



## A Death in Summer

*Benjamin Black , John Banville*

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**A Death in Summer** Benjamin Black , John Banville  
**One of The *Chicago Tribune*'s Best Reads of 2011**

**One of Dublin's most powerful men meets a violent end— and an acknowledged master of crime fiction delivers his most gripping novel yet**

On a sweltering summer afternoon, newspaper tycoon Richard Jewell—known to his many enemies as Diamond Dick—is discovered with his head blown off by a shotgun blast. But is it suicide or murder? For help with the investigation, Detective Inspector Hackett calls in his old friend Quirke, who has unusual access to Dublin's elite.

Jewell's coolly elegant French wife, Françoise, seems less than shocked by her husband's death. But Dannie, Jewell's high-strung sister, is devastated, and Quirke is surprised to learn that in her grief she has turned to an unexpected friend: David Sinclair, Quirke's ambitious assistant in the pathology lab at the Hospital of the Holy Family. Further, Sinclair has been seeing Quirke's fractious daughter Phoebe, and an unlikely romance is blossoming between the two. As a record heat wave envelops the city and the secret deals underpinning Diamond Dick's empire begin to be revealed, Quirke and Hackett find themselves caught up in a dark web of intrigue and violence that threatens to end in disaster.

Tightly plotted and gorgeously written, *A Death in Summer* proves to be brilliant but sometimes reckless Quirke that in a city where old money and the right bloodlines rule, he is by no means safe from mortal danger.

## A Death in Summer Details

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Author : Benjamin Black , John Banville

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## From Reader Review A Death in Summer for online ebook

### Tony says

Black, Benjamin. A DEATH IN SUMMER. (2011). \*\*\*\*.

Benjamin Black is the pseudonym of John Banville, the Booker Prize-winning author of "The Sea," and many other fine novels. He writes these crime novels under the name Black as a "diversion." His voice as a crime writer is totally different from his voice and style as Banville. In an interview, he admitted that his serious literary books under his real name come slowly. He writes only about 100-200 words per day. His crime novels as Black, however, get tossed off at the rate of 1,000-2,000 words per day. You wouldn't know that they were written at this breakneck speed. It still seems as if every work was specifically chosen as the best one for the need. In this adventure, we again meet Dr. Quirke, a pathologist based in a Dublin hospital, who does the autopsies for the Dublin police. He is called to the scene of a shooting by his good friend, Inspector Hackett. Richard Jewell has been found shot to death – his head nearly blown off by the shotgun blast. The shotgun was found lying clutched to his body, and suicide was suspected. Quirke and Hackett, however, realize that it could not have been suicide. Had it been, the shotgun would have been flung across the room after the blast. Who killed him? Jewell had no end of enemies. He was a wealthy man and the owner of the best-selling newspaper in Dublin. His wife, Françoise, was originally from France, and was very beautiful. They had a nine-year-old daughter. The principal suspect was one of Jewell's business rivals who was making a bid to take over Jewell's company, a mister Sumner. At one time, the Jewells and the Sumners were fast friends, but had recently had an argument that finally split them apart. Mr. Black carefully dissects the lives of all of the players and, through his protagonist, Dr. Quirke, finds that there are deeper reasons for this murder than might appear at first glance. Black once again has written an intelligent and well-woven story of psychological suspense that provides the reader with a look into the secrets of two families past their visible veneers. Recommended.

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### Eyehavenofilter says

Quirke, Dublin's pathologist is called in to investigate the supposed murder of one of the city's most infamous 'rich folk' named Jewell. With a history of violence and a secret entrenched in the vile goings on at St. Christopher's home for boys with certain vulnerabilities, orphans, the unwanted, troublesome, from overburdened families, petty thieves, victims of incest, etc.

both the victim of this most recent crime and his closest enemy named Sumner, seemed to have a lurid interest in St. Christopher's. This secret along with so many others is the tangled ball of yarn that Quirke and his pal Detective Hackett (not the brightest bulb in the box) must untangle. Quirke's assistant is threatened and maimed for his attempt to help.

