



Touch the Devil

Jack Higgins

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Pocket Books, publisher of 16 Higgins bestsellers, now presents an extraordinary novel that reunites retired British agent Liam Devlin and renegade American Martin Brosnan. The two legendary guerrillas of the most ruthless wars take on a terrorist who delivers maximum destruction for whoever pays.

Touch the Devil Details

Date : Published January 31st 1997 by Penguin Books (first published February 1st 1982)

ISBN : 9780451189882

Author : Jack Higgins

Format : Unknown Binding 240 pages

Genre : Fiction, Thriller, Spy Thriller, Espionage

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From Reader Review Touch the Devil for online ebook

Scott Vout says

back when Higgins could still really bring it.
This one i have read 3 or 4 times now.
For the longest time Higgins was my favourite author.
I read all his stuff and i dont usually have anything bad to say about him

if you are a spy novel/historic fiction fan
you will enjoy this one

Tom says

I was in the mood for a spy novel, so when I found this on my bookshelf, I figured why not? Not familiar with Jack Higgins, but what the heck. It's only a couple hundred pages long. It should be a pretty quick read. Well, it took me two full weeks to read that couple hundred pages. Not because the book was bad or too challenging or anything. It just never really pulled me into the story. I found myself setting the book aside to do other things. But that's not to say that it bored me particularly. It just never compelled me.

In the first place, it really is not a spy novel so much as it is a tough-guy action story. I was initially concerned that it might be a kind of watered down James Bond/Ian Fleming type of thing. Turns out, however, that Touch the Devil is more of a watered down Tom Clancy or maybe Clive Cussler kind of story. And that's OK. It could still make for a quick fun read, right? But it didn't take long for the story to feel very formulaic. All of the standard elements are there: psychopathic bad guy, "good guys" of questionable goodness and loyalty, duplicitous head of intelligence agency, car chases, shootouts, and even a damsel in distress. Trouble is, nothing really new or exciting is done with them. Everything is ultimately pretty predictable. And unfortunately, that includes what will become of the primary female character. The book starts out with her being shown as a strong, self-sufficient young woman. Yet somehow she ends up as a helpless waif in need of rescue by the tough guy/action figure -- for whom she swoons, but can not possess. Bummer. I'd hoped for something more substantial from that character. But this, oddly enough, is pretty much the only real negative I've got. The rest is all..well, just kind of there.

So overall, not a bad read by any means. But not a very memorable one.

Ed says

#2 in the Liam Devlin series. This 1982 thriller set in 1979 follows IRA gunman Liam Devlin some 35 years after the events in The Eagle Has Landed (1975). The plot device was used here first, but with a gender change for the Prime Minister, the Russian agent, and the British security cleared clerk, the precise Russian honey trap will be used again in Eye of the Storm (1992), in which novel Liam Devlin and Martin Brosnan will again appear. An exciting read.

Liam Devlin series - Liam Devlin is now semi-retired, working as a professor of English Literature at Trinity College in Dublin. Martin Brosnan is in an island jail off the French coast for shooting a policeman during an IRA arms deal. Frank Barry is now working as a gun-for-hire to various left-wing European terrorist groups,

and sometimes the KGB. After he attempts to kill the British Foreign Secretary on a visit to France, the Prime Minister decides Barry must be dealt with, once and for all. Group 4, the PM's special missions unit headed by Brigadier Charles Ferguson, is given the task. Ferguson enlists the aid of Devlin and, after he breaks out of the prison, Brosnan, in the mission. There is personal bad blood between Brosnan and Barry. In the final confrontation, Barry tries to escape England with a stolen rocket-launcher prototype with Brosnan and Devlin hot on his heels.

Michael Fox says

For me, this is one of those guilty pleasure reads. I've read this book a number of times over the years. Like to cycle it back through my reading list every two-or-so years. Just finished it, again. Still enjoy it. Have always loved the ending paragraph. Great open-ended finish.

Lu says

Once again very well written, Higgins creates good plots as always. Still, in my opinion, probably the weakest element in the Liam Devlin Series as it introduces Martin Brosnan as the new romantic hero but does not create a convincing nemesis for him. Liam Devlin also loses a bit of his usual wits and humour. Good novel and nice reading nonetheless!

Martin Hill says

"Touch the Devil and you can't let go."
— Old Irish Saying

Both the title and the theme of this book — Jack Higgins' third entry in the Liam Devlin series he started with *The Eagle Has Landed* — come from this old Irish saying. It is a story of violent men who have grown tired of the violence and wish to leave it behind.

