



Set in Darkness

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On the eve of the first Scottish parliament in three hundred years, Edinburgh is a city rife with political passions and expectations. Queensbury House, the home of Scotland's new rulers, falls in the middle of John Rebus' turf, keeping him busy with ceremonial tasks. That quickly changes, however, when a long-dead body is discovered in a Queensbury House fireplace, a homeless man throws himself off a bridge - leaving behind a suitcase full of cash - and an up-and-coming politician is found murdered. The links between the three deaths lead Rebus to a confrontation with one of Edinburgh's most notorious criminals, a man he thought he'd put in jail for life. Someone's going to make a lot of money out of Scotland's independence - and, as Rebus knows all too well, where there's big money at stake, darkness gathers.

Set in Darkness Details

Date : Published September 22nd 2005 by Orion (first published 2000)

ISBN : 9780752877228

Author : Ian Rankin

Format : Paperback 496 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Cultural, Scotland

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From Reader Review Set in Darkness for online ebook

Margaret says

Not the best of the Rebus novels I've read, but still not a bad read.

Given that it's setting just as Scotland gained it's own parliament, it has a certain resonance with the current BREXIT situation.

I loathe the character of DI Derek Linford, so was absolutely delighted with the misfortunes of this character during the book.

Probably more a book for the Rebus fans than the general crime fan.

Larraine says

The title is perfect for this book. This whole story is about darkness in it's varying forms. A body is found in a building that is being torn down. It dates from 1978-79. A homeless man plunges to his death by suicide. Nothing to see here except he has 400,000 pounds in the bank. Then a prominent politician from well known Edinburgh family is murdered. Meanwhile two guys, friends since childhood, are roaming the streets at night, picking up women and raping them, leaving no trace behind. Rebus finds himself partnered with a young and upcoming Detective Inspector who turns out to have a few issues of his own when it comes to women. To top it all off Cafferty, Rebus' old nemesis, has been released from jail because of a diagnosis of terminal cancer. Rebus smells something rotten there but can't prove a thing. This is a dark descent into murder, family dynamics and corruption. As always, it's wonderful even if the ending isn't quite as satisfactory as some might like.

Shirley Schwartz says

Eleventh in a wonderful series! It's been awhile since i've read old Rebus, and I enjoyed getting back into the series. Ian Rankin is an extremely skilled mystery writer, and his Rebus creation is awesome. John Rebus is a very complex character-brooding, intelligent, determined to solve mysteries at any cost (even his own career as a policeman in the Edinburgh police force). What I really enjoy about Mr. Rankin's books are his perfectly believable and sinister plots that just roll along with no lagging or side stepping. And Rebus is a real hard-boiled police inspector. We not only see the dark side of Edinburgh life, but we are up front and personal with Rebus' dark side at all times throughout each of the books. This book starts with a mummified body found boarded up in a fireplace at an old building undergoing construction. Almost right away after this 20 some year old body is found, another body which is much fresher is discovered. The two appear to be unrelated to each other, but as Rebus and his team start digging, connections start appearing that reach far back into the Edinburgh underworld and an old nemesis reaches out to John Rebus as well. I cannot recommend this crime series enough. If you are a fan of United Kingdom police procedurals, then don't miss Rankin's wonderful Rebus series. I know I will be continuing to read again after a little hiatus.

Kathy says

Had important errands and could not put this book down. I am so out of sequence, suffering some confusion from that, but this was a tension-filled plot that maintained my interest to the end.

All the characters were interesting and some even brilliantly conceived; music background added to the slow march to the truth; Edinburgh moving through change with construction featured as the new criminal opportunity; Cafferty reappears with falsified release from prison; Siobhan has some interesting assignments trying to help rape victim and then attracting unwanted attention and trouble for herself; daughter Sammy is offstage but being taken care of, and best she not know what treatment her father is subjected to by Cafferty leading up to New Year 1999.

