blower in the police force who, as he would be in most organisations, is shunned by his colleagues and sent to work in the back of beyond. Unfortunately he ends up in an equally bad scenario where the local police force consists basically of thugs.

Disher writes really well and his descriptions of the locality are spot on. His characters are also well developed and the main character, Hirsch, is very likeable. The story is paced very well and it is too easy to keep on reading and reading right through to the end. And the ending is wonderful particularly the assistance Hirsch gets from an unexpected source.

Thoroughly enjoyable and highly recommended:)

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## **Donna says**

This was an Australian crime book. I listened to the audio and I liked the author's accent. Usually I'm not a fan of that, but in this book, it was nice. I liked the MC. He progressed greatly and the ending was completely believable as far as where he ended up. His characteristics were well drawn. I didn't like him at first...he was a little a whiny. But then he grew on me. The story was a little busy for me, however, the author kept it all reigned in. So 3 stars.

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## **Andrew Nette says**

Garry Disher has been writing crime fiction for longer than I've been reading it.

I love his work and think his books are getting better and better.

If you want proof, check out his latest novel, Bitter Wash Road.

Unlike Disher's other crime fiction, the Wyatt series and the Challis and Destry police procedurals, Bitter Wash Road is intended as a stand alone.

The story is told from the perspective of Hirsch, a whistle blowing cop, him self under suspicion of corruption, who has been exiled to a one-man police station in the small town of Tiverton, located in dry wheat and wool country south of the Flinders Ranges, South Australia.

The first few chapters are a master class in class in how to write a tense, atmospheric crime thriller.

Called out to investigate a report of shots being fired on Bitter Wash Road, Hirsch ends up being the first cop on the scene of a terrible crime, a young local girl found dead in a ditch.

The dead girl had a reputation for being a bit wild, a taste for hitch hiking, with all the innuendo that goes with it. Everyone, including his boss, an old school cop called Kropp, thinks it is a hit and run. Hirsch is not convinced.

Kropp wants Hirsch investigating stolen sheep and house break-ins, not poking his nose in where it is not wanted by looking into the girl's death. But Hirsch won't be deterred.

Is Kropp just being antagonistic because of Hirsch's reputation as a whistle blower or is he hiding something?

There are so many things I liked about this book. The central crime and its perpetrators and complex, real and brilliantly revealed.

Hirsch is a great character, tough, solitary, a touch of the mongrel about him. He's not particularly sympathetic and it is unclear whether he's not also guilty of some of the very corruption he's denounced in other police.

Disher has also excelled at creating a menacing air of paranoia resulting from his status as an outcast from the rest of the police due to whistle blowing.

Last but not least, is the terrific writing, both descriptions of physical location and of people and situations.

It was late in the afternoon before the accident investigators arrived. Hirsch wanted to hang around and talk about what he'd been thinking but they ignored. Two men and one woman conscious of the dwindling light, the sun smearing itself across the horizon, long shadows playing visual tricks. They took their photos, measured distances, crouched and poked and grid-searched and marked up their diagrams.

'You're blocking the light,' the female officer said. Her tone indicated she knew exactly who Hirsch was.

Bitter Wash Road is a complex, slow burn thriller from a writer at the top of his game. It's one of Disher's darkest books yet and, in my opinion, one of his best.

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## **Pat says**

4 stars

I read "Under the Cold Bright Lights" by Garry Disher and enjoyed the book so much I wanted to try another by this author. This book is definitely good but I think the former book spoiled me.

In "Hell to Pay", Constable Paul Hirschhausen (Hirsch) is stationed in a small town in the bushland of South Australia. Corruption happens because after all, who is really watching, but a local girl is found in a hit-and-run and Hirsch is not so sure the circumstances are all that clear. As he begins to dig so much more is discovered.

Australian novels are not highlighted here in the US but I recommend giving some novels a chance. The ending of this book was definitely not expected.

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## **Jenny says**

Bitter Wash Road is about a man who lost everything to do the right thing. Detective Paul Hirschhausen after whistleblower on his colleagues was demoted to a constable and sent to one policemen station in a small rural town in South Australia. When Constable Paul Hirschhausen was called to investigate the death of a 16-year-girl, it started events that changed his life and the small community that he is in-charged to protect. The readers of Bitter Wash Road will follow Constable Paul Hirschhausen investigation of the death of the young girl to see what happens.

I have read other books by Garry Disher and I never been disappointed in his portrayal of his characters or the plot of the book and Bitter Wash Road continued my love affair with Garry Disher's books. I like the way Garry Disher describes the problems that Constable Paul Hirschhausen had to endure because he reported on crooked cops. I love Garry Disher's portrayal of his characters and the way they entwine with each other throughout Bitter Wash Road. Garry Disher knows the way to keep me engaged with the characters and plot of Bitter Wash Road, and I never accepted the ending of this book.

