



Bad Debts

Peter Temple

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Winner of the Ned Kelly Award for Crime Fiction.

Meet Jack Irish, criminal lawyer, debt collector, football lover, turf watcher, trainee cabinetmaker, and one of the best crime characters ever created.

When Jack receives a puzzling message from a jailed ex-client he's too deep in misery over Fitzroy's latest loss to take much notice. Next thing Jack knows, the ex-client's dead and he's been drawn into a life-threatening investigation involving high-level corruption, dark sexual secrets, shonky property deals, and murder. With hitmen after him, shady ex-policemen at every turn, and the body count rising, Jack needs to find out what's going on - and fast.

The first novel in the iconic Jack Irish series, *Bad Debts* was originally published in 1996 and won the Ned Kelly Award for Best First Novel. Guy Pearce stars as Jack Irish in the ABC telemovies based on the series.

Peter Temple is the author of nine novels, including four books in the Jack Irish series. He has won the Ned Kelly Award for Crime Fiction five times, and his widely acclaimed novels have been published in over twenty countries. *The Broken Shore* won the UK's prestigious Duncan Lawrie Dagger for the best crime novel of 2007 and *Truth* won the 2010 Miles Franklin Literary Award, the first time a crime writer has won an award of this calibre anywhere in the world.

'One of the world's finest crime writers.' *The Times*

'Having read the new novels of Michael Connelly and Martin Cruz Smith, I have to say that Temple belongs in their company. Australia is a long way off, but this bloke is world-class.' *Washington Post*

'*Bad Debts* is wonderful, quintessentially Australian stuff, full of authentic, diehard types, old culture cops, backstreet humour and inner-city dialogue you can overhear in the bars of certain hotels, the ones with framed pictures of horses on the walls. it is the genuine article and an absolute pearly of a read.' *Australian Book Review*

'Like his characters, Temple has a spare, funny delivery, and a sharp eye for a target...Temple writes with the urgency of someone who wants to disrupt an official investigation, and his story is kept up like taut wire. Brothers and sisters in crime, worship at the Temple.' *Australian*

'Temple can be as tough as nails, but also displays a wickedly droll sense of humour which, like the work of, say, the American writer Joe R. Lansdale, frequently has the reader holding his sides with laughter even while immersed in some particularly unpleasant scenario...With *Bad Debts* Temple has created a world-class novel.' *Sydney Morning Herald*

Bad Debts Details

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From Reader Review Bad Debts for online ebook

Barbara Anderson says

As another review I read said "it is not 'The Broken Shore' and that was my disappointment. And the plotting was so complicated I simply gave up trying to work it out. I've bought the entire Jack Irish series on the strength of the power of the writing in "The Broken Shore" so I will plough on but really I just wanted to read some more about Joe Cashin and Rebb and to read another book just like that. "Truth" was wonderful too, and Villani was a superbly drawn conflicted character, although again I don't need that much complexity of plot when the writing is that good. And Temple's writing is beautiful.

A.M. says

Back when Jack was lost in the murk of the aftermath of his wife's death at the hands of an angry client, he acted for a guy in a hit'n'run case. The victim was a political agitator trying to save a housing development. Problem was, the residents didn't really want it saved, the developers certainly didn't, and a decade later when the guy is released he calls Jack and tells him he's in trouble. Tragically Jack isn't home. By the time he gets the message, the guy Danny McKillop has been shot dead by police in a pub carpark. But the case itches at Jack.

By all reports, Danny was a grass for the cops but it doesn't explain why he'd be effectively executed. Jack's not sure he did his best for his old client so he's determined to do so now.

A trail of porn and tears follows.

Not only is the victim dead, the accused, but also the police's star witness and he had links with street kid charities and the church. But now the development the young woman was campaigning against is worth \$600m and the case involves the premier and the Minister for Police.

It's all starting to get a bit stinky. Nearly as stinky as a dead body in a spa bath.