Bookfan53 says

My daughter gave me this book as a Christmas gift when it first came out. This is my second time reading Set in Darkness and I had forgotten just what a good story it is. The book is set in interesting times, before the building of our Scottish Parliament, hence it gives quite a bit of background history to the area where eventually the Parliament was built, among much controversy I may add.

I don't want to say too much about the plot, although there are five plot strands to follow and an appearance by Rebus' old adversary Ger Cafferty. I thoroughly enjoyed this story and would highly recommend this book. If you like detective fiction with a wee bit of Scottish history thrown in for good measure, this is for you.

Miriam Smith says

I like DI John Rebus, he's brooding, clever, determined and a lovable scots character. He loves his whisky, food and cigarettes and makes a fantastic copper hell bent on doing everything against the rules! Rankin is a great writer, produces excellent story lines, characters and the history of Scotland, Edinburgh in particular, that encompasses the plot is always factual and interesting. This was another great book in the Rebus series (11th) with 3 storylines that came together seamlessly and a possible opening into the next in the line of Rebus novels. Would recommend.

Stephen Howarth says

Not quite as good as Dead Soles, but it still held its own.

Ammar says

The 11th novel in the Rebus series.

Two masked men abduct single women who leave a club. A young politician is murdered, and a mummified body is found in a chimney where the new Parliament is being built.

And Big Cef is out of prison...

Rebus has to deal with all the following along with new eager blood in the force that is trying to prove itself.

This novel is different than its predecessors as there is barely any mention of Dr Patience or Sammy, or his brother or even DCI Gil.

Laura says

From BBC radio 4 - Classical Serial:

Ian Rankin's crime thriller centres on the building of the new Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh in 1998.

During the construction work a body is discovered in an old fireplace. The forensics suggest the victim was murdered 20 years before. Police are still attempting to identify the corpse when a second body is found on the site - and this time it's one of the prospective candidates for the new parliament. It's a high-profile case and the rising star of Lothian And Borders Police - 28-year-old Detective Inspector Linford - is assigned to investigate, assisted by a reluctant John Rebus.

Episode 2 of 2

In the final part of Ian Rankin's crime thriller, Rebus is investigating two murders on the site where the new Scottish Parliament is being built in Edinburgh in 1998. But he makes the mistake of sleeping with the sister of one of the victims. DC Siobhan Clarke is looking into the death of a vagrant with over £400,000 in the bank. Rebus begins to suspect all three cases could be linked - but crime boss Ger Cafferty has his own ideas about where the police investigation should be going. Dramatised by Chris Dolan.

Dramatised by Chris Dolan.

Other parts are played by the cast.

*Producer/director: Bruce Young
BBC Scotland.*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04j...>

Fiona says

So, I'm living in Edinburgh at the moment, and I'm a massive fan of crime fiction, and yet before now I've never read anything by Ian Rankin. Time to rectify that - I went to Edinburgh Central Library and picked out the paperback with the most interesting looking blurb. I'm a sucker for anything that looks like it's tangentially related to politics, so off I went.

I am undecided about Rebus. The first chapter was a bit of an epic info-dump, and I found the ending unsatisfying and not particularly believable. Having said that, Rankin got from A to B like an absolute

champion. The supporting cast was particularly strong, and I spent a long time thinking about the book when I wasn't actually reading it, which is always a good sign. It did make the ending all the more disappointing, though - the man clearly knows how to write a good mystery. Hence, I'm undecided, but in a probably-ought-to-read-another-one-and-see-if-it's-a-running-theme kind of way.

Now is the time, though, I have to admit: a few particularly good shout-outs when one character took a walk down my road, bought a paper on Nicolson Street or went to Luca's for icecream. I think I got a lot more from this book for having the local knowledge that it's so clearly steeped in. I liked it partly because I love the city, and Rankin captures Edinburgh really very well.

As an afterthought, the entire cast by rights ought to have liver poisoning by now.

