Ian Rankin Mortal Causes



Let It Bleed
Black and Blue
Other Novels:
The Flood Watchman
Westwind
Writing as Jack Harvey
Witch Hunt
Bleeding Hearts
Blood Hunt
Ian Rankin Mortal Causes
An Inspector Rebus Novel
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named or wouldn't thank me for naming them. You know who you are.

Thanks also to: Colin and Liz Stevenson, for trying, Gerald Hammond, for his gun expertise; the Officers of the City of Edinburgh Police and Lothian and Borders Police, who never seem to mind me telling stories about them; David and Pauline, for help at the Festival.

The best book on the subject of Protestant paramilitaries is Professor Steve Bruce's The Red Hand (OUP, 1992). One quote from the book: `There is no "Northern Ireland problem" for which there is a solution. There is only a conflict in which there must be winners and losers.'

The action of Mortal Causes takes place in a fictionallsed summer, 1993, before the Shankill Road bombing and its bloody aftermath.

Perhaps Edinburgh's terrible inability to speak out, Edinburgh's silence with regard to all it should be saying, Is but the hush that precedes the thunder, The liberating detonation so oppressively imminent now? Hugh MacDiarmid

We're all gonna be just dirt in the ground.

Introduction

He could scream all he liked.

They were underground, a place he didn't know, a cool ancient place but lit by electricity. And he was being punished. The blood dripped off him onto the earth floor. He could hear sounds like distant voices, something beyond the breathing of the men who stood around him. Ghosts, he thought. Shrieks and laughter, the sounds of a good night out. He must be mistaken: he was having a very bad night in.

His bare toes just touched the ground. His shoes had came off as they'd scraped him down the flights of steps. His socks had followed sometime after. He was in agony, but agony could be cured. Agony wasn't eternal. He wondered if he would walk again. He remembered the barrel of the gun touching the back of his knee, sending waves of energy up and down his leg.

His eyes were closed. If he opened them he knew he would see flecks of his own blood against the whitewashed wall, the wall which seemed to arch towards him. His toes were still moving against the ground, dabbling in warm blood. Wherever he tried to steak, he could feel his face cracking: dried salt tears and sweat.

It was strange, the shape your life could take. You might be loved as a child but still go bad. You might have monsters for parents but grow up pure. His life had been neither one nor the other. Or rather, it had been both, for he'd been cherished and abandoned in equal measure. He was six, and shaking hands with a large man. There should have been more affection between them, but somehow there wasn't. He was ten, and his mother was looking tired, bowed down, as she leaned over the sink washing dishes. Not knowing he was in the doorway, she paused to rest her hands on the rim of the sink. He was thirteen, and being initiated into his first gang. They took a pack of cards and skinned his knuckles with the edge of the pack. They took it in turns, all eleven of them. It hurt until he belonged.

Now there was a shuffling sound. And the gun barrel was touching the back of his neck, sending out more waves. How could something be so cold? He took a deep breath, feeling the effort in his shoulder-blades. There couldn't be more pain than he already felt. Heavy breathing close to his ear, and then the words again.

'Nemo me impune lacessit.'

He opened his eyes to the ghosts. They were in a smoke filled tavern, seated around a long rectangular table, their goblets of wine and ale held high. A young woman was slouching from the lap of a one-legged man. The goblets had stems but no bases: you couldn't put them back on the table until they'd been emptied. A toast was being raised. Those in fine dress rubbed shoulders with beggars. There were no divisions, not in the tavern's gloom. Then they looked towards him, and he tried to smile.

He felt but did not hear the final explosion.

1

Probably the worst Saturday night of the year: which was why Inspector John Rebus had landed the shift. God was in his heaven, just making sure. There had been a derby match in the afternoon, Hibs versus Hearts at Easter Road. Fans making their way back to the west end and beyond had stopped in the city centre to drink to excess and take in some of the sights and sounds of the Festival.

The Edinburgh Festival was the bane of Rebus's life. He'd spent years confronting it, trying to avoid it, cursing it, being caught up in it. There were those who said that it was somehow atypical of Edinburgh, a city which for most of the year seemed sleepy, moderate, bridled. But that was nonsense; Edinburgh's history was full of licence and riotous behaviour. But the Festival, especially the Festival Fringe, was different. Tourism was its lifeblood, and where there were tourists there was trouble. Pickpockets and housebreakers came to town as to a convention, while those football supporters who normally steered clear of the city centre suddenly became its passionate defenders, challenging the foreign invaders who could be found at tables outside short-lease cafes up and down the High Street.

Tonight the two might clash in a big way.

'It's hell out there,' one constable had already commented as he paused for rest in the canteen. Rebus believed him all too readily. The cells were filling nicely along with the CID in-trays. A woman had pushed her drunken husband's fingers into the kitchen mincer. Someone was applying superglue to cashpoint machines then chiselling the flap open later to get at the money. Several bags had been snatched around Princes Street. And the Can Gang were on the go again.

The Can Gang had a simple recipe. They stood at bus stops and offered a drink from their can. They were imposing figures, and the victim would take the proffered drink, not knowing that the beer or cola contained crushed up Mogadon tablets, or similar fast-acting tranquillisers. When the victim passed out, the gang would strip them of cash and valuables. You woke up with a gummy head, or in one severe case with your stomach pumped dry. And you woke up poor.

Meantime, there had been another bomb threat, this time phoned to the newspaper rather than Lowland Radio. Rebus had gone to the newspaper offices to take a statement from the journalist who'd taken the call. The place was a madhouse of Festival and Fringe critics filing their reviews. The journalist read from his notes.

'He just said, if we didn't shut the Festival down, we'd be sorry.'

'Did he sound serious?'

'Oh, yes, definitely.'

`And he had an Irish accent?'
'Sounded like it.'
'Not just a fake?'
The reporter shrugged. He was keen to file his story, so Rebus let him go. That made three calls in the past weak, each one threatening to bomb or otherwise disrupt the Festival. The police were taking the threat seriously. How could they afford not to? So far, the tourists hadn't been scared off, but venues were being urged to make security checks before and after each performance.
Back at St Leonard's, Rebus reported to his Chief Superintendent, then tried to finish another piece of paperwork. Masochist that he was, he quite liked the Saturday backshift. You saw the city in its many guises. It allowed a salutory peek into Edinburgh's grey soul. Sin and evil weren't black - he'd argued the point with a priest - but were greyly anonymous. You saw them all night long, the grey peering faces of the wrongdoers and malcontents, the wife beaters and the knife boys. Unfocused eyes, drained of all concern save for themselves. And you prayed, if you were John Rebus, prayed that as few people as possible ever had to get as close as this to the massive grey nonentity.
Then you went to the canteen and had a joke with the lads, fixing a smile to your face whether you were listening or not.
`Here, Inspector, have you heard the one about the squid with the moustache? He goes into a restaurant and-'
Rebus turned away from the DC's story towards his ringing phone.

