



The Ruin

Dervla McTiernan

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It's been twenty years since Cormac Reilly discovered the body of Hilaria Blake in her crumbling Georgian home. But he's never forgotten the two children she left behind...

When Aisling Conroy's boyfriend Jack is found in the freezing black waters of the river Corrib, the police tell her it was suicide. A surgical resident, she throws herself into study and work, trying to forget - until Jack's sister Maude shows up. Maude suspects foul play, and she is determined to prove it.

DI Cormac Reilly is the detective assigned with the re-investigation of an 'accidental' overdose twenty years ago - of Jack and Maude's drug- and alcohol-addled mother. Cormac is under increasing pressure to charge Maude for murder when his colleague Danny uncovers a piece of evidence that will change everything...

This unsettling crime debut draws us deep into the dark heart of Ireland and asks who will protect you when the authorities can't - or won't. Perfect for fans of Tana French and Jane Casey.

The Ruin Details

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From Reader Review The Ruin for online ebook

PattyMacDotComma says

4★

“The truism that a lawyer should never ask a question to which he did not already know the answer did not apply to detectives. If anything the opposite rule applied. You had a plan going into every interrogation, but sometimes it was best to follow your instinct,”

Ireland’s loss is Australia’s gain! Author Dervla McTiernan and her family have migrated to Perth, Western Australia. Although this debut novel is set in cold, rainy Ireland, one character did ‘flee’ for many years to the Kimberley, a long, long way north of Perth, to a very different climate.

Garda Cormac Reilly didn’t move quite that far in the novel, but he did shift across Ireland from Dublin to Galway with his girlfriend, Emma, a research scientist She was excited to win a prestigious grant, but the work is based in a lab in Galway, so he has gone with her. His 20-year career as a detective sergeant in Dublin was far more complex than anything the Mill Street Garda station is likely to offer him, but . . . ah, the things we do for love, eh?

Of course, crime isn’t restricted to the Big Smoke, and even the loneliest, most remote outpost can be dangerous. Galway is hardly remote, but it’s different.

The book opens with a prologue from 1993, when young Reilly was called to an old, once-grand home, where he met two young children whose mother was dead in bed. He takes them to the local hospital and can do no more.

Then the story moves to 2013, where we meet Jack and Aisling, a young couple in love who are setting out their future together.

*[I looked up how to pronounce Aisling, since I don’t know anyone by this name, and it’s roughly ASH-ling, ASH-lin, or ASH-leen, depending upon whom you ask. I like to be able to hear the names in my head when I read. The ASH is enough for me. But I digress.]**

The author has done a wonderful job of keeping the timeline easy to follow by introducing each section with the date. The first main action happens on St Patrick’s Day, March 17, and the following chapters move into April. Very easy, and thank you! I mention this because there is a fashion for shifting times so often that it’s easy to get lost, and many readers really dislike it.

Whenever Cormac remembers something from the past, he is remembering it, and it’s discussed as the past. Straight-forward.

But the story’s not that simple. (Well, a good mystery never is, is it?) There’s a reported suicide that doesn’t seem to be getting the attention it deserves, and Reilly can feel a chill in the squad room. Who’s trustworthy, who isn’t?

The initial quotation about not asking a question unless you know the answer is from where he’s about to interview someone he’s pretty sure he shouldn’t trust. He makes a bit of a show getting out his notebook, referring to notes, jotting things down patiently. He explains that some people

“... were too clever. They lied when they should stay quiet. They thought ahead, saw the risks, and moved to tie them off. They could never quite see how the slow setting down of questions and noting of answers could drive them into a trap of their own making.”

It's a bit like the trick of not filling a conversational silence to encourage someone to reveal just a bit more. Like the old saying, 'give him enough rope and he'll hang himself'.

Good story, well told, and I did mention the rain and the cold, didn't I?

“They walked home together, hand in hand. It was cold, but the rain held off and there was such simple pleasure in that.”

...