Is Quirke's interest in St. Christopher's too personal, having spent time there as a child, or has his relationship to the dead man's wife clouded his judgement, since time spent between the sheets with this French beauty may have had a tendency to soften his opinion as well? What about her daughter, she's such an odd little thing, what has effected her so deeply?

Has Quirke waded in too deep in the drink this time, or can he pull himself out in time to make sense of it all and riddle out who killed Jewell?

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## Sid Nuncius says

This is a consciously "literary" crime novel. How you respond to it will depend upon whether you like the sort of heightened language employed by Benjamin Black (the Man Booker winner John Banville writing under a well-publicised pseudonym). I do like it and so I did enjoy the book, although I thought it had its flaws.

To illustrate the style of the book, Banville describes a buffet table which has "at its centre, a mighty salmon, succulently, indecently pink, arranged on a silver salver..." Or as another example, "The priest was studying him closely again, running ghostly fingers over the Braille of Quirke's soul." I found all this atmospheric and evocative - which is just as well, because there is a lot of atmosphere and character and a great deal of Fine Writing but, frankly, not all that much plot. What plot there is, is a bit thin and covers very well-trodden ground - child abuse, the wealthy believing they can behave as they wish and so on - and it flagged pretty badly in places. However it serves well enough as a vehicle for conveying the author's character analyses and sense of the mores of 1950s Ireland, which seems to me to be the real point of this book

I thought Inspector Hackett (only a relatively minor character, sadly) a wonderful creation, and there is one prolonged interview scene conducted by him which is utterly compelling and quite brilliantly done, I thought. Although less engaging, Black's other characters seem very real and well-drawn to me and I thought he made some penetrating observations about the way people think and behave.

In short, this is not really a whodunit sort of crime novel, but it is a very well written, thoughtful book and an enjoyable, intelligent read.

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## Éride says

Reseña de MUERTE EN VERANO

Muerte en verano es una novela policiaca escrita por Benjamin Black (pseudónimo de John Banville) en el año 2011.

El doctor Quirke debe investigar la misteriosa muerte de uno de los hombres más poderosos de Dublín, diamante Dick, el cual fue encontrado muerto en su despacho, con una escopeta entre las manos.

Los primeros indicios apuntan a un suicidio, pero la policía no tarda en averiguar que ha sido asesinado. Así, Quirke deberá investigar la vida de este misterioso hombre, y, por ello, frecuentará a todas sus amistades y enemigos, y por casualidad, será conducido al orfanato en el que pasó su infancia, muy relacionado con la vida de este poderoso hombre.

Me ha gustado mucho la trama y como va desarrollando los hechos. Me ha impresionado bastante la mala imagen que pretende dar de Dublín, cuando hace referencia al calor, el transporte, los locales y la gente.

Parece que nada de lo que ve le resulta agradable, y me ha parecido bastante curioso, dado que Dublín es muy moderna y está bastante bien, a pesar de no ser muy grande.

Aunque parezca increíble, me ha gustado que todos los personajes fumen como carreteros. Para mí, le da veracidad a la historia de una forma impresionante.

La ambientación y las descripciones de los personajes me han parecido fantásticas, la forma de narrar y los diálogos están muy bien conseguidos e incluso las descripciones tienen algo de poético.

Por otra parte, al formar parte de una saga y ser este el cuarto libro, siento que me he perdido cosas que ya se dan por hecho en la novela. Pero bueno, eso es cosa mía.

El final es bastante predecible y hacia la mitad se va intuyendo el móvil del asesinato, por lo que no me ha

sorprendido mucho.

A veces la trama se vuelve demasiado confusa y sientes que lees sin avanzar en la intriga, lo cual es bastante frustrante.

Sí lo recomiendo, me ha parecido una novela muy buena, y aunque el final se ha quedado un poco flojo, supongo que intentaré leerme toda la saga, que creo que merece la pena.

