

## A Song for the Dark Times by Ian Rankin

Reviewed by Donna



Rebus is back! This is number 23 in the John Rebus books, and while some of the recent titles in this series have left me a bit disappointed, this one shows a different Rebus and is another brilliant addition to this series – this time it is personal.

Unlike many series detectives, Rebus has always aged in real time. Here we see a physically slower Rebus – dodgy lungs have forced him to move to a ground floor unit, he's given up the smokes and cut back on the booze and even his trusty Saab is no longer so trusty.

And Rebus now has a wee dog called Brillo. It is also a much more reflective Rebus as he acknowledges what he has lost by putting the job before his family. The novel centres around two cases – the murder of a well-connected and wealthy Saudi student in Edinburgh and the disappearance of the partner of Rebus' daughter Samantha.

All the familiar faces are back – Detective Siobhan Clark and Malcolm Fox are chasing the Edinburgh murder with Big Ger Cafferty trying to pull more than a few strings behind the scenes and rearrange a few faces along the way.

Rebus heads up to the Scottish Highlands to support his daughter. He quickly becomes involved in the investigation of Samantha's partner and his interest in a WW2 POW camp, much to the annoyance of the local detectives.

The two different cases are related, eventually. Contemporary issues such as Brexit, class disparities and notions of entitlement, the constant surveillance by Facebook and the rise of boutique gin all feature here and allow Ian Rankin to write so well about the human condition.

I'm not sure how long Rebus will continue, but it's great to have him back – he may be a bit more cranky and can no longer do stairs, but he still has that sharp investigative mind and continues to fight the good fight.

(This was written pre-covid and Ian Rankin thought then that the world was heading to a very dark place. The title is from a line by German poet Bertolt Brecht –

*Motto. In the dark times will there be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times.*

We will have to wait to see what Rebus makes of covid.

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