“The cold settled about her like a cloak, chilling the sweat on her brow and stiffening her hands. The sun was still out, but it was a winter sun – all show and no substance – and clouds were gathering.”

Welcome, Dervla! I hope you enjoy your move to such a sunny place. Now, about all that rain, . . .

* For anyone else wanting to know how to pronounce Irish words, this fellow is very helpful.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU9w9...>

Josh says

This police procedural set in mostly in Galway, Ireland introduces new series protagonist Cormac Reilly; a smart and dedicated Guard who isn't afraid to go against the grain to solve a case - even if it means investigating his colleagues.

The Ruin is a story of two tales intertwined by murder and circumstance. When Jake Blake goes missing, his partner, Aisling Conroy fears she's lost her loved one following the discovery of her pregnancy, however, it's not a matter of cold feet, with something more sinister the cause; suicide. Aisling starts questioning herself while trying to piece together a fractured picture of Jake - suicide doesn't 'fit' with Jake's profile, and when his long-gone sister, Maude returns poking holes in the guard's case, murder becomes most likely.

20 years earlier, Jake was the victim of domestic abuse; the guard called to his residence, Cormac Reilly, took him to the hospital along with his sister who promptly disappeared, only to resurface in the present day. The clever interlocking of cases around Cormac was well executed.

The Ruin is a quick read such is the quality of the writing and easily flowing narrative. The characters are complex and well rounded. This feels like the beginning of what could be a long running series with bit players in the guard given complimentary page-time; just enough tease them out in readiness for further exploration.

My rating: 4/5 stars. The Ruin captures the rainy and grey of Galway while shining a light on an interesting protagonist with an equally interesting backstory that I'm keen to read more of.

Bianca says

I just love it when a novel lives up to the hype.

The Ruin was a very satisfying read - steady, engaging and very atmospheric.

Garda Cormac Reilly (I love his name) was an interesting character, whom I hope to get to know better in the second novel.

McTiernan weaved a compelling story, bringing to light some unsavoury Irish older realities, as the treatment of unwed mothers, child abuse and neglect, paedophilia, abortion. How timely. On a side note, I love all the wonderful news coming out of Ireland - equal marriage rights and they've just had a referendum to remove an antiquated constitution amendment prohibiting abortions. Welcome to the 21st century, Ireland.

So, people, pay attention, there's a new crime-mystery writer and she's very skilled.

Dem says

Refreshing and Back to basics well constructed crime novel that is believable and entertaining. A cracking good read for those who enjoy crime / mystery novels.

The Ruin is a debut novel by Dervla McTiernan and what a complex and fast paced novel set in Galway. I rarely read crime novels but every now and then like to test the waters and I couldn't resist picking up a copy of the Ruin and so glad I did as it has an interesting and believable plot, great characters and plenty of twists and turns to keep the reader interested.

Set in Ireland the author captures a wonderful sense of time and place and she doesn't shy away from the dark and disturbing. A book of lies and secrets and the man of the moment is Detective Cormac Reilly who is drawn back to a case he has worked on in his earlier career when he discovered the dead body of Hilario Blake in her crumbling Georgian home and the two children she left behind still haunts his memory.

I think readers who enjoy Police procedure novels or crime novels are going to really enjoy this one as it's well written and full of suspense and I for one look forward to the next installment of the Cormac Reilly Series.

Faith says

Set in 2013, this is the first book of a new series featuring Detective Sergeant Cormac Reilly who has recently moved to Galway from Dublin in order to be with his girlfriend Emma. His new colleagues are not exactly welcoming and it seems to go beyond the usual hazing of the new guy. There are undercurrents of unease. The cops seem to spend as much time disrupting investigations as they do pursuing them. Reilly is stuck with going over the cold cases, one of which is a case in which he was involved in 1993. Working solo, Reilly was sent to investigate a domestic situation and discovered the body of Hilaria Blake, dead from an accidental heroin overdose. Her orphaned children Maude and Jack (15 and 5) showed signs of abuse and neglect. Maude disappeared but Jack was eventually adopted, became an engineer and formed a happy relationship with a surgical resident, Aisling Conroy. And then Jack committed suicide. Maude suddenly

resurfaces after the suicide and insists that the police investigate Jack's death as a murder. Reilly, Maude and Aisley were terrific characters.