PUNTUACIÓN: 8,2/10

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## **Halley Sutton says**

Interesting characters, easy page turner.

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## **John Hood says**

Nothing says Summer like a good murder story. Maybe it's the cold-bloodedness of it all that helps to beat the heat; perhaps it's simply that sweat is easier to endure when it's shared with someone who's sweating death. Whatever it is, there are few things more refreshing when the temperature rises than witnessing somebody fall.

When you make that a few somebodies, well, even Miami's steamy, sultry dog days can become almost pleasant, unless of course you're on the receiving end of a shotgun, a garrote or a fatal plunge. That's why I spent an entire weekend immersed in murder. And it's also why I wholeheartedly recommend you do likewise.

Begin, if you will, in Dublin, scene of the crime in Benjamin Black's steam-deemed *A Death in Summer* (Henry Holt \$25). Black, as you probably know, is the darker alias of the Booker Prized novelist John Banville, whose Quirke stories (of which this is the fourth) apparently give the scribe some relief from all that high-mindedness for which he is so esteemed. Not that the low lifes he brings to tale here are below par, mind you. But there is a definitive shadiness to the proceedings, a shadiness that'll cool even the most hot-headed.

It sure as hell cools Richard Jewell, who's lost his whole head to a shotgun. Quirke, the meddling pathologist who never fails to warm to cold-blooded murder, knows at once the newspaper magnate couldn't possibly have swallowed both barrels all by himself. So he gets hot on the proverbial case. That everybody and their mother has a motive to off the large-living Diamond Dick only compounds Quirke's cool calculating. That some very bad characters insist he cease and desist makes him even more determined. In cahoots with his old friend Detective Inspector Hackett, Quirke follows his nose wherever it goes, even – and especially – when it risks even more mayhem.

Like Black's previous outings, *A Death* paints Dublin with both charm and menace, and it casts Quirke in an almost Holmesian light. Reading it beneath a hot sun as the temperature approaches triple digits is kinda like the literary equivalent of an eclipse. How many writers do you know who are compelling enough to completely block out the solar system's brightest star even for one dog day afternoon?

From:

Bound: *Dead, Dead and More Dead*

## Gala says

3.5/5

El género policial, ya desde sus inicios, ha sido constantemente considerado un género *menor*. Que era sólo para entretener, que no iba más allá de eso; de hecho, se podía comprar por apenas unos pocos centavos y, por ende, se convertía en accesible para casi todo el mundo. Sin embargo, con libros, y más específicamente prosas como las de Black/Banville ese prejuicio sobre el género policíaco empieza a resquebrajarse.

*Muerte en verano* no es, estrictamente una novela policial. ¿Por qué? Simplemente, porque lo que respecta al crimen en sí está, a pesar de ser el eje principal, rodeado por otros muchos temas que lo complementan. Si bien me interesó la forma en la que está escrita la novela y cómo en muchos casos el caso pasa a un segundo plano, considero que casi la totalidad del libro está sumida en un tono medio, sin subidas ni bajadas. Es decir que lo que antecede a la resolución del caso está flotando en un mar tranquilo, sin olas ni viento. A ver, no es que no pasara *absolutamente nada*, pero las revelaciones y confesiones que aparecen no son tan impresionantes, o no cómo yo me las esperaba. Digamos que, todo ese tramo es apenas la entrada, cuando el plato fuerte viene bien al final; ahí sí, hay descubrimientos muy interesantes, escalofrantes, sí, pero interesantes, que sin lugar a dudas valen por todo el libro.