But they can't.

Devlin, Martin Brosnan, and Frank Barry once fought together in the Irish Troubles but have long since gone their own ways.

Barry is now one of the world's most notorious guns-for-hire; a man British intelligence would go to any length to eradicate from the face of the world. Barry, however, has plans for one last contract, one that will allow him to retire safely in his native Ireland.

Liam Devlin left behind the revolutions of his youth and now lives as quietly as he can in Ireland where he is a professor at Dublin's Trinity College. His quiet life is disrupted when British intelligence kidnaps him and forces him into a plot to assassinate Barry.

Martin Brosnan, former American Army Ranger and Vietnam vet, is doomed to spend the rest of his life in a French prison for killing a police officer in France. But the British believe Brosnan may be the only man

who can bring down Barry. It's up to Devlin, however, to figure out how to get Brosnan out of prison.

All three have grown tired of their violent lives but, having touched the Devil, they can't let go of the violence.

In Liam Devlin, Higgins created one of the most likable bad guys in literature. Even in *The Eagle Has Landed*, in which Devlin works with the Nazis in a plot to kill British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the reader can't help but root for the witty and flippant Irishman. In Martin Brosnan, an American war hero of Irish heritage, Higgins has created another approachable and sympathetic bad guy who, despite his violence, isn't really that bad. There are even moments when the reader can feel bad for Frank Barry who, unlike Devlin and Brosnan, really is bad.

Anyone who enjoyed the first Liam Devlin novel will enjoy *Touch the Devil*.

Philip says

In *Touch the Devil*, Liam Devlin returns in a Cold War adventure that pits two IRA veterans against a terrorist-for-hire Frank Barry, who has been wreaking havoc in Germany and France, with backing from the KGB. His next mission might be his deadliest, as Barry plans to steal a state-of-the-art missile and sell it to the highest bidder. Retired IRA gunman Liam Devlin and his ally Martin Brosnan, orchestrated by a British black ops unit, are the only men that can prevent the missile from falling into the wrong hands. But first Devlin must stage a thrilling jailbreak to free Brosnan before the men set off on a gripping race against the clock to eliminate Barry and his reign of terror. This is again like the first Liam Devlin book a fast passed thriller, with any number of twists and turns in the plot. The final twist is the most jaw dropping!! On to the next one.....

Jerry B says

Early 80's thriller, nice mix of villains and good guys!

Our introduction to the prolific Jack Higgins was his early (1969) thriller "A Fine Night for Dying". That novel, while mildly entertaining, was short and pretty tame by modern standards. With "Devil" we moved ahead several years to a Higgins' work written in 1982 and set in roughly that same time frame. Based on other reviews, apparently the lead characters -- Martin Brosnan, Liam Devlin, and Frank Barry -- appear in several other Higgins stories; but their appearances stand by themselves just fine in this story. A flashback prologue set in Viet Nam during the war introduces us to Brosnan and a female photographer, Anne-Marie Audin, who plays a minor role throughout the book. But the main focus is on Barry, who spends most of his time as a paid assassin with seemingly little loyalty to any cause or country. When he nearly offs a British Foreign Secretary on a visit to France, and slays an important agent instead, the Prime Minister orders her Secret Service to retaliate. The guy in charge, Brigadier Charles Ferguson, deciding it takes a killer to kill one, in effect hires (now) death row convict and ex-IRA terrorist Martin Brosnan to attempt the deed. Brosnan figures Ferguson will never pull off getting him out of the slammer, and so stages a stunning escape instead, setting up a climax where it's bad guy versus bad guy for the suspenseful latter section of the book.

"Devil" is a fun read: it's long enough and complex enough to build and sustain your interest; the characters

are interesting; and in the end we're not completely sure which bad guy we want to root for!! Along the way a number of bystanders and lesser characters get knocked off by our author, but some twists and turns fool us on more than one occasion. A somewhat philosophical but stunning denouement even gives us pause for thought. Presuming this is more representative of Higgins' work than our first read, we can see why he has built a loyal following. Enjoy "Touch the Devil"!

Tom Tischler says

I was in one of my favorite haunts once again, the library when I came across one of my favorite authors books. It's an oldie from 1982 but if you like Jack Higgins's I'm sure you will like this one. He always manages to keep your fingers moving and it's a good way to start off the New Year. I gave it a 4.

Steve Waymeyer says

Very fun read

SapphireFox says

I truly do not understand why it took me seven weeks to get through the 148 paged Reader's Digest condensed version of this book...