I've probably read too many police procedurals because now they usually bore me, but every once in a while one comes along that exceeds my expectations. Fortunately, "The Ruin" was one of those books. It's a police procedural with believable characters, a poignant story and a plot that holds together. I thought it might have been about 50 pages shorter, but other than that I had no complaints. The next book in the series is supposed to be published in 2019. I look forward to it.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

Carolyn says

After some 20y of building up his career in elite units, working on some of the biggest cases in Dublin, DS Cormac Reilly has moved back to Galway where his career began so that his partner can further her scientific career. Now he finds himself the new boy in the office, consigned to cold cases and trying to fit in when everyone is suspicious of him and his reasons for being there.

Cormac's first case in Galway as a young constable involved a call out to a dead woman in a lonely, crumbling mansion. He'll never forget the two starving, neglected children, Jack and Maude who he found there and took to A&E and always wondered what became of them. Now Jack's body has been fished out of the river after an apparent suicide, but his partner Aisling refuses to believe that and wants the gardai to investigate his death. Cormac is assigned the case and his investigations lead him to wonder what happened 20y ago in that house where he found Jack and Maude.

This is an amazingly good debut novel by Irish-Australian Dervla McTiernan. Well written with a compelling story line and believable characters, the novel weaves in threads dealing with the Catholic Church, historical child abuse and current day corruption in the police force. It's refreshing to see that Cormac is a modern hard working, honest sort of detective with a pleasant personality and happy home life and not the grumpy, alcoholic or depressed divorcee that populates so many thrillers. I am also very happy to see that this is the first in a series as I can't wait to see Cormac and some of the other characters back in action.

Louise Wilson says

Cormac Riley #1

It's been twenty years since Cormac Riley discovered the body of Hilaria Blake in her crumbling Georgian home. But he's never forgotten the two children she left behind.

1993, Cormac Riley was a young Garda called to the scene of a suspected domestic. He finds two young children, Maude who's fifteen and Jack who was just five years old. In the bedroom he finds the body of a woman with a needle still stuck in her arm. Twenty years later, Cormac is working in Galway. He is working on cold cases, one he had worked on before. Maude had disappeared after her mother died., but Jack had eventually been adopted. He went on to become work as an engineer and was in a relationship. But then Jack

commits suicide.

This is a really good debut novel. The writing flows easily across the pages. I always like when novel are set in Ireland. The setting are always beautiful. This plot echoes of the past and present current events. There is also something going on at the police station. The story covers historical child abuse and police corruption. The characters are believable and an ending that satisfactory. A great start to a new series.

I would like to thank NetGalley, Little Brown Book Group UK and the author Dervla McTiernan for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Ingrid says

Ruin is Irish for secret.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I just cannot get my head around it being a debut! The story has a fast pace and is very well built up. Cormac Reilly is sympathetic and straight forward. I'm very enthusiastic and very sorry that I have to wait till March 2019 for the next book in the series.

Brenda says

Surgical resident Aisling Conroy was happy with her life. Her desire to become a surgeon was within her grasp; her boyfriend Jack Blake was someone she knew she would spend the rest of her life with. The love they shared was deep and real. But after a long night in A&E, breakfast with Jack then waking late that afternoon to find Jack gone - not returning home overnight either - the knock on the door the next morning was a devastating shock. Aisling would not believe what the garda were telling her...

The fog of disbelief she still held at the funeral didn't lift - but when she learned Jack's sister Maude had turned up, she was shocked. Jack hadn't seen his sister in twenty years - their young lives had been terrible, but it wasn't something Jack had spoken about. But Maude was determined to find the answers to Jack's death; the garda weren't interested but she was sure there had been foul play involved.