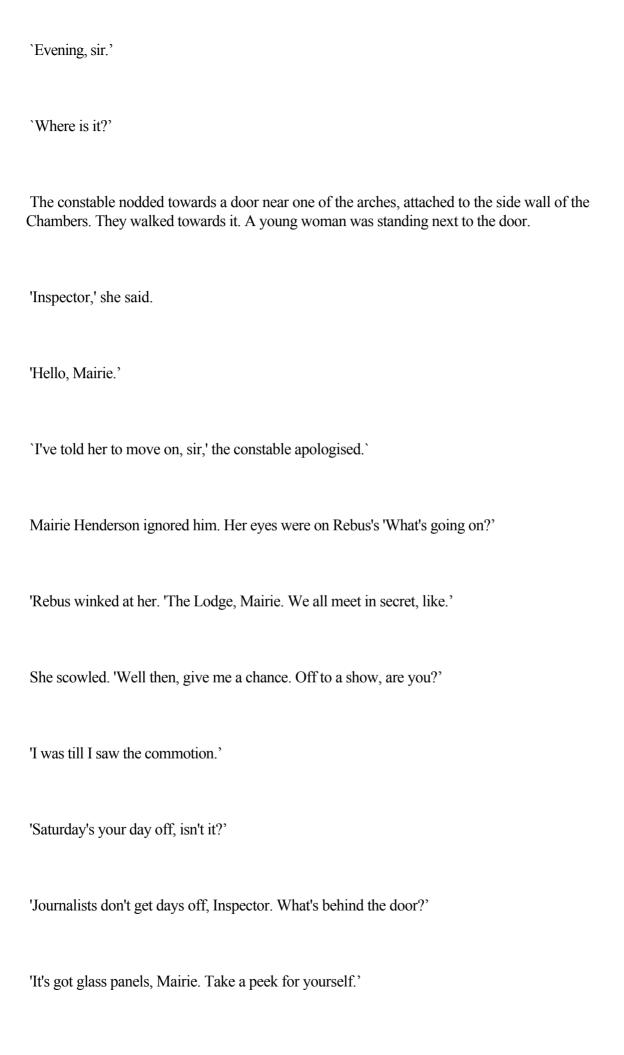
`DI Rebus.'
He listened for a moment, the smile melting from his face. Then he put down the receiver and lifted his jacket from the back of his chair.
'Bad news?' asked the DC.
'You're not joking, son.'

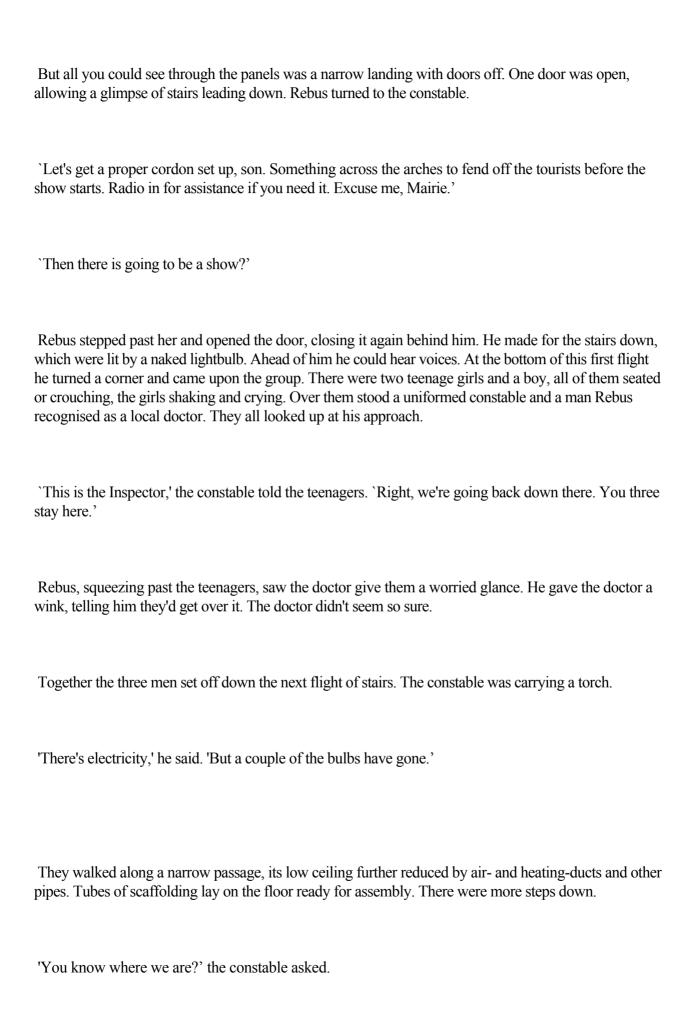
The High Street was packed with people, most of them just browsing. Young people bobbed up and down trying to instil enthusiasm in the Fringe productions they were supporting. Supporting them? They were probably the leads in them. They busily thrust flyers into hands already full of similar sheets.

'Only two quid, best value on the Fringe!' 'You won't see another show like it!' There were jugglers and people with painted faces, and a cacophony of musical disharmonies. Where else in the world would bagpipes, banjos and kazoos meet to join in a bucking battle from hell? Locals said this Festival was quieter than the last. They'd been saying it for years. Rebus wondered if the thing had ever had a heyday. It was plenty busy enough for him.

Though it was a warm night, he kept his car windows shut. Even so, as he crawled along the seas flyers would be pushed beneath his windscreen wipers, all but blocking his vision. His scowl met impregnable drama student smiles. It was ten o'clock, not long dark; that was the beauty of a Scottish summer. He tried to imagine himself on a deserted beach, or crouched atop a mountain, alone with his thoughts. Who was he trying to kid? John Rebus was always alone with his thoughts. And just now he was thinking of drink. Another hour or two and the bars would sluice themselves out, unless they'd applied for (and been granted) the very late licences available at Festival time.

