



## The Black Book

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## **The Black Book** Ian Rankin

Five years ago, a mysterious fire burned Edinburgh's seed Central Hotel to ashes. Long-forgotten and unsolved, the case reappears when a charred body--with a bullet in its head--is found amongst the ruins. Inspector John Rebus knows that his superiors would rather he let sleeping dogs lie. He knows that part of the answer lies somewhere in a cryptic black notebook. And he knows that to solve the case, he'll have to peel back layer upon layer of unspeakable secrets to arrive at the truth. . .

## **The Black Book Details**

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Author : Ian Rankin

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## From Reader Review The Black Book for online ebook

### Emma says

An intricately woven, tense noir thriller and the best I have read thus far. Incredible storytelling.

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### Andrew Smith says

Inspector John Rebus is distracted. His brother, Michael, has turned up, fresh from a spell 'at Her Majesty's pleasure', courtesy of a drug dealing charge Rebus himself helped to nail down. Michael's looking for a place to kip down for a spell and he's hoping his brother can help him out. But there's more. Michael is soon found hanging by his feet from the Forth Bridge and a friend and colleague of Rebus is badly beaten, reason and perpetrator unknown. All this distraction means that Rebus is less attentive than ever to the girlfriend who has taken him in and soon his luggage is on the wrong side of the front door.

His investigations into the incidents lead him to a restaurant owned by an Elvis fanatic and potential links to an old case: a fire at a city hotel in which a body was found, in the ruins. If this weren't enough, he's been asked to assist in a surveillance task and is forced to share the task with fellow police inspector by the name of Flower ('little weed' as Rebus refers to him). The two detest each other – this is bound to end in tears.

Then Morris 'Big Ger' Cafferty makes an appearance. Now, aficionados of this series will know that the relationship between Rebus and Cafferty is a complex one. On one hand it's it's the typical cop versus head honcho gangster thing, but delve a little deeper and you start to sense that there's some empathy here too; perhaps the two have more in common than either would like to think. As the series progresses this relationship deepens and becomes ever more complex (I know this because of the random order I've happened to read these books), and any time these two share the same page the quality of the dialogue goes up a further notch – in my opinion it's the high point of Rankin's writing.

The narrative does ramble a bit and there are probably too many threads and too many characters. For that reason, I'd say it's not one of the best books in this series. However, there's really no such thing as a bad Rebus book and I'd take any instalment above ninety percent of the crime fiction novels out there. As usual, I smiled most of the way through this one. The only bad news is that I've got very few of this series left to read. Maybe I ought to ration myself – I'm not looking forward to closing the book on Rebus for the final time.

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### Sandy says

I was rooting around a sale bin in a second hand bookstore & looky looky what I found. I've been following this series for years but somehow missed this one. Made my day.

This is an old one & there's only about a kabillion reviews already so I won't bother, I'm sure it's all been said. But it reminded me of one of the things I love about reading.....when you come across a series that for whatever reason, you become attached to & read just for the pure pleasure of spending time with that character. Here's hoping Rebus continues to stroll the streets of Edinburgh for years to come.

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## Paul Darcy says

By this point, John Rebus is becoming familiar to me. He is crusty, crafty and will stoop to conquer any “bad” guys that happen to cross him.

In this, the fifth full Rebus mystery novel, we do find out what happens with his current love affair (I was itching to know after the end of book four) and how he treats his fellow workers and friends - er, scratch that last bit. Rebus has no real friends.

Inspector Rebus reminds me of a mix of Dr. House, Black Adder and perhaps a touch of “everyman” who ever lived, loved and broke the law - for the right reasons, of course. This is a strong testament to the fully realized character Ian Rankin manages to create in John Rebus.

A character which keeps me coming back for more.

This novel deals with Rebus getting involved in a case which supposedly died five years ago. Until he stumbles upon a couple of clues, and starts to look under rocks.

The stakes are high, and Rebus’s life is actually in jeopardy, but that does not stop him. In the usual fashion Ian Rankin’s use of language and his dialogue for Rebus is in top form. I won’t get specific because the best quips and jokes come when you least expect them - and they are always fresh and fun.

There is one real smart bastard in this novel, and he has always gotten away with, well, murder. It’s a fun ride to see how Rebus manages to get this main man in the end. And you just know that after that main man gets out of jail - Rebus will be in some serious shite.