It has all the necessary elements to make up a great thrilling story like The Janus Man for which I really want to like it and give it more stars. But for some reason it was exceedingly tedious to get through - might be that I just was not in the right mind space (though I have been enjoying Lee Child 's novellas and The Fix the past few weeks so this should have been right up there.

The Reader's Digest summary page of the author at the end might have been more exciting and insightful then the story itself but with the potential clearly visible in the writing I am keen to try another of his books in the future.

Cal says

Brief Summary:

Liam Devlin is recruited by the British secret service to convince his old IRA buddy Martin Brosnan to kill their old IRA associate Frank Barry who is working as a freelance terrorist. Barry is constantly evading the British and French governments and left them with no other options. Devlin helps Brosnan escape from an Alcatraz-esqe prison off the coast of France. Then after Barry kidnaps Brosnan's old french girlfriend Devlin and Brosnan track Barry down and kill him. There is a sub-plot that revolves around Barry stealing a top secret anti-tank rocket but is only developed well enough to explain how Devlin and Brosnan track down Barry. In the end Brosnan is fed up with being used. He sneaks into Thatcher's office with the intent of assassinating her but at the last minute changes his mind. He returns to Devlin's estate and presumably lives happily ever after with his rekindled french girlfriend.

Review:

I loved Higgins' "The Eagle has Landed" and so I wanted to check out what is supposed to be a sequel to that book. It's not really a sequel as it's totally unrelated other than the presence of Devlin. I will say that Devlin is a really fun character and keeps me turning the pages. This was a quick, easy, rollicking read. I expected that going in and was not disappointed. But something about Higgins' writing style has put his books a half-step above some of his peers in my mind. Because of that I will continue to read the Devlin books and eventually give one of his other series a try.

Ajitabh Pandey says

<http://ajitabhpandey.info/2014/11/touch-the-devil-by-jack-higgins/>

This is the second book in the Liam Devlin series and the story timeline is the cold war period. The British secret service needed the services of Liam Devlin and one of the other X-IRA operative Martin Brosnan to assassinate another X-IRA operative turned terrorist. Martin Brosnan was jailed in a french prison so the first task was to get him freed from there. This part itself turned out to be a thrilling and gripping part. After Martin was freed up before he and Devlin could proceed further towards their intended target, the target found them and injured both of them before kidnapping Martin's girlfriend, who was also a well known photographer. Then the chase followed and the target was eliminated, but by this time there was still about 10% of the book left, so I was wondering what next and was really pleased to see what comes up next (which I am not going to tell as I do not want to reveal the climax).

A very simple story line - a typical in the spy-thriller types genre, yet very effectively written. The book keeps you griped through out. 3 out of 5 is my rating for this book.

Mal Warwick says

Liam Devlin, Martin Brosnan, and Frank Barry are ruthless, highly trained killers. All three are veterans of the IRA, but their paths have diverged widely by 1979. Devlin, now sixty-one years of age and still a believer in the cause of a united Irish nation, surfaces from time to time on university campuses in Ireland and the United States, where he is an occasional professor of English literature. Brosnan, convicted four years earlier in France in a near-successful attempt to assassinate Charles de Gaulle, has been confined to a cell on Belle Isle in the Mediterranean, the successor to the notorious Devil's Island. For his part, Barry has turned mercenary. His current employer is the KGB.

The IRA was yesterday's ISIS

If you're under the age of fifty or so, you may be unaware that, in the eyes of the British, the IRA in the 1960s and 70s was regarded with as much fear and disgust as ISIS is today. Earlier in 1979, an IRA bomb had killed Lord Mountbatten, uncle of Prince Phillip, commander of Allied Forces in Southeast Asia in World War II, and the last Viceroy of India. If the IRA had assassinated the Queen, it's unlikely that the furor would have been much greater. This is the "army" from which Devlin, Brosnan, and Barry have all emerged into their divergent careers. Now, when Barry murders the brilliant MI5 agent sent to end his life, Devlin and Brosnan are recruited to take out Barry — an assignment they cherish because of long-standing rivalry.

Enter the KGB and the Corsican mob

MI5 (called DI5 in the novel) approaches Devlin with a seemingly impossible challenge: to persuade Brosnan that MI5 can arrange for him to leave Belle Isle and join Devlin in pursuit of Barry. However, Brosnan isn't easy to convince. Further compounding the problem, his cellmate is the aging former head of the Union Corse, the Corsican mob, and the two have grown close. Meanwhile, Barry has taken on a high-priority assignment for the KGB: to hijack a truck in England carrying an advanced weapon coveted by the USSR and the USA. To add glamour and love interest, a beautiful and courageous young French photojournalist gets involved as well as all sides come together in a spectacular series of collisions.