Eadie says

Another great installment in the world of Ian Rankin's Rebus. This book is once again set in Edinburgh and the author does an excellent job giving us a description of the city and some of its nasty parts. I always enjoy the characters and their humorous dialogue and reaction to one another. Another re-appearance of arch enemy, Big Ger Cafferty (Strawman), adds a unique touch. In this story there are three different crime elements focused on; a man dead for twenty years found behind a wall in the renovated Parliament Building, a tramp who jumps off a bridge and leaves behind a suitcase full of cash and Roddy Grieve, a political candidate is found dead. It is interesting how in the end these three instances are tied together. These subplots had all the ingredients to make this another remarkable and fascinating read. I look forward to the next book in the series and would highly recommend reading this series in order as the stories build one upon another.

Lori says

A long forgotten corpse in a walled-up fireplace (fondly called 'skelly' throughout), a nameless, mysterious and bridge-jumping tramp with a bucket of cash stored away and an up-and-coming and popular politician from a famous Edinburgh family. Other than all being dead what could they possibly have in common? John Rebus, at his deducing best, suspects a link and doggedly pushes himself and his team to prove it. A well-written plot with enough red herrings to make it interesting but still coming together by the end in a satisfying way. As always, Rebus' sleuthing is hindered by his personal bad judgement and less-than-respectful approach to dealing with many of his colleagues and superiors. Wylie and Hood, two newly recruited members to "team" Rebus show themselves to be effective detectives and "worthy" of Rebus' admiration which he demonstrates by his increasing faith and reliance on their skills. Siobhan, always steadfastly anchored in the Rebus camp, continues to be an integral part of any investigation and performs admirably in this story both in her continued support of her superior, her problem-solving strengths and her tough, assertive approach with the Fettes import who ends up a thorn in both her and Rebus' side. As always, Rankin intertwines the personality of Edinburgh in all his stories and this one is especially effective as it reveals not only the current underbelly (aka Big Ger Cafferty) of this amazing city but the crooked and violent persona of an Edinburgh from 20 years past. Another terrific installment in this excellent series.

Ellen says

Set in Darkness by Ian Rankin.

Rebus is among those in attendance as demolition work on the additions to Queensbury House was proceeding. The group was being guided on an archaeological tour of the historical Queensbury House. DI Bobby Hogan & DS Ellen Wylie also present on this seemingly tedious tour. That is until another member of their group remarks about the legend of a ghost. The guide, David Gelfelan, states the story goes that a woman crying has been seen. Her son, a servant, had been murdered there.

The group proceeds thru a hallway into a dimly lit room. As David observes the surroundings he notices 2 fireplaces. One of which had a metal covering. The covering was pried away revealing a corpse within.

At this same time a homeless man commits suicide by jumping off a bridge. Rebus finds that man had over 400,00 in British pounds in his account. That money was deposited under mysterious and unexplained circumstances. A 3rd death reported of a newcomer to politics from an aristocratic family.

Are these 3 murders connected? Is Rebus's old nemesis in back of it all? A rich and complex story unfolds as the past is revealed thanks in part to Rebus's colleagues, Ellen Wylie & Grant Hood. Siophan Clarke is in her usual top form.

As a team Ellen Wylie & Grant Hood come prepared and compliment each other as a team.

The author reported on the 3 leels of Edinburgh. the 1st being the respectable Edinburgh as seen on the surface. the 2nd as the hidden city. The remains after being ransacked by invading armies. the 3rd being the business & financial aspects of the city. Reading a Rankin novel is to become involved in every aspect of the life in Edinburgh.

As far as an ending goes...it was a new beginning. A future in the making, but for who?

Page 141: "Though my soul may set in darkness, it will rise in perfect light."

Jan-Maat says

Ah, I fancied a novel to read and my Mum asked me to drop this one off in the book exchange box round the corner in the neighbouring street. I thought I'd give it a read first, the pages do turn easily enough, but I'd say overall it was a variable read, the kind of thing which you will like if you like this kind of thing, but if you don't then this book won't win you over to the writer or genre.