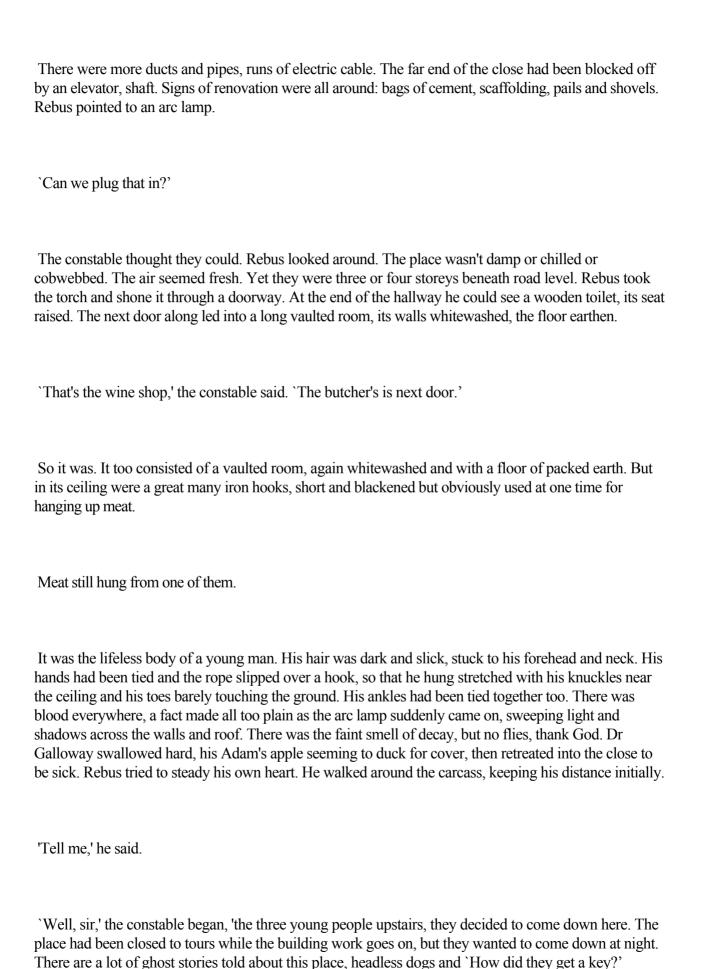
He was heading for the City Chambers, across the street from St Giles' Cathedral. You turned off the High Street and through one of two stone arches into a small parking area in front of the Chambers themselves. A uniformed constable was standing guard beneath one of the arches. He recognised Rebus and nodded, stepping out of the way. Rebus parked his own car beside a marked patrol car, stopped the engine and got out.

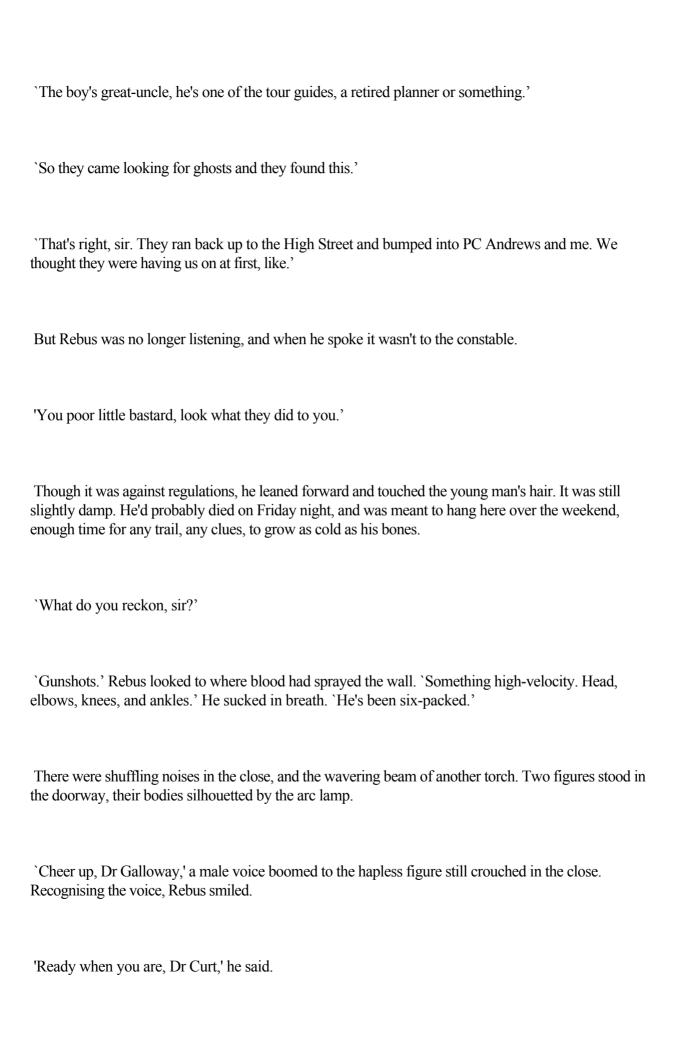




'Mary King's Close,' said Rebus.
Not that he'd ever been down here, not exactly. But he'd been in similar old buried streets beneath the High Street. He knew of Mary King's Close.
'Story goes,' said the constable, 'there was a plague in the 1600s, people died or moved out, never really moved back. Then there was a fire. They blocked off the ends of the street. When they rebuilt, they built over the top of the close.'
He shone his torch towards the ceiling, which was now three or four storeys above them. 'See that marble slab? That's the floor of the City Chambers.'
He smiled. `I came on the tour last year.'
`Incredible,' the doctor said. Then to Rebus: 'I'm Dr Galloway.'
`Inspector Rebus. Thanks for getting here so quickly.'
The doctor ignored this. 'You're a friend of Dr Aitken's, aren't you?'
Ah, Patience Aitken. She'd be at home just now, feet tucked under her, a cat and an improving book on her lap, boring classical music in the background. Rebus nodded.
'I used to share a surgery with her,' Dr Galloway explained.
They were in the close proper now, a narrow and fairly steep roadway between stone buildings. A rough drainage channel ran down one side of the road. Passages led off to dark alcoves, one of which, according to the constable, housed a bakery, its ovens intact. The constable was beginning to get on

Rebus's nerves.