But that will be a few novels down the road I’m sure.

I really, really like how these novels always deal as much or more with Rebus’s personal life. By this I mean his run ins with relatives (Michael his brother is out of jail now and . . .), loved ones and fellow workers. It’s always as interesting as the actual case Rebus is working on. It is like two stories woven together - the classic detective case and the sometimes painful yet believable life of Rebus.

I don’t know which is more fun. Rankin keeps me laughing at least every chapter with his use of images. Oh, and in this one we have an Elvis-theme restaurant playing a major part. Yeah, you can just imagine.

I can’t recommend these novels highly enough. If you like mysteries, no, if you like humor, crusty characters and a romping good time - you will love this series.

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## Lori says

Best Rebus yet. The more I read him the better I like him; not in spite of his flaws but because of them. My enjoyment of this book was helped by my currently being in Scotland and having just visited Edinburgh which, as in 3 of the previous books, figures prominently in the storyline. However, in addition to the picturesque unfolding of Edinburgh's multi-faceted personality and the fabulously flawed character of John Rebus, this novel boasts an excellent plot and a most challenging and convoluted mystery. Well-done Ian Rankin. Can't wait to read the next one.

## Ammar says

3.5

Expected better from Rankin in this one.  
It wasn't as noir as the previous books  
I'll read the 6th book in the series and see if it's any better

It's my least fav Rebus so far

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## Phryne says

I have read several of the Rebus series now and plan to work my way progressively through all of them. This one was particularly good in that Rebus seems to be mostly in control of things, his boss is supporting him and his love life is at a standstill. So much more time is spent on actual police work and solving crimes, always a good thing I think in a crime novel. I found this particular book a great way to spend time on a long plane flight and I look forward to reading the next one soon.

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## Alexander Inglis says

Ian Rankin's *The Black Book* is the 5th of his Inspector John Rebus series set in Edinburgh; this is the first of his novels I've read. Although in his early thirties when he wrote this tale, Rankin shapes Rebus with a world-weary cast, delivering a startlingly interior view of his middle-aged detective. Rebus isn't a 20s-something swashbuckler; nor has his passion died -- instead, it smoulders, burning red hot when correctly fanned, flicking encrusted ash skyward contemptuously.

In this outing, Rebus has to deal with his girl-friend who's had enough of him, his returning brother (an ex-con) with no where else to stay except with John, a flat full of late teenage university students on their own for the first time (and sharing his flat he's been forced to return to). And that's just his personal life. On the job, he becomes engulfed by a five year old murder, pursuing the investigation "on his own time" (and literally, too, as he is suspended at one point from the force), which leads to a gay bar / Elvis themed restaurant and ongoing encounters with ghosts from the arson of the Central Hotel where the body was found ... with links to organised crime in the present day. As the story threads come together, Rebus's personal and professional life become entirely entangled as a key piece of evidence to the old murder lands in his hands. And that's just the start of his troubles.

Rankin shifts between a third person narrative focussed on Rebus to the other characters as they uncover their own motives in the moment and on to richly detailed commentary about life and surroundings in the chief setting of Edinburgh. Dialects pop up; the Edinburgh lilt can be heard vividly; and local words are sprinkled into dialogue as a chef adds secret sauce to a favourite dish. Somehow, Rankin manages the verbal sleight-of-hand to conjure this Scottish setting in a way that seems entirely familiar, like ones own home town -- but wait, that's not true is it? And his winning character, Rebus, worms his way off the page like the best of the hard-boiled detectives, utterly convincing and sympathetic but no one's ideal of the perfect husband for your daughter. No wonder the series is occasionally dubbed "Tartan Noir"!

I read the Kindle edition so I can't say it was a page turner. I can say I enjoyed, and enjoyed savouring, every e-inked turn of phrase as it flashed by, reading much further into the night on multiple occasions than is good for me. Highly recommended.

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### **CarolineFromConcord says**

In this mystery about Scottish police detective John Rebus, Ian Rankin shows all his characteristic deftness. (Well, the last paragraph was atypically sweet, kind of a wrong note, but it was only one paragraph.) Rebus follows his own rules and accepts the punishments that inevitably follow.

After his detective sergeant gets hit over the head in a parking lot behind an Elvis-themed restaurant and lands in the hospital, the victim's estranged girlfriend tells Rebus about a black book that (in code) details cold cases the guy had been investigating on his own time. She says he had seemed very stressed lately.