I own the paperback but saw this on the library audio list and clicked it immediately. And I am SO glad I did. Thank god for the Aussie narrator of a quintessentially Aussie novel. Yeah, she's a spunk.

Temple's novels are always complex - a spiderweb linkage of crooked cops, old criminal clients, vague mothers, smart reporters, and crafty old men.

4 stars

Tom says

a cracking gritty read - I struggled a little with some of the Melbourne vernacular but once I remembered what a ute was, I was right.

crooked horses, crooked politicians, dodgy land deals ...
thanks for the tip, Mike!

Drew Bakker says

Despite long sections involving detailed accounts of carpentry and horse racing, it was pretty good.

JayeL says

I really liked this book. Jack was not the hard-boiled private investigator type. He is not a P.I., he is a lawyer who does high level odd jobs that are only basically lawyer-like. I liked him as a character, because he seemed real and human. He does get beaten up, but it isn't every 5 minutes. I liked the other characters as well, especially Linda and Cam. I didn't understand what Harry did or a lot about the horse racing aspect, but that didn't diminish my enjoyment.

Jane says

Geeze, Temple is good. I mean, this is no Broken Shore, and has all his usual 'way too many coincidences' problems. And what's with his obsession with street-kid-porn? But damn he writes a likeable protagonist. Is there anyone who wouldn't like Jack Irish? I just love the way Temple writes dialogue and describes things. I'd love to see him write some not-crime, cause really, I don't care much for crime. Anyway, read this in two days. Just couldn't stop.

Mud Job says

A friend lent me a copy of the fourth book in this series, and not having finished it in the time we were together, I decided to go back and read the last third. It was then, early 2018, I discovered there were four in the set, so went to the first to catch up on the story.

Well-written and enjoyable, I zipped through the first three and have yet to finish the one that brought me to Peter Temple.

Lots of side details, horse racing, cabinet making, the different lady friends, keep the interest. Knowing very little about the actualities of life in Australia, I found the resolution to be somehow pertinent to my education of same.

Was sad to learn of Temple's passing shortly after finishing book three, and think that may be why I'm holding off on the last, maybe to savor the flavor.

Dave Riley says

The plotting is always convoluted in a Peter Temple read. You do at times scratch your head -- but then...there's so much verve in these pages peopled with some beautifully drawn characters and a tangible sense of place and time that the ride is something you are not keen on concluding.

Jack Irish -- as gumshoes go -- is very credible indeed. He comes to us in this, in the first of the series, fully formed. Dodgy. Opportunistic. Living on the edge at bit. But genuinely one of us.

Neither a cowboy nor spiv. A tad cowardly. He's not even one iota psychopathic.

As a lawyer who has decided to live closer to the street and on his wits, Jack Irish is a stand out crime fiction remake. Aiding him is a lot of discursive humour and a great command of Australian cultural mores and peculiarities.

Even more so: Jack Irish is oh so very much a Melbourne boy that I pity those whose roots are elsewhere because they'd miss the papable reflection that draws so much on the city and its people to enliven it.

For some of us, reading *Bad Debts* is almost as good as a visit back home.

Nancy Oakes says

Set mainly in Melbourne, once a criminal lawyer, John (Jack) Irish is now making his way out of a dark period of life that he drifted into after the death of his second wife who died at the hands of an unhappy client. Trying to deal with his pain, Jack drowned his sorrows in alcohol and became a collector of "serious debts," as well as a gambler betting on the ponies. He does some odd work for a couple of men in the horse racing business. But there's another side to Jack -- as a sort of therapy, he also helps a friend make furniture, finding a bit of peace and pride in his work, and he has a huge heart. He's a dad to daughter Claire. He tries to stay on the side of law and order, but there are moments when he sometimes has to cross over that border.