Obviously it is #11 in a series, and I did ponder on that while reading (this is a multi-task book), naturally reading a series is a self selecting exercise - if you don't like number one the chances are you won't progress to number 11, equally if you are sick of them by number three then you bale out then mostly, then again I felt that it is a book and every book has to stand on its own merits unless it is completely spineless. The book that is only good because of the affection you have built up for the characters in previous volumes does not seem to be either good or much of a book at all to me.

It reminded me very strongly of watching police-detective dramas on TV and I don't mean *The Wire* I mean the standard stuff, you can watch it and it is mildly diverting, if you fall asleep over it and wake up only to see the closing credits then you won't have missed anything, similarly reading this I feel as though I've been eating beaten egg whites. And God alone knows why the sub plot with the rapists was put in there, came

over like some cack-handed comic relief, perhaps it was intended as a red herring, or indeed as some kind of bleak joke that too stupid to live types will eventually sort themselves out?

My big surprise here is that I knew by reputation that the Rebus novels were set in Edinburgh and I imagined that city would be a character or at least a major presence and it wasn't. Despite the Scottish parliament story line it felt surprisingly rootless. The archaeologist discovering a body in the walls of a building I recall from a Lieutenant Boruvka story, but I suppose human imagination is also finite and once you've read enough then you find the same things popping up time and again.

It wasn't so much here that Rankin spoon feeds the reader, but that everything on that spoon is pre-chewed. For instance early on we are told that a woman detective is good and asks intelligent questions in meetings, I feel obscurely perhaps as the reader that it is for me to read the character's performance in meetings and to decide if the questions she asks are intelligent or not rather than for the author to straight out tell me - standing with his semaphore flags at the side of the page from the margin signalling : *I AM AWARE OF THE HISTORIC DENIGRATION OF WOMEN IN WORKING LIFE AND I AM DETERMINED TO WORK AGAINST THAT TO THE LAST DROP OF MY PRINTER CARTRIDGE*, likewise we are told that a woman senior officer is better than her male peers, but she remains off page, we don't in this novel at least get to see her being better than her peers. I never felt I got to know anything about the characters, I was glad that the author respected the convention of giving them names because they all blended together into dependable sidekick for me, or setting - the author told me everything although from other reviews I learn that the main detective is allegedly introspective the detection seemed to come about just as it does on TV giving the impression of a writer's conference and hurried discussion on how to wind up the story within the allotted time.

Considering the characters I began to feel that being a workaholic broader with a knowledge of rock and or roll music and with a good general cultural knowledge do not in the case of Rebus a character make, but rather were like Kojak's lollipops or Columbo's raincoat or Sherlock Holmes' fondness for cocaine sign posts towards what might in a real person be a character. Everything here is a signifier yet without intrinsic significance. That I suppose must be true of all novels but generally it isn't something I generally feel reading a novel. It felt entirely reasonable that Rebus and his acolytes did nothing at the weekend purely because they were fictional characters, logically they can have no life off stage, simply often with fiction one believes that possibility that the characters could have and one needs a Pirandello to make fun of the concept to become aware of the silliness of that construct rather than a very conventional narrative.

But there were a couple of things I liked. At one stage the detectives visit a retired building contractor who has been forced out of business by his son, leaving one of them comments that it was a show home. Architecture and construction is a powerful image, the house built for the aged parents as advertising for the family firm brings to mind the fancy new Parliament building - self-promotion in stone and wood and steel, what was knocked down to make it possible and who is buried (literally) into the foundations? And who is trying to sell what to whom?

The other was the sense of generational conflict. In the world of this novel the young gods fight to overturn Cronus and the titans, but the old gods fight back as best they can. The new detective on the rise has to supplant the old one, the old gangster is in contention with the younger one, a new generation of politicians shoves past the older ones. It is writing perhaps inspired by watching too many documentaries about stags or walruses or the ilk, but remarkably consistent from families to formal institutions all we see is the resentments of the old and the ambitions of the young. Arguably some of the younger detectives strive for replacement by replication, modelling themselves into workaholics like the more senior Rebus, creating a non-life round a sense of emptiness in their own lives and throwing work into that void in an attempt to hide

it.