The pathologist stepped into the chamber and shook Rebus's hand. 'The hidden city, quite a revelation.'
His companion, a woman, stepped forward to join them, 'Have the two of you met?'
Dr Curt sounded like the host at a luncheon party. 'Inspector Rebus, this is Ms Rattray from the Procurator Fiscal's office.'
'Caroline Rattray.'
She shook Rebus's hand. She was tall, as tall as either man, with long dark hair tied at the back.
`Caroline and I,' Curt was saying, 'were enjoying supper after the ballet when the call came. So I thought I'd drag her along, kill two birds with one stone so to speak.'
Curt exhaled fumes of good food and good wine. Both he and the lawyer were dressed for an evening out, and already some white plaster-dust had smudged Caroline Rattray's black jacket. As Rebus moved to brush off the dust, she caught her first sight of the body, and looked away quickly, Rebus didn't blame her, but Curt was advancing on tie figure as though towards another guest at the party. He paused to put on polythene overshoes.
'I always carry some in my car,' he explained. 'You never know when they'll be needed.'
He got close to the body and examined the head first, before looking back towards Rebus
'Dr Galloway had a look, has he?'
Rebus shook his head slowly. He knew what was coming. He'd seen Curt examine headless bodies and mangled bodies and bodies that were little more than torsos or melted to the consistency of lard, and the pathologist always said the same thing.



`A six-pack?' echoed Curt.
Rebus stared at the hanging body. 'It's a punishment,` he said quietly. 'Only you're not supposed to die What's that on the floor?'
He was pointing to the dead man's feet, to the spot where they grazed the dark-stained ground.
'Looks like rats have been nibbling his toes,' said Curt.
'No, not that.'
There were shallow grooves in the earth, so wide they must have been made with a big toe. Four crud- capital letters were discernible.
'Is that Neno or Nemo?'
'Could even be Memo,' offered Dr Curt.
'Captain Nemo,' said the constable. 'He's the guy in 2,000 Leagues Beneath the Sea.'
'Jules Verne,' said Curt, nodding.
The constable shook his head. 'No, sir, Walt Disney,' he said.
2

On Sunday morning Rebus and Dr Patience Aitken decided to get away from it all by staying in bed. He nipped out early for croissants and papers from the local corner shop, and they are breakfast from a tray on top of the bedcovers, sharing sections of the newspapers, discarding more than they read.

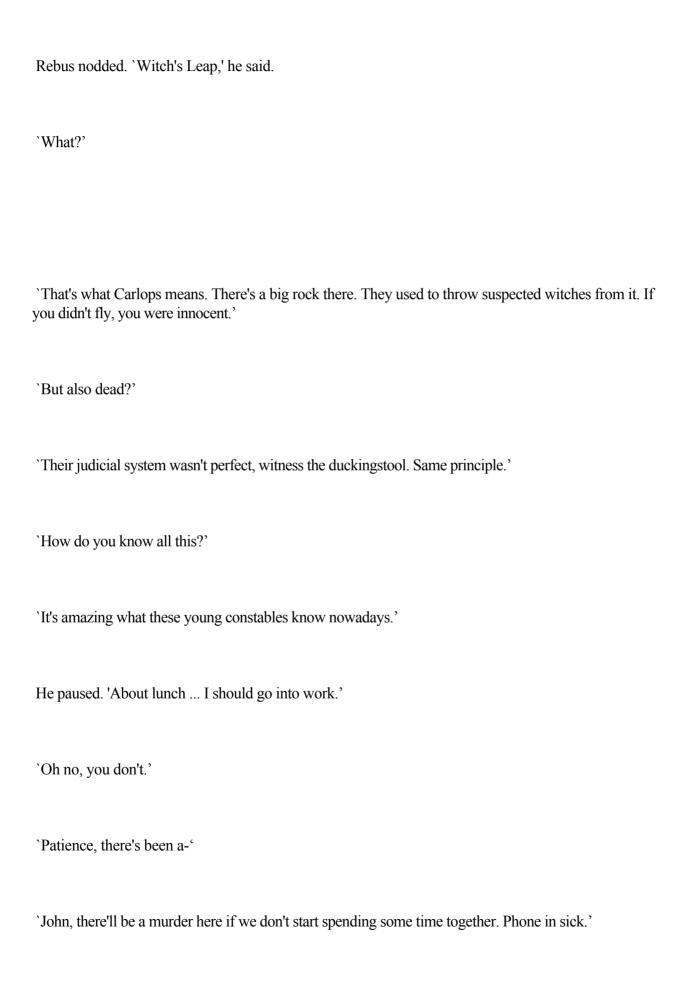
There was no mention of the previous night's grisly find in Mary King's Close. The news had seeped out too late for publication. But Rebus knew there would be something about it on the local radio news, so he was quite content for once when Patience tuned the bedside radio to a classical station.

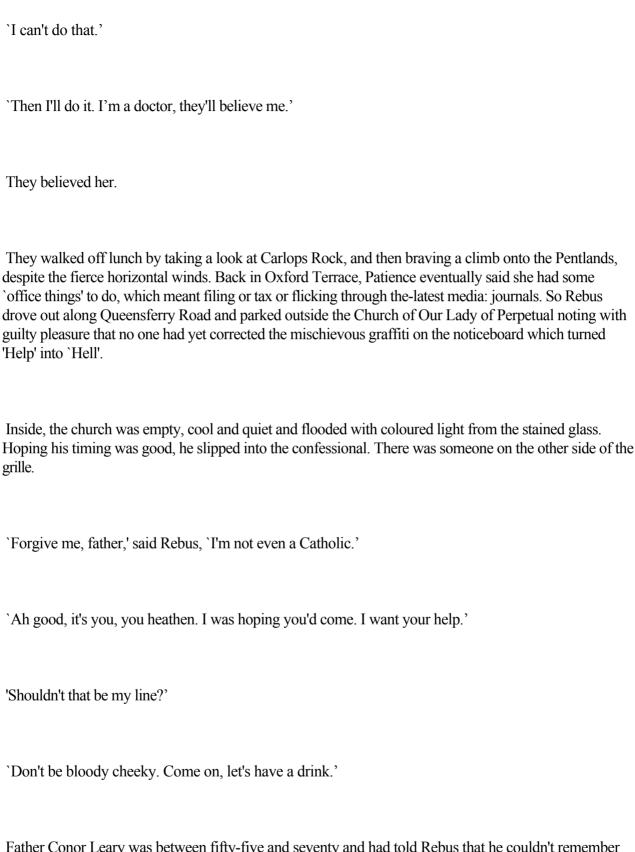
He should have come off his shift at midnight, but murder tended to disrupt the system of shifts. On a murder inquiry, you stopped working when you reasonably could. Rebus had hung around till two in the morning, consulting with the night shift about the corpse in Mary King's Close. He'd contacted his Chief Inspector and Chief Super, and kept in touch with Fettes HQ, where the forensic stuff had gone. DI Flower kept telling him to go home. Finally he'd taken tile advice.