It's all a glorious cockup, suspenseful and entertaining all the way.

About the author

Jack Higgins, a pseudonym of bestselling British author Harry Patterson, has been writing thrillers and novels of espionage since 1959. According to Wikipedia, "His 84 novels in total have sold over 150 million copies and have been translated into 55 languages." Four of those novels have featured Liam Devlin, of which *Touch the Devil* is the second. A much longer running series features another Irish terrorist named Sean Dillon. To date there are twenty-one novels in that series.

Tony says

I recently reread, and rather surprisingly enjoyed Higgins' classic WWII thriller *The Eagle Has Landed* -- and that led me to seek this out. One of the most engaging elements of that book was the Irish-terrorist-turned-German-agent Liam Devlin, and this book visits him some thirty or so years later, in the midst of the Cold War. After a rather strange Vietnam War-set prologue involving the rescue of a lovely French photographer by an immensely skilled special forces soldier, the story shifts to the sometime around 1980 or so. We meet a freelance terrorist who has been paid to assassinate the British Foreign Secretary during a visit to France. This opening is the kind of procedural operation that Higgins excels at, as the master-terrorist Frank Barry puts together a plan and lays his trap. However, there's a British secret agent in on the plot, and the story takes a twist that leads Prime Minister Thatcher to authorize Barry's execution.

This task falls to the Brigadier in charge of such black ops, who, in delving into Barry's past, discovers connections to Liam Devlin, and the Irish-American special forces fella' from the prologue (Martin Brosnan, who apparently appears in some other Higgins' books). The good old "set a thief to catch a thief" plot is brought forth, and the Brigadier coerces Devlin and Brosnan to take out Barry. This sets the stage for two other lovely set pieces: an SAS-snatch team renditioning Devlin to England, and an good old-fashioned prison break to spring Brosnan from an island prison off the coast of France. This involves fun stuff like the Corsican mafia, and much more. Meanwhile, Barry has been hired by the KGB to steal a revolutionary new anti-tank rocket weapon that the West Germans have developed and represents a severe blow to Soviet tank supremacy in the European Theater. So, that's yet another fun procedural set piece, as Barry works on that heist while Devlin, Brosnan, and the British try to track him down.

As with "*The Eagle Has Landed*", Higgins does not plumb particularly deeply into any of the character's psyches. Their motivations are pretty linear and there's nothing unexpected along the way -- however, that's not really much of a concern in a thriller like this. The set pieces are all pretty fun, and the Cold War setting is kind of interesting in its own retro way. The book concludes with another fun set piece, that, while predictable, puts just the right cap on things. All in all, if you like Higgins, you'll probably like this.

Christian, Kelanth, Scala says

Il tocco del diavolo, in originale "Touch the Devil", è un libro di Jack Higgins , pubblicato la prima volta nel 1982. E' il secondo libro della serie con protagonista "Liam Devlin". Il titolo prende spunto da un vecchio proverbio Irlandese: "Touch the Devil and you can't let go."

La trama del romanzo è presto scritta: la storia gira intorno a tre uomini: Devlin, Martin Brosnan, e Frank Barry che una volta hanno combattuto insieme nel conflitto irlandese. Liam Devlin è ora professore presso del Trinity College di Dublino. Brosnan si trova in una famigerata prigione al largo delle coste francesi per aver sparato ad un poliziotto nel corso di un traffico d'armi dell'IRA. Barry sta lavorando come un killer professionista per dei gruppi terroristici e il KGB. Quando Barry tenta di assassinare il ministro degli esteri britannico nel corso di una visita in Francia del primo ministro decide che deve essere ucciso una volta per tutte. Il compito viene affidato ad un'unità speciale guidata da Charles Ferguson. Il piano è che Devlin venga rapito e portato in Inghilterra. Il passo successivo è quello di far uscire Brosnan fuori dal carcere dell'isola francese. C'è cattivo sangue tra Devlin, Brosnan, e Barry. Ed è questo il piano di Ferguson, quello di usare questo odio a suo vantaggio.

Higgins alterna strani momenti di scrittura ottima e altri dove sembra perdersi in strani meandri, dialoghi tirati e vicoli ciechi. Punti di adrenalina pura e altri dove tutto si ferma a macerare, come se fossero due persone diverse ad alternarsi alla scrittura.