The citizens of Edinburgh made good bankers and lawyers perhaps precisely because they held their emotions in check and were good at keeping secrets (p.260) which I thought quite nice in a story in which a major theme was that everything was dragged out and delayed on account of what the characters didn't say, but then that's true of most crime stories. If everybody just confessed at the start then these things would be over far faster. Sadly despite his priestly office that doesn't even happen in Father Brown stories.

But aside from that I felt that although the pages turned easily enough it was a flat and lifeless read.

Bill says

Another excellent Rebus mystery. I think I enjoyed this one more because it wasn't just Rebus trying to solve the murders; there were other officers, DS Wylie and Hood, as well as the lovely DS Siobhan Clark, assisting on the case and another of her own. As well, DI Derek Linford, the poster boy for quick advancement, with his own secrets. Working three separate cases that might be tied together, a body found in the building site of the new Scotland Parliament, plus a suicide and another murder. Throw Big Ger, Rebus' old nemesis, into the mix and you've got a mystery with many twists and turns. Excellent, gritty stuff. Rankin does not let you down.

Luffy says

I really need to get off my backside and find the time to read this series in chronological order. Ian Rankin, I've been told, is a master for describing the city of Edinburgh. No one apparently does it better. I didn't know or notice this fact. This is one of those books which discouraged me from reading all the series. The main reason for my reticence is that in the background there's is always the same one and only mob boss who's pulling the strings. Anyway this book did little for me.

Hobart says

This originally appeared at The Irresponsible Reader.

This has all the elements of a good Rebus novel -- and then some.

We've got a murder that took place so long ago that there are almost no living witnesses or suspects, a very contemporary murder, Rebus in political trouble, Rebus being self-destructive, and a couple of cases that have nothing whatsoever to do with the murders -- oh, and Big Ger Cafferty shows up to do something horrible (and something helpful).

Farmer John is near retirement and comes up with an assignment to keep Rebus out of his hair -- he's part of a task force overseeing security on the construction for the impending Parliament. This construction uncovers a murder victim and Rebus and the rest of the task force begin investigating. They can barely get started when another corpse shows up. This one is very fresh, and very connected to a prominent family -- politically and culturally. I'm not going to get into this much more than that -- there's a lot of good stuff in

these cases, most of which we've seen variations of before. This doesn't make it bad, it's very Rebus-y material, told the way we've come to expect.

The part of the book that fascinated me were the crimes that had little to do with the murders. Siobhan Clarke starts off the book doing some work on a sexual assault case that isn't really hers, and then witnesses a suicide of a homeless man. This homeless man turns out to have plenty of money in the bank and a history that cannot account for that. Clarke threatens at times to take over the book with her investigations. Not just from her investigation, but the way that one uniformed officer describes her as "one of Rebus" and the introspection, speculation and reaction to that observation causes in Clarke's life and work. (Incidentally, Clarke taking over the novel would be fine with me)

One of the storylines is perfect -- there's almost no interaction with any police characters, and resolves largely off-screen. Basically the way that most storylines actually resolve in the world. There are payoffs in the novel as a whole, but not in the way you'd expect.

Really well-constructed with almost no dull moments, puzzles that you can't suss out at first glance, and a whole lot of great characters. There's not a lot for the courts to deal with at the end of this book, but that doesn't mean that there's no justice found for any victims. This isn't the best Rebus novel I've read, but it's really, really good.

Mark Harrison says

Excellent murder mystery connecting three different crimes twenty years apart in a web of family feuds and political backstabbing. Rebus is brilliant and troubled as always and has to face his great nemesis who has been returned to the streets. Slightly rushed ending was a shame but still a great read.

Bettie? says

Bettie's Books

Terence M says

Audiobook - 16:26 hours - Narrator: Samuel Gillies

Another very good Inspector John Rebus novel.

4.0 stars

Review to come