The real problem with back shifts was that Rebus couldn't sleep well after them anyway. He'd managed four hours since arriving home, and four hours would suffice. But there was a warm pleasure in slipping into bed as dawn neared, curling against the body already asleep there. And even more pleasure in pushing the cat off the bed as you did so.

Before retiring, he'd swallowed four measures of whisky He told himself it was purely medicinal, but rinsed the put it away, hoping Patience wouldn't notice. She' complained often of his drinking, among other things.

'We're eating out,' she said now.
`When?'
'Lunch today.'
`Where?'
`That place out at Carlops.'





Father Conor Leary was between fifty-five and seventy and had told Rebus that he couldn't remember which he was nearer. He was a bulky barrelling figure with thick silver hair which sprouted not only from his head but also from ears, nose and the back of his neck. In civvies, Rebus guessed he would pass for a retired dockworker or skilled labourer of some kind who had also been handy as a boxer, and Father Leary had photos and trophies to prove that this last was incontrovertible truth. He often jabbed the air to make a point, finishing with an uppercut to show that there could be no comeback. In conversation between the two men, Rebus had often wished for a referee.

But today Father Leary sat comfortably and sedately enough in the deckchair in his garden. It was a beautiful early evening, warm and clear with the trace of a cool seaborne breeze.
'A great day to go hot-air ballooning,' said Father Leary, taking a swig from his glass of Guinness. 'Or bungee jumping. I believe they've set up something of the sort on The Meadows, just for the duration of the Festival. Man, I'd like to try that.'
Rebus blinked but said nothing. His Guinness was cold enough to double as dental anaesthetic. He shifted in his own deckchair, which was by far the older of the two. Before sitting, he'd noticed how threadbare the canvas washow how it had been rubbed away where It met the horizontal wooden spars. He hoped it would hold.
`Do you like my garden?'
Rebus looked at the bright blooms, the trim grass. `I don't know much about gardens,' he admitted.
'Me neither. It's not a sin. But there's an old chap I know who does know about them, and he looks after this one for a few bob.'
He raised his glass towards his lips. 'So how are you keeping?'
'I'm fine.'
`And Dr Aitken?'
`She's fine.'
`And the two of you are still ?'







'A reversal of roles, eh? Well, I suppose that's what I had in mind all along.'
He sat further forward in the deckchair, the material stretching and sounding a sharp note of complaint. 'Here it is then. You know Pilmuir?'
`Don't be daft.'
'Yes, stupid question. And Pilmuir's Garibaldi Estate?'
'The Gar-B, it's the roughest scheme in the city, maybe in the country.'
`There are good people there, but you're right. That's why the Church sent an outreach worker.'
`And now he's in trouble?'
`Maybe.'
Father Leary finished his drink. 'It was my idea. There's a community hall on the estate, only it had been locked up for months. I thought we could reopen it as a youth club.'
`For Catholics?'
'For both faiths.'
He sat back in his chair. 'Even for the faithless. The Garibaldi is predominantly Protestant, but there are Catholics there too. We got agreement, and set up some funds. I knew we needed someone special, someone really dynamic in charge.'

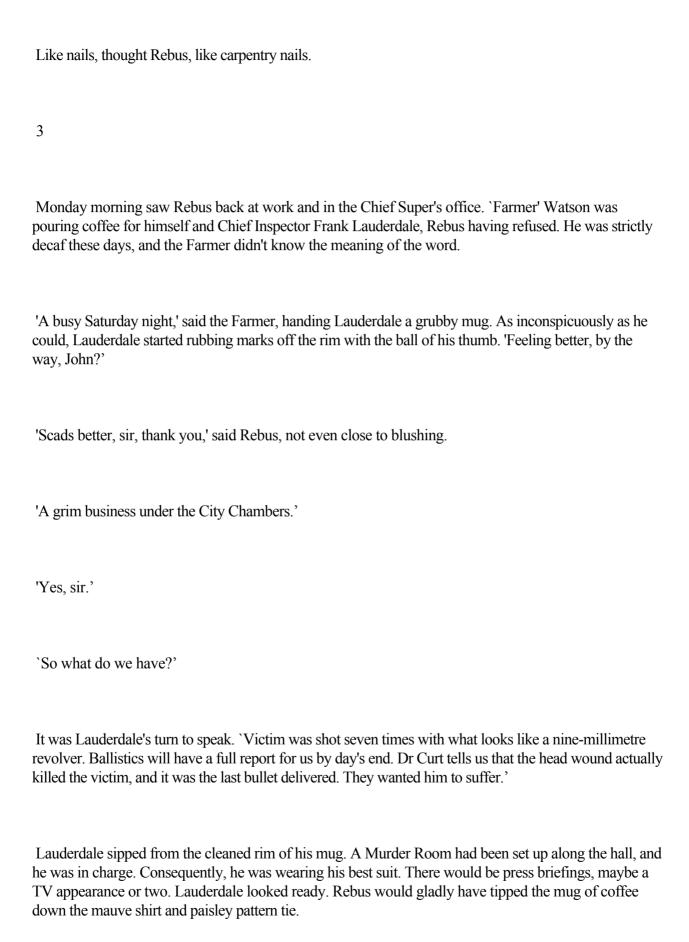
He punched the air. 'Someone who might just draw the two sides together.'
Mission impossible, thought Rebus. This scheme will self-destruct in ten seconds.
Not least of the Gar-B's problems was the sectarian divide or the lack of one, depending on how you looked at it. Protestants and Catholics lived in the same streets, same tower blocks. Mostly, they lived in relative harmony and shared poverty. But, there being little to do on the estate, the youth of the place tended to organise into opposing gangs and wage warfare. Every year there was at least one pitched battle for police to contend with, usually in July, usually around the Protestant holy day of the 12th.
'So you brought in the SAS?' Rebus suggested. Father Leary was slow to get the joke.
'Not at all,' he said, 'just a young man, a very ordinary young man but with inner strength.'
His fist cut the air. 'Spiritual strength. And for a while it looked like a disaster. Nobody came to the club, the windows were smashed as soon as we'd replaced them, the graffiti got worse and more personal. But then he started to break through. That seemed the miracle. Attendance at the club increased, and both sides were joining.'
'So what's gone wrong?'
Father Leary loosened his shoulders. 'It just wasn't quite right. I thought there'd be sports, maybe a football team or something. We bought the strips and applied to join a local league. But the lads weren't interested. All they wanted to do was hang around the hall itself. And the balance isn't there either, the Catholics have stopped joining. Most of them have even stopped attending.'
He looked at Rebus. 'That's not just sour grapes, you understand.'
Rebus nodded. 'The Prod gangs have annnexed it?'



