



## The Baptist

*Ruby Barnes*

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A psychological thriller that follows the murderous adventures of John Baptist, a man born to eliminate evil from our world. John spent his formative years in an institution for the criminally insane but he becomes a beneficiary of 'care in the community' and ultimately rediscovers his purpose.

Combining elements of Criminal Minds and Dexter, The Baptist is a deceptive view of normality through the lens of a man led by reawakened religious mania and a woman driven by lust.

What if you woke up one day and realised you're a serial killer on a mission from God?

The Baptist - he's clever, calculating and uncatchable. If you hear a knocking on your door don't let him in. John Baptist is cleansing a path for the Second Coming.

## **The Baptist Details**

Date : Published April 4th 2012 by Marble City Publishing (first published October 28th 2011)

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Author : Ruby Barnes

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Genre : Horror

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## From Reader Review The Baptist for online ebook

### Deneé says

This book was like "A Beautiful Mind" on steroids. John Baptist is such an interesting, crazy, in-depth character. The book was extremely detailed in the process and connections of how John's mind works that leads him to the decisions he makes. Up to a certain point he was 'cleansing' with a purpose, but as time went by and he got involved with a woman (Mary... or Alice) with similar personality traits he gets thrown off track to the point where 'sacrifices' were being made without evidence of evil-doing. What would John Baptist do if he saw a fiery halo staring back at him in the mirror, I wonder? This book will really have you questioning what is real and what is fantasy (as with the Alice in Wonderland elements.)

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### Richard Sutton says

Psycho Killer, Ques que se?

The Baptist takes the reader down a jolly pathway, littered, in macabre fashion, with the collateral damage. To sum it up, this novel is almost like a joke that begins, "Two serial killers walk into a pub..." You can imagine the punch-line... or maybe not.

The thing is, at several times during the trip, I was nearly nauseated by scenes the author depicts in enough detail to shock my senses. The Baptist delves into an intimate portrait of madness, but also how evil can grow from banal circumstances. One deranged serial killer might elude detection for some time, but what about two of them? Two can live as cheaply as one, but they can kill in ever-so-much more creative and egregious ways. Their evil, feeding upon itself as their madness is given free range by their complicity and given new dimension through their sexual depravity.

Author Barnes brings each character to life such that each is immediately recognizable, even familiar; and that just makes the shudders his writing elicits all the more effective. I had a lot of fun reading the Baptist, and while the end is apparently in clear sight, it still comes as a surprise in the final twist. This is a great read for anyone who has been a little too comfortable in their skin for a while. It should give them all kinds of new things to be anxious about!

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### Vicki says

This book was offered to me in exchange for an honest review.

I enjoy a good thriller, but it's not easy to find an author that is able to really shock your senses. Well, let me tell you, Ruby Barnes did just that for this reader!

The Baptist is well-written, characters are believable and well-developed, and the plot is realistic, even though very disturbing. Within the first few pages, John commits an unconscionable act against his brother, and then the author had me hooked. What on earth would make a child do such a thing?

Oftentimes I think people "enjoy" a good thriller because it is so hard to fathom what makes people like John tick. The horrendous acts that he commits are not the most difficult aspect of his mind to comprehend; it is his plotting that is so frightening, the lengths he will go to in order to find/get his unsuspecting prey.

There were also religious allusions throughout the book: Mary, "the halo of hell," "strength of righteousness," and even once he said he had, "delivered all God's will." That completely freaked me out, because there ARE people with mental illnesses that believe such things. John wasn't a bad person; he only sought to do the will of God. The religious allusions and phrases are woven into the story beautifully and only make the reader more in tune to his psychosis.

One person he friends is named Feargal, and there is a HUGE twist with that friendship that wasn't expected. I don't want to write any spoilers, but their friendship is integral to the story line.

I recommend this story to anyone who is mature, enjoys a thriller that will leave you looking over your shoulder, and who isn't offended by some foul language.

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### **Sarah Williams says**

This is another winner from an author who quite clearly has a talent as a great storyteller. I was hooked right from the start and loved the dark and sinister quality of this tale. The characters in this book are complex but very effectively portrayed and the sense of madness, of a mind battling itself is powerful and poignant. Ruby Barnes is easily one of my favourite Indie authors and I hope there will be more books to come.

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### **Denna says**

I was first introduced to Ruby Barnes and *The Baptist* when I received the first three chapters as an assignment on a peer writer critique site. I believe my first reaction fell somewhere into the—You have got to be kidding me!—category. Shocking comes to mind when I think about this story. I read a lot of beginnings to novels, but rarely do I have one stick with me like *The Baptist* did. I couldn't get the story off my mind and found myself watching for its release date. You have got to admire an author who can make a connection like this with their writing. My only regret is for taking so long to write up my review.

