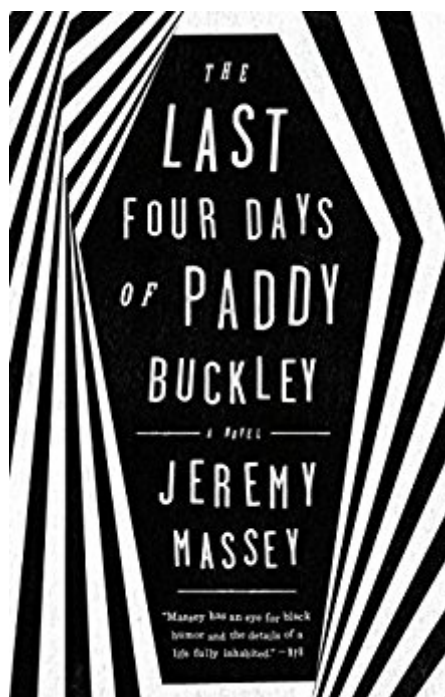


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The Last Four Days Of Paddy Buckley: A Novel



Synopsis

A dark and unexpected novel about a Dublin undertaker who finds himself on the wrong side of the Irish mob. Paddy Buckley is a grieving widower who has worked for years for Gallagher's, a long-established "some say the best" funeral home in Dublin. One night driving home after an unexpected encounter with a client, Paddy hits a pedestrian crossing the street. He pulls over and gets out of his car, intending to do the right thing. As he bends over to help the man, he recognizes him. It's Donal Cullen, brother of one of the most notorious mobsters in Dublin. And he's dead. Shocked and scared, Paddy jumps back in his car and drives away before anyone notices what's happened. The next morning, the Cullen family calls Gallagher's to oversee the funeral arrangements. Paddy, to his dismay, is given the task of meeting with the grieving Vincent Cullen, Dublin's crime boss, and Cullen's entourage. When events go awry, Paddy is plunged into an unexpected eddy of intrigue, deceit, and treachery. By turns a thriller, a love story, and a black comedy of ill manners, *The Last Four Days of Paddy Buckley* is a surprising, compulsively readable debut novel. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

File Size: 1038 KB

Print Length: 304 pages

Publisher: Riverhead Books; Reprint edition (May 12, 2015)

Publication Date: May 12, 2015

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00OQSF7JQ

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #65,425 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #33 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor > Lawyers & Criminals #62 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Humor & Satire > Dark Humor #127 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Crime Fiction > Noir

Customer Reviews

This delightfully quirky novel will not be everybody's cup of tea. For one thing, as the protagonist works at a funeral home, there are numerous detailed descriptions of what goes on in a funeral home. I found these passages fascinating, but then again, I have a morbid streak. The plot is pretty much summarized by the title: It describes the four days that pass after our hero, Paddy Buckley, commits a hit-and-run one night, accidentally killing the brother of the city's most notorious gangsters, Vincent Cullen. Paddy panics, understandably enough, especially when Vincent turns to the funeral home Paddy works at to handle the preparation and burial of his brother's body. Add to that a rather improbable love triangle involving a mother and daughter and yet another accidental death involving Paddy, and you've got a plot full of dark comedy and not a little bit of dramatic tension. I won't spoil your reading pleasure by describing how Paddy deals with the various predicaments he finds himself in, but I can assure you that--as long as you don't find the subject matter off-putting--you'll find the book an engaging and entertaining read. I had a hard time putting it down. But running throughout the somewhat wacky plot lines and action is a more serious exploration of the nature of good and evil: Paddy is demonstrated to be, at heart, a loving, generous, good man. But he does something bad: While he did not intend to murder poor Donal Cullen, his failure to stop and accept responsibility is both illegal and immoral. The distraught gangster brother, Vincent, is one of the most interesting and complex characters in the novel: Clearly, he is not a good man, but he has a code of honor that leaves the reader (well, okay, THIS reader) grudgingly sympathetic.

The title of this book is what grabbed my attention, and the description whetted my literary appetite for a humorous story of an accidental death gone very wrong. While I wouldn't describe the novel as funny, it has a wry humor that is almost its own character. Death and homicide often need to be treated with care to avoid a darker, macabre tone. I enjoyed the first third or so of the book as I was learning the back story of Paddy Buckley, the finer points of the funereal world, and the unfortunate choices that leads Paddy to even more unfortunate consequences. The "surprise" ending wasn't much of a surprise and was preceded by more action than I was expecting. Overall, this was a pleasant read but the middle faltered a bit and became tedious to read compared to its beginning and end. I think the plot needed to be expounded upon and tightened up to make it interesting and create better flow. The characters needed to be more developed and refined so that we clearly understood their reasons for each decision. I was particularly confounded by Paddy's undying infidelity for his deceased wife followed by his rash, immature involvement with two unfamiliar women. Elaborating on Paddy's emotional growth, or evolution, allows us to

understand his unexpected choices without them seeming too uncharacteristic. For a first novel, Jeremy Massey impressed me with an entertaining read that differed in tone and plot, and I can see a bright future for this new novelist. With his experience as a screenwriter, I can see this story made into movie for either big or small screen.

The Last Four Days of Paddy Buckley doesn't end well, but few novels of this genre do. TLFDPB as it will be referred to from now on lies in the genre of books dealing with hapless narrators who are thrust into unusual circumstances over which they have very little control, where the only ending is bad or worse. Paddy Buckley is an undertaker who accidentally kills the brother of the head mafia capo in Dublin. Unfortunately his funeral home is called on to process the funeral, and Paddy is given the case of planning the funeral for the gentleman he accidentally hit and killed in a traffic accident. Paddy has other adventures, as any good Irishman should, mostly involving the widow and daughter of another individual he must bury. These two women provide interesting but somewhat unlikely color and sexual content to a life that has been hollowed out by the recent death of Paddy's wife. As is the case in any of these novels, the plot turns on whether or not Paddy will be recognized as the killer, and if he is what the outcome will be. I'll leave the juicy bits out to encourage you to read the book, but his manner of exit is reasonable and works as a component of the plot devices. I found the attraction between Paddy and a recent widow and her daughter a bit unusual and strange given his melancholy over losing his wife, and the naive but faithful sidekick a bit Sanco Panza, but on the whole TLFDPB works. It is a good read, you know where the story will lead and the only question is how it is resolved.

The Last Four Days of Paddy Buckley was my first exposure to Jeremy Massey, but it will not be my last. While I enjoy the suspense of a well-written thriller, this one was much different than those I usually read. The author uses his knowledge and experience working with his father in Dublin as an undertaker to unfold a dark tale of four days in the life of Paddy Buckley, an employee of Frank Gallagher's funeral home in Dublin. Consumed by the longing and memories of his dead wife, Eva's, Paddy is sleep deprived and has worked every day for the past 6 months burying himself (no pun intended) in his work. As a result, he is not focused and is behaving inappropriately, actions that have inadvertently led to the death of two people and has put his life and future and others in peril. While there are a bit too many coincidences to make this a believable story, it was an entertaining, fast-paced, suspense filled, compelling and unique novel that held my interest for all 285 pages of this intriguing and haunting ride. Enjoy!

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