funding, but the money to keep it going comes from somewhere nevertheless.'
'Where from?'
'I don't know.'
'How much?'
`It doesn't take much.'
'So what do you want me to do?'
The question Rebus had been trying not to ask.
Father Leery gave his weary smile again. 'To be honest, I don't know. Perhaps I just needed to tell someone.'
'Don't give me that. You want me to go out there.'
'Not if you don't want to.'
It was Rebus's turn to smile. 'I've been in safer places.'
'And a few worse ones too'

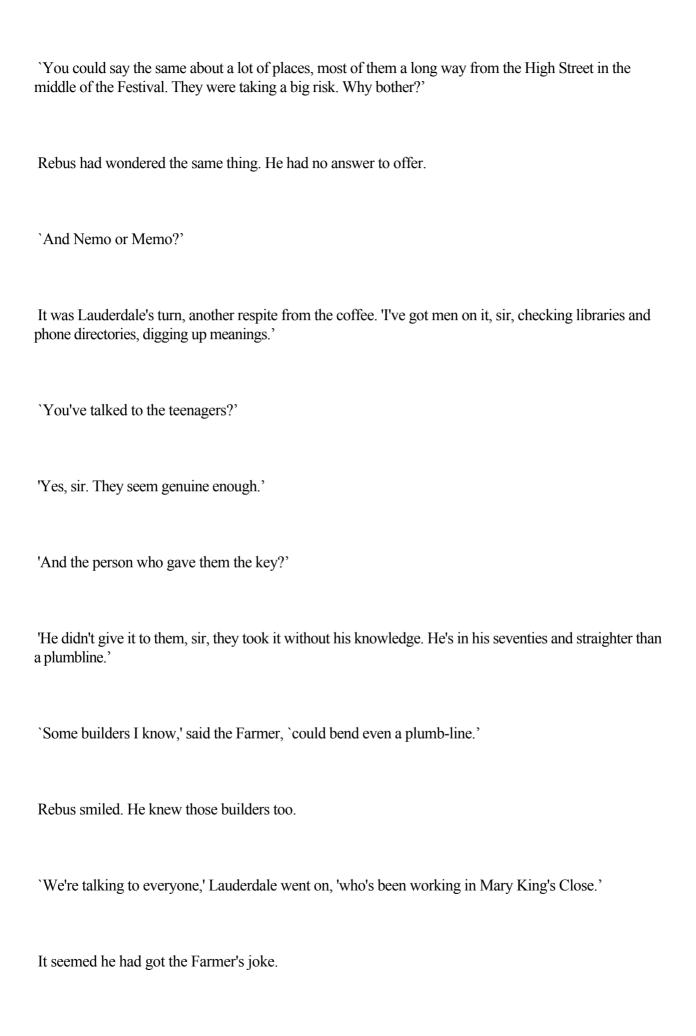
Father Leery shook his head. `He's lay, John. I can't order him to do anything. We've cut the club's