As the novel opens, Jack checks his answering machine to find a number of messages from a client, Danny McKillop, who Jack once defended in a hit and run accident. He pleads with Jack to meet him, but Jack doesn't remember him at the time and the last message was left a couple of days earlier. Now curious, Jack digs into the case files, where he discovers that McKillop had been accused of the death of Anne Jeppeson, a young activist some ten years earlier. McKillop had pleaded guilty after a witness positively ID'd him as the driver of the car. McKillop had pleaded guilty and received ten years for his crime. Now out, it seems that he really wants to talk to Jack. As Jack pokes around, he starts thinking that perhaps McKillop wasn't the one behind the wheel; little does he know that he is opening a veritable Pandora's box of an investigation, helped along by a gorgeous journalist named Linda Hillier. It isn't long until he discovers that someone is willing to kill to keep Jack from getting to the truth. In a story that is part hardboiled noir with added bits of action-packed conspiracy thriller, Jack has to navigate between bullets, explosions and a host of shady people to get to the truth. The problem is that Jack has no idea who to trust.

My first experience with Peter Temple is with his *The Broken Shore*, which I loved and which has much more of a literary feel to it than does *Bad Debts*. Having said that, *Bad Debts* really kept me on my toes and kept my brain engaged trying to figure out the 10 year-old mystery of Danny McKillop. And while I'm normally not a huge fan of the fast-paced variety of thriller/conspiracy novel, this one I liked, not only because of the writing in which Temple has crafted a very tightly-woven and controlled story despite the number of crazy twists and turns, but also because of the characters, especially, but not limited to, Jack himself. Rarely do I like a first series novel this much, but I was sucked in from the beginning and just couldn't let it go.

nina says

There's nothing not to like here: good writing, complicated plot, fun setting in Australia. However, if you've read enough of this type of book, you can go through the checklist: Black best friend? Check. Tragic experience in past? Check. Recovering alcoholic? Check. Police contacts? Reporter girlfriend? Colorful friends? Check, check, check. There's nothing new here, but it's fun.

Maureen says

This is a new author for me and I will be looking out for him in future. His familiarity with Australian speech patterns and the ability to have his characters speaking in a believable way resulted in his characters being brought to life for me. Following on from reading a Richard Flanagan book, I couldn't help but be impressed by the difference in their ability to reproduce the Australian idiom. My criticism is that the author lets his imagination run away with him at the end, when we have assassins on a bike, a house explosion, a rooftop escape and quite some murders. Phew. Good escapist stuff, excellent dialogue with a sense of humour, despite a rush of blood to his head at the end.

SarahJT says

The story unfolded beautifully, expertly paced and just the right amount of twists and turns, action sequences and a very satisfying denouement. Not sure about Jack Irish's character arc - subtle, perhaps non-existent??? Brilliant book nonetheless. Sad to finish it on the very day of the author's death.

Andre says

Meet Jack Irish. After seeing the tv movies with Guy Pierce, I got very interested in these books. Sure enough, the books are even better than the movies. Excellent read and a great story with humour to boot. Highly recommended.

annapi says

A good solid mystery, but I got bogged down in the Australian terms and slang. I did find it a tad confusing at first, as it was full of twists, and it slowed down for me in the middle. But once I figured out where it was going with all the murder, politics and corruption, and started to understand more, I enjoyed it. It reads like a slightly rocky start to a series, but I think it has the potential to get much better. The main character, Jack Irish, could use some development but I like him.

Lisa Hall says

I have a new favorite lawyer.

Jack Irish, criminal lawyer, cabinet maker and horseracing fanatic, gets a call from the past, several in fact. If he'd only pick up his messages more often. An old client, one he doesn't remember, wants to talk. Danny McKillop is dead by the time Jack finds him.

The McKillop case is one from Jack's drinking days and as he looks into the matter, guilt over having failed to represent the man properly, to question the confession, takes root and won't let go.

This was a complex plot easily told. Jack Irish, who's not Irish at all, delivers as a rough and tumble lawyer out running down the cold trail of a case no one wants dragged into the light. Great action and language, the secondary characters come to life. Very enjoyable story.