Sinceramente preferivo i suoi romanzi ambientati durante la seconda guerra mondiale, dove la ricostruzione storia era ben fatta e le trame correvano veloci; questo non mi sento di consigliarlo, purtroppo.

Michael says

This is the second of four novels featuring Liam Devlin, Irish soldier of fortune. This is essentially two stories in one: a prison break and a pursuit plot. The characters are well developed and the story moves along at a fairly quick pace. I got what I wanted out of the book (i.e. a decent Cold War thriller) and found it a satisfying read.

Jim says

This is the second book in the Liam Devlin series. The first being The Eagle Has Landed. I was somewhat disappointed in this outing. The book centers around three men ... Devlin, Martin Brosnan, and Frank Barry who once fought together in the Irish Troubles. Liam Devlin is now a professor at Dublin's Trinity College. Brosnan is now in a notorious prison off the French coast for shooting a policeman during an IRA arms deal. Barry is now working as a gun-for-hire to left-wing European terrorist groups and the KGB.

When Barry attempts to assassinate the British Foreign Secretary during a visit to France the Prime Minister decides he must be dealt with, once and for all. Group 4, the PM's special missions unit headed by Brigadier Charles Ferguson, is given the task. He arranges to have Devlin kidnapped and brought to England. The next step is to get Brosnan out of a French island prison. There is bad blood between Devlin, Brosnan, and Barry. Especially the latter two and Ferguson's plan is to use that to his advantage in dealing with Barry.

The prologue of this book takes place during the Vietnam war where Martin Brosnan, an American Army Ranger, saves the life of a female photographer, Anne-Marie Audin. She has a minor role throughout the story and mostly it revolves around her relationship with Brosnan and how he has changed ... from Army Ranger to member of the IRA to prisoner.

The title of the book is apparently take from an old Irish saying "Touch the Devil and you can't let go." And that is the theme. It is the story of violent men who have grown tired of the violence and wish to leave it behind. But they can't.

Bogdan says

My usual light reading brought me in close contact with Jack Higgins. An author I did not heard before, but learned pretty fast that he is a master of thrillers. This particular novel is a spy thriller set in the late 70s Europe, in the middle of Cold War. It brought me back some memories from my teenage years when I used to read many similar books.

Now about the **premise**, as in line with the genre requirements, this is on the usual good versus bad fight. The plot is not too complicated but tries to prove right the idea that only the bad guys may be able to catch other bad guys. I was not too convinced of it and this is why I will give it a 3.

Regarding the **form**, the most important thing is that the author tries to avoid excessive stereotypes. Of course that this is almost impossible in this genre, but does limit them so that it is readable. I did not liked too much that some scenes were poorly described and some dialogue scenes were having a similar issue. Nevertheless, the reading experience is, in general, enjoyable, so I will give it a 2 for **form**.

In terms of **originality**, only the fact that the same author wrote over 60 novels from the same genre speaks for itself. As it was a pretty popular genre among writers, I will have to rate it a 1 at **originality**.

The **characters** are not at all out of the genre requirements. But at least they are not obsessively predictive and with the bad guys turning sides, we get a well deserved variation. Due to this, I will rate it with a 2.

Regarding the **complexity and difficulty**, I assume the popularity of the genre helped created several well known models. So it should not have pose extraordinary difficulty while the entire novel is pretty linear. So I will rate it with a 2 for **complexity and difficulty**.

In terms of **credibility** I agree both side had spies and commando teams during Cold War. But I doubt their lives were as thrilling as the worst thriller novel. This is why I will rate it with a 1.

The last criteria is **edition**. I had an eBook with some minor but annoying flaws. Few paragraphs were not properly aligned and notes appeared in the wrong position. Overall it was pretty ok. Due to this, I will rate it with a 3.

To summarize, I used this intermezzo to catch up my breath between other, more serious books. And this novel proved the right choice for this intermezzo. All in all, my final rating for the novel is 2.00, which requires no rounding on Goodreads system.

Criteria	Rating

Premise 3
+-----+-----+
Form 2
+-----+-----+
Originality 1
+-----+-----+
Characters 2
+-----+-----+
Difficulty/Complexity 2
+-----+-----+
Credibility 1
+-----+-----+
Edition 3
+-----+-----+
Total 2.00
+-----+-----+

For more details on how I rated and reviewed this novel, please read these guidelines.

J.C. Steel says

I enjoyed this book when I was ten, and I still enjoy it now. Liam Devlin runs a close tie for my favourite Higgins protagonist with Sean Egan.