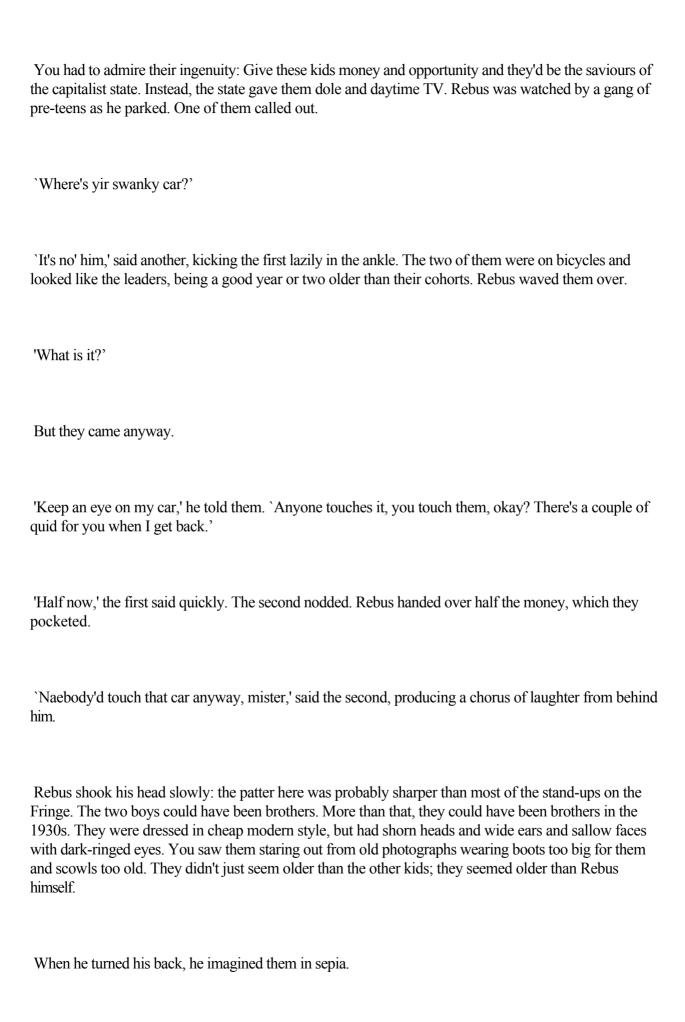






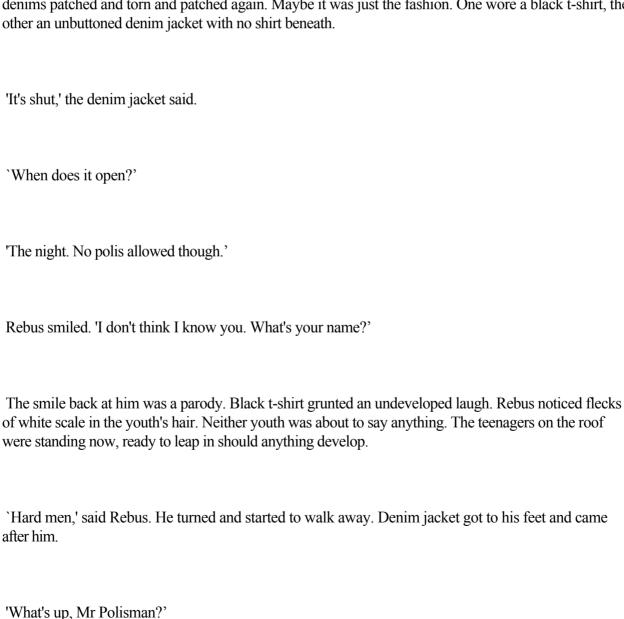
All right, John,' said the Farmer. 'You were in the army, what about the tattoo'?'
Yes, the tattoo. Rebus had known the conclusion everyone would jump to. From the case notes, they'd spent most of Sunday jumping to it. The Farmer was examining a photograph. It had been taken during Sunday's postmortem examination. The SOCOs on Saturday night had taken photos too, but those hadn't come out nearly as clearly.
The photo showed a tattoo on the victim's right forearm. It was a rough, self-inflicted affair, the kind you sometimes saw on teenagers, usually on the backs of hands. A needle and some blue ink, that's all you needed; that and a measure of luck that the thing wouldn't become infected. Those were all the victim had needed to prick the letters SaS into his skin.
`It's not the Special Air Service,' said Rebus.
'No?'
Rebus shook his head. 'For all sorts of reasons. You'd use a capital A for a start. More likely, if you wanted an SAS tattoo you'd go far the crest, the knife and wings and "Who dares wins", something like that.'
'Unless you didn't know anything about the regiment,' offered Lauderdale.
`Then why sport a tattoo?'
`Do we have any ideas?' asked the Farmer.
`We're checking,' said Lauderdale.





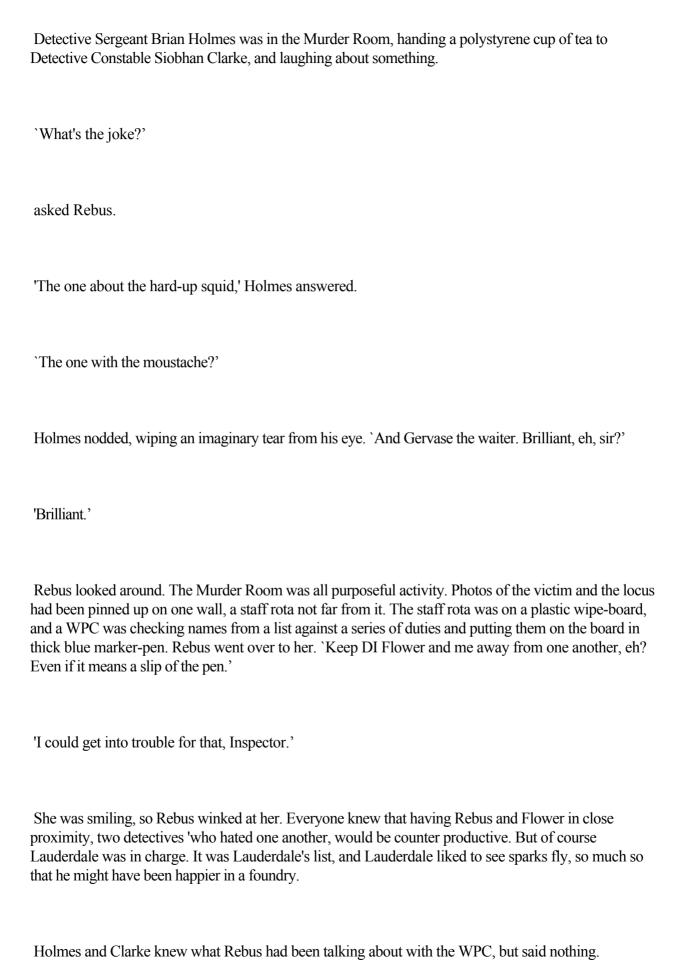
He wandered towards the community centre. He'd to pass dome lock-up garages and one of the three twelve-storey blocks of flats. The community centre itself was no more than a hall, small and tired looking with boarded windows and the usual indecipherable graffiti. Surrounded by concrete, it had a low flat roof, asphalt black, on which lay four teenagers smoking cigarettes. Their chests were naked, their t-shirts tied around their waists. There was so much broken glass up there, they could have doubled as fakirs in a magic show. One of them had a pile of sheets of paper, and was folding them into paper planes which he released from the roof. Judging by the number of planes littering the grass, it had been a busy morning at the control tower.

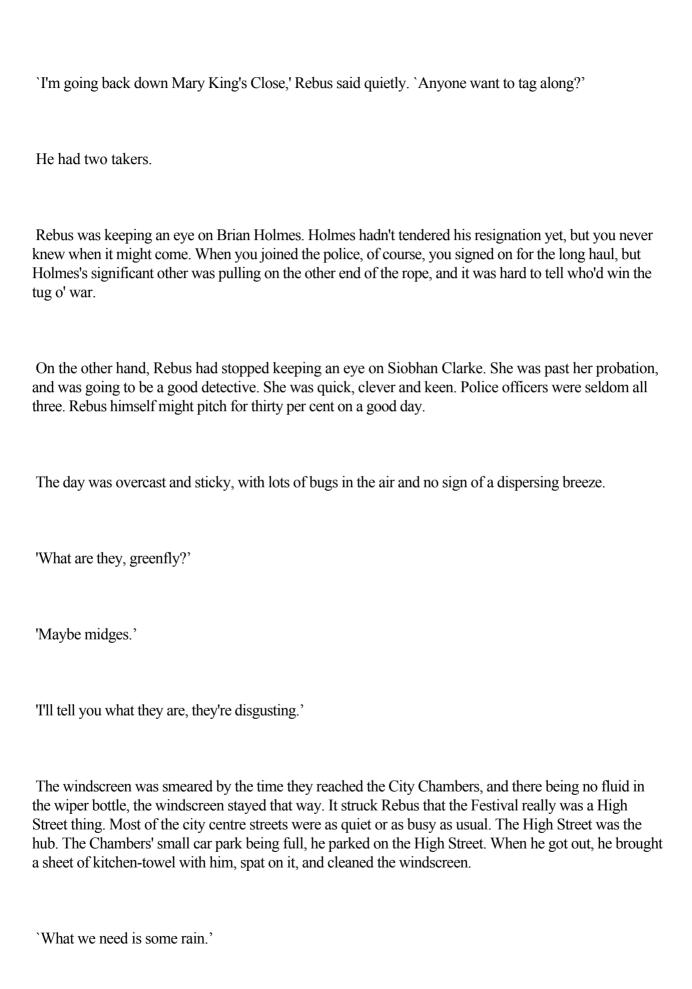
Paint had peeled in long strips from the centre's doors, and one layer of the plywood beneath had been punctured by a foot or a fist. But the doors were locked fast by means of not one but two padlocks. Two more youths sat on the ground, backs against the doors, legs stretched in front of them and crossed at the ankles, for all the world like security guards on a break. Their trainers were in bad repair, their denims patched and torn and patched again. Maybe it was just the fashion. One wore a black t-shirt, the other an unbuttoned denim jacket with no shirt beneath.