Having read the thriller "Peril" last year and thoroughly enjoying the story, I already knew Ruby Barnes could write. John, the main character in *The Baptist*, earns his title when he freaks out one day and decides his brother is evil and a danger to all those around him—mainly John and his parents—and so he chooses to drown his brother in the bathtub. Any normal parents would understandably be shocked by this turn of events. Not only did they lose the son John killed, they also lose John. He is committed to a mental institution and spends the rest of his childhood growing up with an assortment of amusing characters who are just as messed up as he is. You'll have to read the novel for yourself if you want to know what goes on behind closed mental ward walls, but I will say this, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" by Ken Kesey comes in a definite second to some of the antics John and his new psychopathic friends dream up. Ruby Barnes pushes barriers many might wish he'd well left alone.

But the mental institution is only the beginning of the rollercoaster ride we take with John. Once the doctors state he is well enough, John is released to a clueless society. We are left somewhat surprised when he manages to actually blend in; he finds a job, gets married and has a couple of kids. By all outward appearance, John becomes a solid member of society—until he stops taking his medication and ends up baptizing another evil man—an unlucky stranger out hitchhiking in the wrong place at the wrong time. And though John is definitely a dangerous person to be around, and not one to ever be fully trusted, we begin to understand and identify with the drive behind a mind that is never quite sane. My feelings alternated between fear for John's young family, and hope, that he'd find a way to overcome the lifelong demons who rode his shoulders.

Bottom line—John's actions are despicable, horrifying, and guaranteed to make you cringe in more than a few places, but at the same time we find he is not a totally unlikable character. He is a messed up young man trying to fight for his life and sanity in an often insane world. Who among us can't identify with that during the difficult times of our lives? Definitely a novel I'd recommend to all you thrill seekers and adrenalin junkies out there searching for your next fright.

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### **Kath Middleton says**

This stupendous psychological thriller had me on the edge of my seat with my brain-cells fully in gear. It's a complex plot and is told from several stand-points. The main protagonist, John, spends some years in a mental hospital after killing his brother. There he meets Mary, a fellow patient. The hospital closes and the inmates are dispersed into the community, each with suitable medication. John marries and has a family. Eventually he takes himself off his medication. We are faced with several personalities in this story, and the clues are there to tell us what is happening. John has delusions and is helped by his old friend 'Mary' to try to bring them to fruition.

The story is very cleverly told and I found the device of multiple narrators took us to places that John himself could not. I do enjoy the author's style of writing. It's immediate and thrilling and he really catches the Irish speech modes in his dialogue. I finished this book almost breathlessly and I look forward to Ruby's next book. He's a very talented story teller.

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### **Jay Fromkin says**

I've never read others' reviews of a book I'd just finished - until now. I wanted to see if any reviews had been left by psychologists or psychiatrists. They haven't, so here goes.

This is my second Ruby Barnes novel; I'd read "Peril" about a month ago and thoroughly enjoyed it. After reading my review, Barnes offered to send me "The Baptist," and I enthusiastically agreed. Here's the bottom line: Barnes can flat-out write.

While the books both deal with psychological pathology (Peril's protagonist is afflicted with narcissism and a lazy sort of greed and misogyny) "The Baptist"'s protagonist is full-on bonkers - and that's not simply a judgement call. John Baptist has been institutionalized after drowning his brother when both were children, believing he can see his brother's inherent evil, determined not to allow him to grow up in the mold of their

father. But it's not the brother or the father who's evil, it's John, and it's evil wrapped in the robes of deep-seated religious mania. Upon release from a mental institution, John marries, fathers two children, and goes to work at his father-in-law's garage. He also stops taking his medications. At this point I wondered if we were on our way to an Irish "Shutter Island," and that everything taking place did so within John's mind, and he was still hospitalized. No, that would be too easy.

John, lonely within his marriage, stalks and adopts a friend, Feargal, who is nothing more than a figment of his imagination. But his "friendship" with Feargal leads him to Alice/Mary, a fellow former mental patient with a split personality. Alice/Mary is all too real. Mary is tough, but needy; Alice is unfettered sexuality, alluring, dangerous, and the crazier of the two personalities. John essentially leaves his family in an attempt to permanently cleave Alice's personality from Mary's and sustain Alice as the dominant persona, with tragic societal costs. During an intense relationship based on sex, drugs, alcohol and their co-dependent mental illness, John and Alice murder their way toward John's unspoken mission - preparing the world for Jesus' return. He's not just John Baptist; he's John the Baptist, baptizing those who might stand in this way through water and blood.