Rebus follows the leads in the book, against the wishes of his superiors, and unsettles some powerful Edinburgh worthies. Did the fire in the old hotel five years ago involve Rebus's nemesis, Big Ger Cafferty? Who was the unidentified corpse? Why is a loser investigator from up north passing messages from Rebus's long-forgotten aunt, and how might Rebus make use of him for future gray-area activities? Would it be possible to make a questionable deal with the recently released child molester and send him out of town for therapy? And speaking of recently released, what should Rebus do about his formerly drug-dealing brother?

I like Rankin's plots and the way all the pieces tie up at the end. I like the characterizations. And I especially like the local slang, much of which I have to figure out from context. May he never tire of Rebus and Edinburgh!

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### **Marisa Meiga says**

Al igual que los anteriores libros de la serie, una buena historia. Me gusta mucho el personaje de John Rebus.

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### **Laura says**

*From BBC Radio 4 - Classic Serial:*

*Ian Rankin's maverick detective, Inspector Rebus, investigates an unsolved murder, with the help of a notebook full of coded clues.*

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### **Alan Cotterell says**

Not sure what happened, this started out well. But then either I lost the plot, or storyline went off on a strange tangent. I usually enjoy Rebus books, but not this one. Let's hope the next one is back up to standard.

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## Ching-Bing-Ping says

I had read my last Ian Rankin book a long time ago, and as far as I remember that one was a collection of short stories, which I didn't particularly enjoy. And, if I stretch my mind even further back to the novel that I had read before that, I can hardly remember its name or what it was about. In short, Ian Rankin, though a celebrated author had never really put a solid mark on my reading life with his creations. I can't say I hate the books, but I don't find them overtly enjoyable, as was the case with *THE BLACK BOOK*, the fifth instalment in the John Rebus series.

The plot takes us to Edinburgh where a colleague of Rebus gets brutally assaulted outside a restaurant. Rebus takes up the cause and finds a black book belonging to the colleague which contains cryptic messages related to crimes mostly unsolved. The victim's ex-partner suspects that the book and its contents are the reason for the assault. Rebus without the authority, takes it upon his own shoulders to find out the truth behind the book's messages and solve some unsolved cases. Running parallel like a loop line is a case where Rebus is ordered to install surveillance on a crooked money lender and a butcher gets a visit from a stabbed relative and Rebus is given the case to solve. And like a true loop line these two lines come and join the main line at the very end thereby leaving no strings loose.

But, the novel didn't match up to its blurb. The blurb suggested a high tension crime thriller with dark crimes and darker motives, but all I got was a slow moving mediocre book, which though not disappointing was never too enjoyable either. Rebus, not being my favourite protagonist, also didn't help the cause. With his perpetual personal problems, and his issues with the senior officers the whole character gets stamped with a big label called "Cliched" and also another called "Its getting Boring". The plot didn't help either. Filled with departmental politics, parallel sub plots and dangerous jumps in narrative between these plots, the book all the time felt like a chronicle of sorts from Rebus' life, where in between all these personal issues he also managed to solve a crime. I love a book which contains a crime, detection and a solution, other side dishes in the form of personal issues and departmental politics never appealed to me.

Summing up, this book, like other Rankin novels I have read stayed true to the Rankin style, and in the process also managed to get the same response from me, which says, "Yeah, I did complete the book, but it took a lot of time, and I can't say that I enjoyed it a lot."

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## Nigel says

I've read a number of Rebus books over the years and always enjoyed them. Rebus is a great character and Rankin is a great writer. These days I'm picking up odd ones from charity shops from the early days and I've not read a bad one yet. This features Ger Cafferty as a character for the first time properly as well as one or two others who get to stick around for quite some time. It's a decent crime read. I guess I was surprised to find just how well this early one stacked up against both Rankin's later books and work from other current authors. For me this one stood the test of time far better than many books I've read from other authors written in the intervening period.