Detective Inspector Cormac Reilly had spent the last month investigating cold cases. Fed up, he jumped at the chance to look into the case he'd caught when he was new to the force, twenty years prior. The first dead person he'd seen - the two frightened young children had stayed in his mind throughout his career.

Did the twenty year old case have anything to do with Jack's death? What would Cormac discover? Was there a cover-up? And what would happen with Aisling?

The Ruin by Aussie author Dervla McTiernan is an outstanding police procedural set in Galway, Ireland. The first in the Cormac Reilly series, I'm already looking forward to the next (March 2019!) Gritty, filled with tension, twists and fast-paced action, *The Ruin* is an excellent debut which bodes only good things for this author's writing future IMO!! Highly recommended.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my digital ARC to read and review.

Jenny says

The Ruin is book 1 of Cormac Reilly series by Dervla McTiernan. When his partner Emma offered a great job in Galway, and Detective Reilly decided to leave Dublin and follow Emma back to Galway. When Detective Sergeant Reilly started his new role at Mill Street Garda Station, his first big cold case was the death of Hilaria Blake twenty years ago. However, he did not realise the consequences of opening this case would be to himself and the community. The readers of The Ruin will continue to follow the twists and turns in Detective Sergeant Reilly investigation to see what happens with everyone involved.

The Ruin is the first book by Dervla McTiernan, wow, what a fantastic book. I am differently looking forward to reading the next instalment in this series the only problem I have to wait until next year. Dervla McTiernan did a fantastic job in highlighting the consequences, issues and the changes in the way community think about child abuse. I like Dervla McTiernan writing style, and Dervla does an excellent job in researching for The Ruin. I love Dervla portrayal of her characters, and the way intertwine with each other.

The readers of The Ruin will start to understand about local law enforcement procedures and roles in Ireland. Also, the readers of The Ruin will learn about living in rural Ireland.

I recommend this book.

Diane S ? says

In 1993, Cormac is a young Garda, called to the scene of a possible domestic. Inside a dilapidated house he finds two young children. Maude, fifteen and Jack only five, both painfully thin. In an upstairs bedroom he finds a dead woman, with the needle still stuck in her arm. Fast forward twenty years, Cormac now a seasoned Garda, recently transferred to Belfast, find himself embroiled in a suspected suicide, concerning once again Jack and Maude.

This is a well thought-out, tightly plotted police procedural. The first in a new series featuring Cormac. Although I didn't feel I got to know Cormac particularly well, I did like that he transferred because of his love interest Emma, putting her job first. A clever and appreciated turn around of gender politics. It was rather the dark atmosphere that captivated my attention. Also the characters of a now grown Maude, and Aisling, a young woman training to be a surgeon. She is also Jack's love interest, provided an additional focus.

There is also something going on in the Garda station, concerning someone Cormac has considered a friend. This additional thread, along with the investigation kept the plot moving quickly. A good start to a new series, that I believe if kept to the same standards as this one, will be very successful. Reminded me a little of the books by the successful, Denise Mina.

ARC by Edelweiss.

Ammar says

Really interesting written debut

A crime

Cold crime

The past and the present

A mother with a needle in her arm

The kids... alone and unkempt

The future

What happens to them

The present

A crime

Murder or suicide

The Garda come in and check things out

Will they fix the errs of the past

And uncover the truth

Cormac Reilly

Wants to help fix the station

Stop the corruption

Get results

And deliver

Phrynnne says

This is actually a brilliant book for an author's debut, and if she can keep up the standard we are in for an excellent series!

I always like an Irish setting. This book begins in a dilapidated ruin in the Galway countryside, twenty years in the past, with a dead body and two damaged children and I was instantly gripped! Cormac Reilly is the young Guard who has to deal with this situation and it comes back to haunt him twenty years later.

The mystery in this book was more the why than the who as it became increasingly obvious who was going to be responsible. Actually having guessed who the main culprit was the story became more tense. On more than one occasion I was saying things like "No! Don't give it to HIM!" as he continued to mosey around in the story as though he had done nothing at all.