This is a fascinating and frightening book that just begs to be read. It is not for those with delicate sensibilities who might be offended by intense sexuality, a gripping description of rampant mental illness, and casual violence, all wrapped in a shroud of religion. But, it is a great read, masterfully written.

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### **TAMMY CUEVAS says**

John is special. He feels that he is preparing the way of the Lord. Certain people need to be weeded out for the coming of the Lord. The first to go is John's brother, Ray. John permanently baptizes Ray in the bathtub at home because Ray is turning into their father. While in the mental institution, John meets the first of many Marys in his life. When the institution closes, John is released into society, marries and tries to fit in. This only works temporarily. John meets Feargal and Mary, and then realizes his true mission from God.

The impossible has happened. Ruby Barnes outdid himself. I did not believe anything could be better than "Peril", but "The Baptist" actually warranted a second read, something I have never done. It is a dark, twisted, confusing journey through the mind of the mentally ill, and while it was disturbing, it was so fascinating, I was almost ashamed of myself. The religious symbolism throughout was interesting. The baptismal motif (obviously), Mary, the halos, etc. All I can say is that I am now hoping for sequels to both "Peril" and "The Baptist".

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the author, Ruby Barnes <<http://rubybarnes.blogspot.com/>> . I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

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### **Karenw says**

I have read and enjoyed the work of Ruby Barnes before and he didn't disappoint this time. It's the mark of a

talented writer when as a reader, you dislike the main characters, yet cannot stop reading because the author has made you care about them. In *Peril*, Mr. Barnes actually made me like the main character, flawed though he was. In this book, however, I found the main character and his twisted cohorts unlikable from the moment John entered the mental hospital for murdering his brother as a child until the bitter end where John finally makes a moral choice and acts on it. I know few writers who can get into the minds of deranged characters and portray them without apology like Ruby Barnes is able to do. His tales pull the reader along; they are very hard to put down. *The Baptist* is a dark, disturbing read, with elements of black humor and wit. Ruby Barnes is a master. His works are very well-written and expertly plotted. I recommend this book to anyone who likes a twisted tale.

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### **Cthulhu Down My Chimney 2Night says**

Fascinating! Utterly riveting; I couldn't take my eyes off the page. Devouring the novel, I marveled at the protagonist/narrator: so self-referential, so self-convincing of his right-doing (regardless of legality or moral value), yet in some ways so emotionally immature and childlike, easily led by certain others, readily induced to act in ways which are not beneficial-for himself or for those near him. His character is a fascinating psychological study, intertwined as it is with various religious allusions and overtones.

Author Ruby Barnes gives us a masterful portrayal of the protagonist, John-from the inside through first-person narrative, and from the outside, as in later life he develops an obsession with a sort of friend. Through this individual, Feargal, we see John as if we were watching him in a mirror, for he is a reflection of the better parts of John's own personality and character. (Spoiler: I shall refrain from going into further detail about John's discovery of Feargal and his intent to befriend him, for those who have not yet been fortunate enough to read this story.)

John is on a tight-wire by midlife, balancing demands of his inherited business, his wife and family, and what passes for normalcy, against his medications (which he often forgoes), his friendship with the elusive (now you see him, now you don't) young Feargal, and remembrance of his mission to eradicate the spawn of Satan-those over whom John spies a red halo. While on the outside he appears to maintain, on the inside forgotten memories and actions, and behavior patterns he had earlier set aside, are beginning to taunt him in ways he does not understand.

"*The Baptist*" is a powerfully written, strongly-motivated novel, one that could be read and reread and new layers of meaning would be discovered on each reading. Rarely have I seen a protagonist dealt with in so scrupulous and fascinating a manner as Author Barnes delivers John to the reader. Amazing novel!

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### **Tim Stevens says**

*The Baptist* is subtitled A Psychological Thriller, and that it is; but it isn't easily pigeonholed along with the likes of *The Silence Of The Lambs* or the works of Mo Hayder. At the heart of its oddness is the way it's structured. It starts from the viewpoint of the titular character, John Baptist, a clearly troubled soul, who apparently murders his brother and is committed to an asylum by his parents who have their own 'issues', before abruptly switching focus and giving us a view of somebody else's thoughts. I say 'apparently' murders his brother because it soon becomes clear that Baptist isn't the most reliable of narrators, not necessarily

because he's a deliberate liar (though he is, as most killers tend to be) but because he doesn't have the strongest grip on reality.