Habiendo experimentado con Black en *La rubia de ojos negros* puedo decir con mucho convencimiento que me gusta mucho su prosa. Es estilizada, elegante. Describe muy bien, incorpora diálogos muy interesantes y, lo que más me gusta es que, a pesar de lo que expliqué antes, tiene ese *algo* que te mantiene encerrado en las páginas, que te entretiene y te hace pensar de un personaje o de otro. Y ya que hablamos de los personajes, todos tienen una personalidad tan bien desarrollada que los convierte en *personas*, no en meros nombres escritos en papel. Lo que quizás me sorprendió más es que no fue el protagonista, el doctor Quirke, el que más me interesó, sino los otros personajes que van apareciendo y que, a diferencia del doctor, no se repiten a lo largo de las demás novelas de la serie (o eso es lo que creo).

En conclusión, *Muerte en verano* es una novela que en un principio tiene una clara etiqueta que dice "policial" pero que, con el correr de las páginas y el desarrollo de la historia, nos vamos dando cuenta de que ese término es solo puntapié inicial para luego ir mostrando una novela que se ramifica y da lugar a otros temas que no tienen que ver tanto con lo estrictamente policial.

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## Larraine says

It is summer in Dublin, 1956, and it is hot, very hot - a very unusual summer for a country accustomed to cool green and a fair amount of rain. Quirk, the morose Dublin pathologist, is in the midst of a love affair with Isabel, a local actress and friend of his daughter, Phoebe. He is called in to view the body of Richard Jewell, a wealthy businessman because the coroner is ill. At first glance it seems as if Jewell committed suicide. (A warning here: the scene is described rather graphically. I can actually still picture it as I write this.) However, it soon becomes painfully obvious that it is not. Jewell's exotic French wife claims to have

been out and returned to find him dead. Everyone else around him denies even hearing the shot. Quirke asks Mrs. Jewell (Francoise) a few questions, is invited to her home for a "memorial drink," and, before long, is having an affair with the widow. However, that doesn't stop him from asking questions. At the same time, he brings his assistant, David Sinclair, whom we learn is Jewish, together with his daughter. Richard Jewell is also Jewish. He was also in conflict with another wealthy businessman. At the same time we learn that Jewell and Teddy Sumner, the son of the rival businessman, have been part of a group called "The Friends of St Christopher," a benevolent organization that provides charity to a local boys' orphanage. As always, we see the dark underbelly of Irish society including the clergy. As the book unfolded, I began to understand little by little what was going on, but the end still was something of a surprise. However, unlike other mystery writers, this book is read more for the pleasure of the unraveling story, characters and writing, than to solve the mystery.

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### **Aoife says**

Another great Quirke story. Unlike other mystery novels it doesn't matter if you figure out part what's going on as there'll be always be something that you didn't figure on and the writing itself is still always the joy with these books. Looking forward to my next Benjamin Black read!

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### **Maribel González says**

Una novela fácil de leer para verano. A pesar de ser predecible y que los personajes no son nada del otro mundo, me ha tenido enganchada hasta el final.

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### **Fionnuala says**

Benjamin Black is the name under which John Banville has chosen to write a series of detective stories, of which this is the fifth. The stories all feature a likeable duo called Hackett and Quirke, a police detective and a pathologist respectively, and are set in 1950's Dublin, a time and place John Banville knows well.

I read the second in the series a couple of years ago, and was impressed enough to plan to go back and read the first before moving on to the later ones as there are backstory elements that develop from book to book. However, I found myself in an airport bookshop recently and as usual, anticipated buying several books to take home with me. To my great disappointment, the shop had nothing that I wanted to buy, something that has never happened to me in my entire life. The shelves either contained books I had already read or books I would never want to read. I walked back and forth like a crazy person, wringing my hands and worrying about not getting to the gate on time. How could I walk out of the bookshop without buying anything? The thought was unbearable. Where I live, there is only one small English language bookshop, so you can understand my dilemma. And I desperately needed something to read on the plane. Finally I spotted this book, stuck in an out of the way corner, and although I would have preferred not to read it until I had read the earlier ones, I had to buy it. I had no choice.

Quirke and Hackett are also faced with a tricky dilemma when they are called out to the scene of a gruesome death but they have choices, and they succeed in extracting themselves from danger while maintaining their dignity.

I had more difficulty.