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## Rachel Hall says

This is the fifth novel in the Inspector John Rebus series and after the somewhat dry subject matter dealt with

in Strip Jack, this is a return to form in terms of providing both more action and plenty of the trademark Rebus wit. Significantly, it is at this juncture in the series that Ian Rankin first began to visualise his Rebus novels as a series, transition location-wise from a 'fictional' Edinburgh to the city authentic and introduced the perfect foil for Rebus in DC Siobhan Clarke. The Black Book features Rebus centre stage and without the complications of a girlfriend, meaning that it offers one of the sharpest portrayals of his early years. Whilst this fifth outing isn't as tightly plotted as it could be, feeling more like an amalgam of different threads that have been cobbled together somewhat, Rankin does manage to pull it into coherent shape along the way. Relatively directionless when it sets out with a joint surveillance operation with Trading Standards into one of the 'lieutenants' of the Big Ger empire on the go, Rebus does seem to go looking for other irons in the fire, perhaps reflecting his lack of interest in cutting down one of the lesser figures in the Cafferty empire. I have commented before on the lack of specific focus assigned to Rebus, and whilst I accept some dramatic licence, it seems unrealistic that even at the level of Inspector he can almost pick and choose his investigative pursuits. Maybe this was prior to the strict justification of resources and increased bureaucracy of the force, but it all adds to the "loose canon" persona of Rebus that Rankin hones.

The fictional police station of Great London Road was razed to the ground in the fourth novel and The Black Book is the first to mark the move to St Leonard's Square. Although Rebus should be resident with girlfriend, Dr Patience Aitken at Oxford Terrace, booted out thanks to one disagreement too many, he is kipping on the sofa of the flat he rents to students in Arden Street, Marchmont. As he contemplates the "black comedy" of his life, it swiftly worsens with the arrival of his brother, Michael, back from London after a three years sojourn at Her Majesty's Pleasure and the news that his dependable DS, Brian Holmes, has received a blunt instrument to the back of the head.. Found in the car park of his regular nightly haunt, The Heartbreak Cafe, ex-girlfriend Nell suspects that the "black book" of cryptic notes, a mix of rumour and hearsay that Holmes kept on his person could provide the answer to the mystery of his unprovoked assault. Nell suspects he had worries on his mind and as Rebus waits with bated breath for the recovery of an unconscious Holmes, he focuses on the fire which destroyed the Central Hotel five years previously that is extensively covered in Holmes "black book" and something more significant than the surveillance operation; that of placing Big Ger at the scene.

Added to this Rebus also handles a stabbing in a butchers with the victim unwilling to corroborate any details and the arrival of a convicted sex offender in the locality. Keeping a close eye on the surveillance operation results, albeit without putting in too much legwork, Rebus stokes these ongoing enquiries all with an eye on the bigger prize of Big Ger. With Holmes in hospital, the officer who works alongside Rebus is female DC Clarke. As a graduate with a flat bought for her by wealthy parents, DC Siobhan Clarke respects Rebus but is exasperated by his reluctance to adhere to the rules and confident enough to hold her own against her boss. Notoriously secretive and narrow-minded when he fixated on a case, Clarke is smart enough to put up with Rebus's sometimes frustrating methodology and occasionally humour him, knowing that working alongside him could teach her a few tricks about the low-life in the city. Notably Clarke and Rebus seem to strike up a relaxed rapport as they bang heads cross-referencing the case notes on Big Ger and the Central Hotel blaze and critically Rebus treats his underlings like equals, valuing their input.

Morris Gerald Cafferty - Big Ger - is Edinburgh's premier gangster with a reputation that rules the city with a foreboding threat of terror. In the same respects that Rebus is a 'dinosaur' in the changing landscape of policing, Big Ger represents the old guard of gangster, with a marked respect for each other and has more in common with Rebus than either will admit to. Both men seem to enjoy jousting against each other whenever they meet, and the result is often a barrage of wit. Big Ger has a magnetic aura that adds to his towering reputation that not even John Rebus is immune to, with the reflected glory that being worthy of his company implying that you are someone to be reckoned with. Despite his desire to see Big Ger go down for a decent stretch, Rebus is as flawed as the next man on the street, and occasionally fooled by the many faces of Cafferty.