As you can tell I got emotionally involved which is always a sign of a good book. This is a very good book and I highly recommend it to other mystery lovers!

Liz Barnsley says

Oh my word, The Ruin was completely wonderful in a heart wrenching, often traumatic but always utterly compelling way. Gorgeous gorgeous writing, an incredibly atmospheric sense of place and some amazingly authentic characters make this an absolute must read.

I fell for Cormac within a chapter then stayed with him all the way as past and present collide in a truly fascinating and addictive story that kept me up late, bleary eyed, desperate to get to the resolution. The Ruin is the very definition of a page turner, a read in one sitting literary masterpiece, without doubt one of the best books I have read this year.

Beautifully plotted, a multi layered and thought provoking narrative, a supporting cast that will sink into your consciousness, all this to be found here and I loved every minute of it.

Dervla McTiernan is a true talent, I'm so so happy that Cormac will return and I'm going to be first in line when "The Scholar" is ready – everyone had better move out of my way. Erm please.

These are the books I read and wait for.

Highly Recommended.

Paromjit says

This is the first in the DI Cormac Reilly series set in Galway, Ireland. Reilly is trying to find his feet at the police station, after having moved from Dublin to be with Emma, his partner, who starts a demanding new job. After a high flying career, the move which might be viewed as a step down for him proves to be significantly more difficult than he expected. He is viewed with suspicion by other officers, there are problematic politics and tensions which prove to be complex and hard to decipher, and the only person willing to connect with Cormac is a colleague he trained with, but who is being shunned by others. Reilly is only being offered cold cases, such as the disappearance of 15 year old Maura Hughes in 1975. 20 years ago when he was a rookie officer, Reilly arrived at the scene of the death of Hilaria Blake, a terminally ill woman who had overdosed on heroin, with her neglected and badly abused children, 15 year old Maude and 5 year old Jack. Upon taking them to hospital, Maude disappears and Jack was taken into foster care. His efforts to investigate were blocked and he is now being offered the opportunity to look into it as a cold case for which there seems to be no logical reason to do so.

Jack Blake grew up happy in his foster home and is now living with medic, Aisling Conroy. Aisling's life descends into a harrowing mass of horror when she is informed by the police that Jack committed suicide by jumping into the river. Maude has recently returned from having spent her life in Australia, and is unconvinced that her brother committed suicide, and she draws in a confused and reluctant Aisling to look deeper into the circumstances of Jack's death. The police refuse point blank to countenance any other scenario other than suicide, despite being offered video evidence gathered by Maude that proves that Jack was nowhere near the bridge at the time he is supposed to have jumped. However, to Reilly's consternation, Maude is arrested for the murder of her mother 20 years ago for no reason that he can fathom. To add to the pressure on Reilly, there are unfounded rumours swirling around in the station that he had slept with Maude and allegations of misconduct in his time in Dublin. Reilly finds that Maude and Jack had been failed by everyone in their childhood as a curtain is lifted to reveal Ireland's dark history with the church. He encounters the poisonous and evil Domenica Keane, and learns of the presence of a paedophile. Will Reilly be able to battle the sinister hidden agendas and obstacles within the police station and find out what happened to Hilaria in the past and Jack in the present?

Dervla McTiernan gives us a promising beginning to this new series as Cormac begins to establish himself in Galway, only to encounter a real can of worms in his new workplace. Despite all that he comes up against, including betrayal, his focus and determination to get to the truth is undiminished. Although we do not get a real sense of Emma, his commitment to her and their relationship gives us a strong sense of his character, he does not drop into a state of blaming Emma for his woes or wanting to return to Dublin. He feels for Maude and all the responsibilities she was forced to shoulder as a child for Jack and her incapable, ill mother, and the lack of action that shames the Church and the Ireland of that time. I found the story a little slow at the start but was soon caught up in the grip of the compelling and tense narrative. Great to have a new voice in Irish Crime on the scene. Many thanks to Little, Brown for an ARC.