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## Idrissa says

Lost access to the book. Will continue soon as I get me own copy. Had loved it this far. Who doesn't love a whodunit that starts with a head blown off by a shotgun?

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## Maddy says

PROTAGONIST: Doctor Quirke, pathologist, and DI Hackett

SETTING: Dublin

SERIES: #4 of 6

RATING: 3.5

WHY: Newspaper tycoon Richard "Diamond Dick" Jewell is found in his study with his head blown off. At first, it is labeled a suicide; however, pathologist Dr. Quirke soon concludes it is murder. He finds himself involved in the investigation, sometimes working with DI Hackett. Things get complicated when Quirke falls in love with the widow, an enigmatic French woman. At the same time, someone is warning him, even resorting to injuring his assistant, Sinclair. There is a plethora of disturbed and/or eccentric characters who are generally not very developed, and the plot is not especially engrossing.

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## Jenny says

Each Quirke novel is better than the last, it seems. Or maybe I just love the most recent one because it is fresh in my mind. Today as I finished this one, Hemingway came to mind. I don't know if it had to do with the subject matter, the era, the voice or the writing. It's been ages since I read him. I do love this writer and intend to read every single one of these Quirke books as I adore this character. After which I shall read everything else by Benjamin Black and John Banville.

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## Nancy Oakes says

If you haven't read the three books prior to this one, [click here](#) to find out what you've missed.

It was a drowsy day in summer, a perfect day for a death:

"When word got about that Richard Jewell had been found with the greater part of his head blown off and clutching a shotgun in his bloodless hands, few outside the family circle and few inside it, either, considered his demise a cause for sorrow."

Thus begins *A Death in Summer*, the fourth novel of this series. As Richard "Diamond Dick" Jewell lays there in his own gore in his beautiful estate called Brooklands, Quirke and Hackett, the two "Connoisseurs of death," arrive on the scene. Jewell runs the *Daily Clarion*, Dublin's top-selling newspaper, and while the death looks like a suicide the press isn't going to run it as such, since suicides were never reported in the



newspapers. Quirke, who had met Jewell some time earlier at a charity function, doesn't believe it's a suicide anyway. When talking to Françoise Jewell, Richard's widow, and his sister Denise (Dannie), he is stymied by their seeming lack of care and wonders "who are these two women really and what was going on here?" That's but one question on his mind as he and Hackett begin their investigation. They will once again mix in the Olympic realm of the moneyed classes who are very adept at hushing up any hint of scandal and quite skilled at keeping secrets, as the investigation takes Quirke back to Françoise (more than once) and to Jewell's business rival, Carlton Sumner. One of the leads will also take Quirke to the orphanage where he spent a short amount of time before being taken to an industrial school; although he's there to inquire after someone who may hold some information, he also wonders if he isn't there to "knead" some of his old wounds. But what he learns may just be the key to unlocking the whole sordid business.

Aside from the portrait of the powerful in Dublin, Black also takes a look at the deep vein of anti-Semitism that flourishes there. Jews are another group of people who find alienation in the city; many of them won't use their real names and opt for one that is less ethnic. Even though the latest Lord Mayor, Briscoe, is Jewish, there are still a lot of people who are victims of prejudice; David Sinclair, Phoebe's new boyfriend, is one of them. There are several subplots that eventually come together at the end, and there are enough diversions to keep any mystery reader well occupied.

While Black continues to amaze me here with his imagery and his gift for language, and especially with his characters, this book just takes forever to get anywhere. Normally I don't mind the slow pace in Black's novels, but this one sort of dragged in several spots. When the action picks back up again, however, it turns that out the slow interludes can be forgiven because of the most evil and haunting nature of the crime, which ultimately has Hackett making the proverbial deal with the devil to gain any sort of justice:

"It's the times, Dr. Quirke, and the place. We haven't grown up yet, here on this tight little island. But we do what we can, you and I. That's all we can do."

highly recommended -- as are all the novels in this series. They are simply superb.

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