.The readers of Bitter Wash Road will learn what happens to whistle-blowers in law enforcement. Also, readers of Bitter Wash Road will understand the problems that small rural communities when law enforcement overlook or became involved with criminal activities.

I recommend this book

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## **Brenda says**

Constable Paul Hirschhausen, known to all as Hirsch, was the new cop in the rural town of Tiverton, a couple of hours north of Adelaide in South Australia. He was called a whistle-blower, hated and despised by his colleagues from the high up ranks to the lowest. Sent to this one-cop town in disgrace, his new boss was Sergeant Kropp , stationed at Redruth which was not all that far from Tiverton. But Hirsch was one of those honest cops; one who believed in the law – in being firm but compassionate when necessary. He was always going to clash with Kropp and the other two constables in Redruth.

Bitter Wash Road was where he was sent on his first job; gunfire had been heard – two criminals were on the run from Queensland; he wondered if it could be them? But what he found was quite different – and after his shock at the closeness of the bullet, his thoughts were on whether this would be his last job...

Then with a terrible suddenness, things went from bad to worse. The finding of the body of a young local girl was a shock to Hirsch; was it an accident or was it something more sinister? The escalation of horrors in the area; the violence and evil – Hirsch felt like he was moving through a sea of treacle. No-one within the force believed his theories; he was lacking in evidence, but his gut was telling him he was right. Did he have anyone at all that he could trust?

I loved this gritty mystery by Aussie author Garry Disher. The plot was excellent with the twists keeping me glued to the pages. I haven't read a lot by this author but that will definitely change. The combination of great characters, both likeable and unlikeable plus the tension and suspense throughout, meant this was an exceptional crime fiction novel. Highly recommended.

With thanks to Text Publishing for my copy to read and review.

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## **Alex says**

I really hope this is the beginning of a new series. Paul "Hirsch" Hirschhausen is a one time Adelaide cop sent to Coventry (or, in this case, the South Australian outback) as punishment for grassing a bent senior copper. He is despised in the force as a result and soon learns he is the target of retribution for those he informed on. Disher's descriptions of the outback and the sinister underbelly of Hirsch's new locale are beautifully written and the tension is real throughout. His characters, both lead and minor, are magnificently drawn and realised. Disher's mastery of plotting is well on show here with many twists. Hirsch is a great character much in the same way that Hallis is in the equally brilliant Peninsula series. Highly recommended!

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## **MaryG2E says**

While the murders are integral to the plot of Bitter Wash Road, they also provide a brilliant vehicle for the author Garry Disher to explore issues around cop culture and corruption in an insightful way. This book is a great read, and is revelatory in its exposure of the kind of blokey attitude that perpetuates stereotypical behaviour in small rural communities. Brainless thugs, thinly disguised as police constables, harass the less fortunate in town, just because they can, and because the uniform gives them power. The higher the rank, the more subtle and sinister is the abuse of power because of police culture, a kind of 'don't tell' brotherhood. BTW, 'Redruth' is a former name for the town of Burra in South Australia, and the author's depiction of the former mining town and surrounding farming areas is very accurate. I greatly respect Garry Disher as an author of quality, and Bitter Wash Road did not disappoint me.

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## **Russell says**

This was the first of Disher's crime novels that I've read, and it probably won't be the last. I've enjoyed his YA work in the past, and this very recent publication confirms Disher as one of Australia's better novelists. What I particularly like about Disher is the way he brings his settings to life - without getting bogged down in tedious description like so many writers. This book is set in rural South Australia, where the author grew up, so it is not surprising that he can describe the harsh surroundings accurately; but it takes great skill to make the reader feel as though they are there.

I'm not going to bother with a plot summary here. It would be difficult to summarise this story without giving too much away - there are a few seemingly insignificant incidents that assume greater importance as the novel unfolds (isn't that always the case with this genre?) so a summary might spoil the next reader's experience. The narrative is fast-paced, with a new lead or clue every few pages, but we rarely get the impression that the action is contrived. There were a few incidents that seemed a little too serendipitous, but the explanations are in the end satisfactory. The characters are mostly believable, though a few are one-dimensional (Andrewartha and Nicholson are probably the worst examples). The language is often very coarse, and some readers may find this a problem, but it is authentic. The conversations would seem unrealistic if sanitised. There is violence, gore, sex, but nothing gratuitous.

I read this book as an eBook, thanks to Geelong Regional Library and the Axis 360 lending platform. It's a great way to read crime fiction. Any time I needed to be reminded where I'd met a character before, I just searched for the name. This didn't help me solve the mystery of course! Some of my initial suspicions were confirmed, but there were enough twists and surprises to keep me interested until the last page.

