

# All Good things

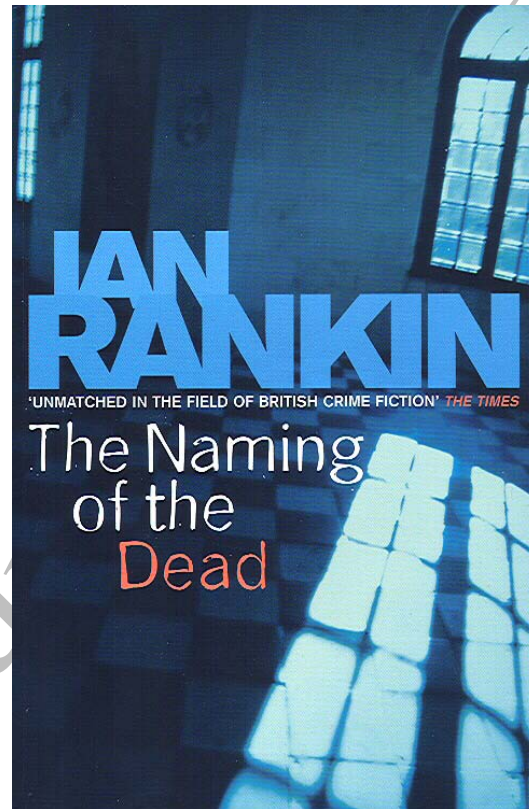
## *Suspended Sentences*

by Jim Napier

I last reviewed a book by Ian Rankin in August of 2005, just a month after the real-world events on which his latest book is based took place. At that time he revealed to me that his protagonist, DI John Rebus, would soon be retired. It was a little like being told the last fine restaurant in the world was disappearing, to be replaced by yet another Macdonald's. "Say it ain't so," I complained. "Rebus is an institution. There's no one else like him." When I had calmed down he pointed out—quite reasonably—that it was a matter of policy, nothing personal. In the series Rebus was nearing sixty, the age at which police officers are *required* to retire. Later, subconsciously echoing Rebus's attitude, I opened a bottle of Laphroaig—Rebus's favourite single malt—and lamented the passing of an era.

### *Ian Rankin*

Ian Rankin has been showered with so many honours that it almost beggars the imagination: for the past several years he has been the best-selling UK crime writer in the world; his books have been published in twenty-two languages; he has garnered four Crime Writer's Dagger Awards, including the prestigious Diamond Dagger in 2005, not to mention four honorary degrees and an OBE for his services to literature. Ian and Miranda live in Edinburgh with their two sons, where they enjoy a well-deserved notoriety.



### *The Naming of the Dead* (Orion Books, 2006)

Detective Inspector John Rebus's existence gives new meaning to the phrase "mid-life crisis": his wife has left him, he has a drinking problem, his superiors distrust him and number the days to his impending retirement, and his younger brother Mickey has recently died from cancer. Small wonder, then, that Rebus really doesn't care who he annoys.

This time there's no shortage of targets for Rebus's abrasive personality. Set in Edinburgh during the first week of July,

2005, the site of the G8 Summit, world leaders are coming together to discuss the problems of the developing world. Security is understandably tight, as demonstrators, radicals, and simple troublemakers from around the world gather in Edinburgh to disrupt the proceedings and garner some media attention for themselves. With thousands of police, including London's Special Branch, in town to ride herd on things, Rebus fumes at being sidelined, relegated to "minding the shop" during the summit.

True to form, however, Rebus manages to find a way of injecting himself into events. A man has been murdered, and Rebus discovers that he was a sexual predator, recently released from prison. It's not long before he ties the crime to the deaths of two other men with similar backgrounds. Even without the summit on their plate, there is a noticeable lack of interest by his fellow officers in a serial killer stalking sex-offenders; and Rebus takes up the challenge. It is not long before he makes some intriguing connections. One of the victims worked for Rebus's long-time nemesis, local crime boss Morris Gerard "Big Ger" Cafferty. Another has ties to reform-minded city councillor Gareth Tench, a man who has the corrupt Cafferty in his sights.

When an MP attending a G8 social function at Edinburgh Castle takes a header off the ramparts to the rocks below, Rebus is led to wonder whether it was an accident, or he jumped, or was pushed – and whether his death is connected to the others. His investigation will lead him to cross paths – and swords – with his own boss, Assistant Chief Constable James Corbin, who sidelined Rebus to avoid just such embarrassments, and with the man in

charge of G8 security, Commander David Steelforth of London's Special Branch.

Rebus calls on his partner of long-standing, Detective Sergeant Siobhan Clarke, to aid him in his enquiries, but she is having problems of her own. Her aging hippie parents have come to Edinburgh to take part in the demonstrations, and have been caught up in the violence. As events wind down and protestors leave the city, Siobhan loses contact with them, only to learn of the London Bus bombings that came on the heels of the summit. Were they somehow caught up in this violence, and are they all right? Her quest will lead her to search for a shadowy protestor, Santal, whose role in the tumultuous events in Edinburgh is far from clear.

### ***Original and compelling***

This 16<sup>th</sup> and penultimate novel in the Rebus series, *The Naming of the Dead*, is as much about Rebus's impending retirement and Siobhan's transition to inherit his mantle as it is about a serial killer and the highly-charged events surrounding the G8 summit. It is a riveting tale on every level, with finely-drawn characters, an intriguing setting, and an original and compelling plot line, amply illustrating why Ian Rankin is rightly considered to be the finest crime writer in Britain today. I cannot recommend it too highly. In a world in which all good things must come to an end, the Rebus novels are a very good thing indeed.

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