Written in the wake of Rankin's spell in the US of A the puns are worse than ever with Rebus having

particular amusement at the expense of the menu at The Heartbreak Cafe (King Shrimp Creole, Love Me Tenderloin, Blue Suede Choux, In The Gateaux), but as usual the nicknames of his colleagues and wrong 'uns across Edinburgh more than make up for it, from Chief Superintendent 'Farmer' Watson, Chief Inspector 'Fart' Lauderdale and, best of all, adversary DI 'Little Weed' Flower! Although in The Black Book, Rankin has delivered an assemblage of plots requiring a few too many bit part players, he once again seems to rouse Rebus into the close in order to pull this into coherent order. The result relies strongly on a few too many convenient coincidences but leaves Rebus once again coming through by the skin of his teeth and sets up his enduring adversary with the "clever scum" that is Cafferty.

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### ΠανώσΚ says

Διαβάζω τις περιπτώσεις του Τζον Ράμπους, αν κατά, κάθε φορά που μου κ'νω (δηλαδή συχνά) απ' τη θεωρομένη (απ' τους άλλους, όχι απ' μένα) ως σοβαρή? υψηλή? λογοτεχνία (στην προκειμένη περίπτωση παρτήσα στη μέση έναν Ράμπερτ Βάλζερ, όχι γιατί δεν ήταν καλός, αλλά απλώς γιατί μο'χτισα). Κάμει φορά περνεί καιρός, μέχρι να ξαναπισώ κάποιο βιβλίο με τον Ράμπους στα χέρια μου, αλλά ποτέ δεν με απογοητεύει. Και πολλές φορές σκ'φτομαι πως ο Ράμπους είναι υπαρκτός πρόσωπο και κ'που τα π'νει σε κάμει παμπ του Εδιμβούργου.

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### Sadlam says

I've read other Rebus novels, but I won't be reading any more. This is over-long, there are too many bad jokes and then one of the main players conveniently explains everything in his journal! I think I've had enough of heavy drinking bad tempered detectives.

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### Ellen says

The Black Book by Ian Rankin.

The main theme or focus for Rebus is the burning down of the Central Hotel 5 years ago. A body, or what was left of a body, was found in the smoldering ashes. That body also had a bullet lodged in its head. Rebus is bound and determined to find answers to this unsolved murder. That's when his problems begin. No one wants him to find any answers to that murder including the police. Well that's ok since nobody stops Rebus for long.

The key to solving this mystery is a black book that was in the possession of Brian Holmes. Brian Holmes was Rebus's other right hand man after Siophan Clarke. Holmes had met with an "accident" after leaving Rebus's company at the Heart Break Cafe. His head was bashed with something hard that left him concussed and hospitalized. Just who was waiting for Holmes outside and why ...Rebus had his suspicions. While visiting Brian in the hospital Nell (Brian's former steady) told him about the black Book and where Brian kept it.

Rebus had no doubt that big Ger Cafferty was behind most if not all of this down to the burning of the Central Hotel and the murder of the body found there. Was Cafferty trying to make a statement to stay away from this investigation by attacking Brian and if so who was next?

The list of characters is off the charts and each personality added to this story.

The author's love of Scotland especially Aberdeen comes through in Rebus's life and his haunts.

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### **Kathy says**

Siobhan Clarke was a new partner for Rebus in this book, working with Rebus on Unsolved Crimes; brother of Rebus gets out of prison and needs place to sleep so he joins the crowd of college students renting from Rebus; Big Ger Cafferty is not at all likable in this earlier book, dramatically changing my view of that character. While I enjoy the series very much as it matured I never made the effort to start from book one to read in order. Had I done so I may have dropped it.

I should add this enjoyable bit...Rebus made a visit to see a relative not seen for years. His father and his brother had a "falling out" and did not speak thereafter. His aunt had a picture of the two of them together she wanted Rebus to have after her husband died. She went to sleep after greeting him, and Rebus went out to the kitchen to put together some sandwiches and brought them in to share.

"She'd started speaking before Rebus realised she was saying grace. 'Some hae eat and cannae eat, and some hae nane that want it. But we hae meat and we can eat, so let the Lord be thankit.' Rebus almost burst out laughing. Almost. But inside, he was touched too."

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### **Alondra says**

4 Stars

In the ongoing saga that is John Rebus's life; he must contend with a 5 year old murder, his ex-con brother returning to town, having a break-up with his girl, and trying to head an undercover sting.... oh yeah, a child molester is on parole and living across the street from a primary school.

Aahhhh, a day in the life of John Rebus.

Things wrap up nicely, but not neatly. There is always a line to be crossed or a cliff edge to step to with Rebus. Still loving this series.

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