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## **Marianne says**

Bitter Wash Road is the eighteenth stand-alone novel by popular Australian author, Garry Disher. It has also been published under the title Hell To Pay. Not long after Constable Paul Hirschhausen has been banished to the small South Australian wheatbelt town of Tiverton for the unforgiveable (being a whistle-blower), he is called to attend an apparent hit-and-run. But, despite the scorn of his superiors, to Hirsch, something feels not quite right. And when, a few weeks later, he discovers the body of a woman who has committed suicide, he is again plagued with doubt.



In Hirsch, Disher has created a central character who is both likeable and believable, flawed yet principled. Disher expertly conveys the atmosphere of the outback town with evocative descriptions that will have the reader tasting the dust in the back of the throat and feeling the boredom and despair. His cast of townspeople will be familiar to anyone who has visited such a place.

Disher gives the reader an original plot that somehow realistically includes a network of paedophiles, a wind farm, an inheritance, some subtle (and not so subtle) threats, pair of fugitive murder-rapists, planted evidence, domestic violence, a pair of cops who delight in harassment of old people, young girls and aborigines, adultery, jealousy, football, drinking and brawling, and a red herring or two to keep everyone guessing. While this is a stand-alone novel, Hirschhausen is an appealing character of whom readers are bound to want more. Once again, Disher does not disappoint.

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## Alex Cantone says

*(Hirsch) recalled camping trips from his childhood, teachers warning the kids not to pitch their tents under gumtrees. All that sinewy health on the outside and quiet decay within. A bit like the police, really.*

Paul Hirschhausen is a (fairly) honest cop, dogged by his time serving with a dishonest and corrupt detective team out of metropolitan Paradise Gardens north of Adelaide. He turned evidence and escaped a jail term, but not the wrath of the South Australian Police Service he “ratted” on. Busted back to constable, he is assigned the one-cop beat at Tiverton, a tiny town in the wheat belt south of the Barrier Highway, between Peterborough and Broken Hill, overseen by Sergeant Kropp at Redruth who, with a pair of misogynist and racist red-neck constables, runs the area *his* way. Hirsch handles the veiled threats, knocking his coffee over, tempting him with money left on the floor, a bullet placed in his letterbox.

When is called out to isolated **Bitter Wash Road** in response to a report of gunfire, and finds a couple of kids taking pot-shots with a .22, spooked by stories of a pair of villains in Queensland driving a black Chrysler, telling him a similar car has seen in their neighbourhood. He asks if they had seen anyone at his letterbox while they were at school in Tiverton, but they demurred, mentioning they saw a woman looking into his private vehicle during the morning recess.

After a brief word with their mothers Hirsch is sent to the Barrier Highway where a passing motorist has found the body of a teenage girl, apparently the victim of a hit-and-run. She is recognised by the doctor who arrives at the scene to verify death and undertake the autopsy. Trying to interview the family is problematic: a single mother with two children by different fathers long gone, one Aboriginal, and from there on in it all gets messy...

Besides policing the local scene, Hirsch is called back to Adelaide for an appeal review of evidence against his former CIB boss. Prompted by the kids seeing someone near his vehicle he searches it, finding a mobile phone and cash taken from the evidence room stashed in his car in an attempt to frame him. He contacts Rosie DeLisle, the Internal Investigations officer who was assigned to him, but she has weightier matters to deal with, a sex ring luring teenage girls...

This one caught me from the start and never let go. It's many years since I drove from Canberra to Adelaide via Broken Hill, (and the Barrier Highway), and Disher vividly captures the landscape, the buildings, the history and the forlornness. The local police are imbued of a pack mentality, and the stench of corruption

points a long finger upwards. Riveting reading and I look forward to other works by this Aussie author.

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## **Michael says**

Constable Paul Hirschhausen is a man of integrity and someone who has fallen foul in Adelaide after whistle-blowing on a bent cop. Hated by his colleagues, he now finds himself in the South Australian town of Tiverton, hoping to move on with his life that involves an upcoming inquest. But far from being a quiet time in this small town, Paul will find himself slap bang into something far greater than what he could ever imagine.

Called out to Bitter Wash Road after reports of shots being fired, he will come across a dead teenage girl on the side of the road. The general consensus is that she was the victim of a hit and run but Hirsch is not convinced. His boss Sergeant Kropp does not want Hirsch to investigate. Why this is so will reveal itself as time goes by. It soon becomes apparent to Hirsch that the young girl's death is the tip of an all-mighty iceberg. He has his own theories, but without evidence and with a lack of trust due to his past, will have to work doubly hard to find the truth.

What that is will manifest itself in police corruption, abuse of power, intimidation, domestic violence and Hirsch putting his life on the line to bring it to a stop. This is gritty crime noir mystery written to perfection, with an unassuming plot that sucks you in and keeps you thinking to the very end. Throw in some great characterisation and the wonderful backdrop of the outback, with its small-town nuances, you have everything you need for a quality read. This is the first book I have read by Aussie author Garry Disher and won't be my last.

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