The frequent changes in point of view make for some tricky reading. A character is described in detail by one narrator; then, in the next chapter, the narrator turns out to match the description he gave the person in the chapter before. Gradually the kaleidoscopic fragments consolidate and the plot becomes clearer. To say much more about it (the plot) would be to spoil the story.

The *Baptist* is a demanding read, which is one of the things I enjoyed about it. Barnes's writing is deft and sinewy but always easy to follow; the trickiness is deliberate and comes from the way the story is laid out. John Baptist is a compelling, complex character, though not one I'd like to spend a great deal of time with. The whole novel is shot through with a strong vein of outrageous humour: the scene late on involving a pair of American tourists, who may really be the clichés they appear to be or may on the other hand be victims of Baptist's own distorted perceptions, is shamefully hilarious.

The story is a little too drawn out towards the end, perhaps, and takes a turn for the predictable; but those are minor quibbles. This is highly original, intelligent and exuberant writing in a genre sorely lacking in such qualities. I look forward to reading Mr Barnes's other novels, *Peril* and *The Crucible*.

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### **J.J. Toner says**

As with Ruby Barnes's debut novel, *Peril*, this book is well-written. A strange tale of two people, one of whom is sex-mad, the other simply mad. The body-count is predictably high. There were a few plot holes, or areas where I thought the plot a little threadbare, but it was an enjoyable read.

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### **Deb Novack says**

This is a book that I could not put down. This story gave us a peek into the unstable life of a mentally ill person and his friends, and what happens when he stops takings his meds. This book has and ending not expected. I have read other works by Ruby Barnes and he is a wonderful author can not wait to read more by this author.

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### **Ruby Barnes says**

#### **A word from the author - Ruby Barnes.**

The *Baptist* is the story of a serial killer who strikes every eight years. It's a psychological thriller that keeps the reader guessing until the last page.

I've reproduced here, with permission, the first three reviews of *The Baptist*.

#### **Chilling - Bibi (London)**

A complex tale of insanity, multiple personalities, revenge and murder.

Well written and totally convincing, it provides an absorbing insight into the minds of some very strange characters. It's not without humour albeit of the dark kind.

This novel is likely to test your mental agility and take you out of your comfort zone, but it's well worth the effort and risk.

**Highly recommended** - Majella Ryan (Ireland)

The second book from the demented author, *Ruby, Ruby, Ruby!!* (Ruby Barnes). Dark and dingy, hot and steamy, everything you need in a novel in one swift download.

**Compelling and very, very different** - Elizabeth Jasper Writer (Andalucia, Spain)

To begin with, the writing is very good indeed, with a light, contemporary touch that makes reading a pleasure. Descriptive passages are original; there is nothing hackneyed about Mr Barnes' prose - it is fresh, sharp and incisive. The pacing is good, the subject matter compelling, unusual and well-observed. The theme - of a serial killer with a religious bent when it comes to despatching his victims - is original and consistent almost right through the story. I loved the intricacies of the relationship between John Baptist and Mary Crossan. In fact, I loved just about everything about the story and read it on two days. The portrayal of John's mental state as he abandons his medication is terrific and the casual way in which he inflicts death is blood-curdlingly understated.

I had a problem with switching from the POV of John in 1st person, to Sarah in 1st person, and then Mary/Alice. It seemed that these alternative points of view were there solely to prop up the plot - that without them, the reader would not know enough of what was going on. Likewise, the inclusion of McAuliffe. His interventions seemed to be there to support the backstory and added little to the main narrative and in one of the final scenes, I was dismayed to find the Gardai portrayed more like the Keystone cops than a police force.

A small issue, but why describe so many journeys too and from places in and around Kilkenny? Perhaps because I have never been there, I did not relate to the town so these journeys became slightly tedious and I think some of them could have been omitted.

Overall, a compelling read that will stick in my mind for far longer than is comfortable.

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**Midu Hadi says**

I got this book for free, in exchange of an honest review, from Making Connections. Get your copy here.

**What I liked:**

the book caught my attention from the start.

I liked all the parts that happened inside the asylum.

Marguerite/Mary/Alice was my favorite & remained so up to the end.

the whole Feargal/Joe mystery was really interesting & done well.

**What I didn't like:**

the second half of the book was just all right. Made me skip & skim my way to more interesting parts.

the parts with Alice & John living in Kingsmead became boring quite fast.

**Also reviewed at:**

Shelfari

Smashwords

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