Rebus didn't bother looking at the youth, but he stopped walking. `Why should anything be up?'
One of the paper planes, aimed or not, hit him on the leg. He picked it up. On the roof, they were laughing quietly.
'Why should anything be up?' he repeated.
`Behave. You're not our usual plod.'
'A change is as good as a rest.'
`Arrest? What for?'
Rebus smiled again. He turned to the youth. The face was just leaving acne behind it, and would be good looking for a few more years before it started to decline. Poor diet and alcohol would be its undoing if drugs or fights weren't. The hair was fair and curly, like a child's hair, but not thick. There was a quick intelligence to the eyes, but the eyes themselves were narrow. The intelligence would be narrow too, focusing only on the main chance, the next deal. There was quick anger in those eyes too, and something further back that Rebus didn't like to think about.
'With an act like yours,' he said, 'you should be on the Fringe.'
'I fuckn hate the Festival.'
'Join the club. What's your name, son?'
'You like names, don't you?'

'I can find out.'
The youth slipped his hands into his tight jeans pockets. 'You don't want to.'
'No?'
A slow shake of the head. 'Believe me, you really don't want to.'
The youth turned, heading back to his friends. 'Or next time,' he said, 'your car might not be there at all.'
Sure enough, as Rebus approached he saw that his car was sinking into the ground. It looked like maybe it was taking cover. But it was only the tyres. They'd been generous; they'd only slashed two of them. He looked around him. There was no sign of the pre-teen gang, though they might be watching from the safe distance of a tower-block window.
He leaned against the car and unfolded the paper plane. It was the flyer for a Fringe show, and a blurb on the back explains that the theatre group in question were uprooting from the city centre in order to play the Garibaldi Community Centre for one night.
'You know not what you do,' Rebus said to himself.
Some young mothers were crossing the football pitch. A crying baby was being shaken on its buggy springs. A toddler was being dragged screaming by the arm, his legs frozen in protest so that they scraped the ground. Both baby and toddler were being brought back into the Gar-b. But not without a fight.
Rebus didn't blame them for resisting.





'Don't say that.'
A transit van and a flat-back trailer were parked outside the entrance to Mary King's Close, evidence that the builders were back at work. The butcher's shop would still be taped off, but that didn't stop the renovations.
'Inspector Rebus?'
An old man had been waiting for them. He was tall fit looking and wore an open cream-coloured raincoat despite the day's heat. His hair had turned not grey silver but a kind of custard yellow, and he wore half-moon glasses most of the way down his nose, as though he needed them only to check the cracks in the pavement.
'Mr Blair-Fish?'
Rebus shook the brittle hand.
'I'd like to apologise again. My great-nephew can be such a 'No need to apologise, sir. Your great-nephew did us a favour. If he hadn't gone down there with those two lassies, we wouldn't have found the body so fast as we did. The quicker the better in a murder investigation.'
Blair-Fish inspected his oft-repaired shoes, then accepted this with a slow nod. 'Still, it's an embarrassment.'
'Not to us, sir.'
'No, I suppose not.'
'Now, if you'll lead the way ?'

Mr Blair-Fish led the way.

He took them in through the door and down the flights of stairs, out of daylight and into a world of low-wattage bulbs beyond which lay the halogen glare of the builders. It was like looking at a stage-set. The workers moved with the studied precision of actors. You could charge a couple of quid a time and get an audience, if not a Fringe First Award. The gaffer knew police when he saw their, and nodded a greeting. Otherwise, nobody paid much attention; except for the occasional sideways and appraising glance towards Siobhan Clarke. Builders were builders, below ground as above.

Blair-Fish was providing a running commentary. Rebus reckoned he'd been the guide when the constable had come on the tour. Rebus heard about how the close had been a thriving thoroughfare prior to the plague, only one of many such plagues to hit Edinburgh. When the denizens moved back, they swore the close was haunted by the spirits of those who had perished there. They all moved out again and the - street fell into disuse. Then came a fire, leaving only the first few storeys untouched. (Edinburgh tenements back then could rise to a precarious twelve storeys or more.) After which, the city merely laid slabs across what remained and built again, burying Mary King's Close.

'The old town was a narrow place, you must remember, built along a ridge or, if you enjoy legend, on the back of a buried serpent. Long and narrow. Everyone was squeezed together, rich and poor living cheek by jowl. In a tenement like this you'd have your paupers at the top, your gentry in the middle floors, and your artisans and commercial people at street level.'

'So what happened?' asked Holmes, genuinely interested.

'The gentry got fed up,' said Blair-Fish. 'When the New Town was built on the other side of Nor' Loch, they were quick to move. With the gentry gone, the old town became dilapidated, and stayed that way for a long time.'

He pointed down some steps into an alcove. 'That was the baker's. See those flat stones? That's where the oven was. If you touch them, they're still warmer than the stones around them.'

Siobhan Clarke had to test-this. She came back shrugging. Rebus was glad he'd brought Holmes and Clarke with him. They kept Blair-Fish busy while he could keep a surreptitious eye on the builders. This had been his plan all along: to appear to be inspecting Mary King's Close, while really inspecting the builders. They didn't look nervous; well, no more nervous than you would expect. They kept their eyes

away from the butcher's shop, and whistled quietly as they worked. They did not seem inclined to discuss the murder. Someone was up a ladder dismantling a run of pipes. Someone else was mending brickwork at the top of a scaffold.
Further into the tour, away from the builders, Blair-Fish took Siobhan Clarke aside to show her where a child had been bricked up in a chimney, a common complaint among eighteenth-century chimney sweeps.

'The Farmer asked a good question,' Rebus confided, to Holmes. 'He said, why would you bring anyone down here Think about it. It shows you must be local. Only locals know about Mary King's Close, and even then only a select few.'

It was true, the public tour of the close was not common knowledge, and tours themselves were by no means frequent.

'They'd have to have been down here themselves, or know someone who had. If not, they'd more likely get lost than find the butcher's.'

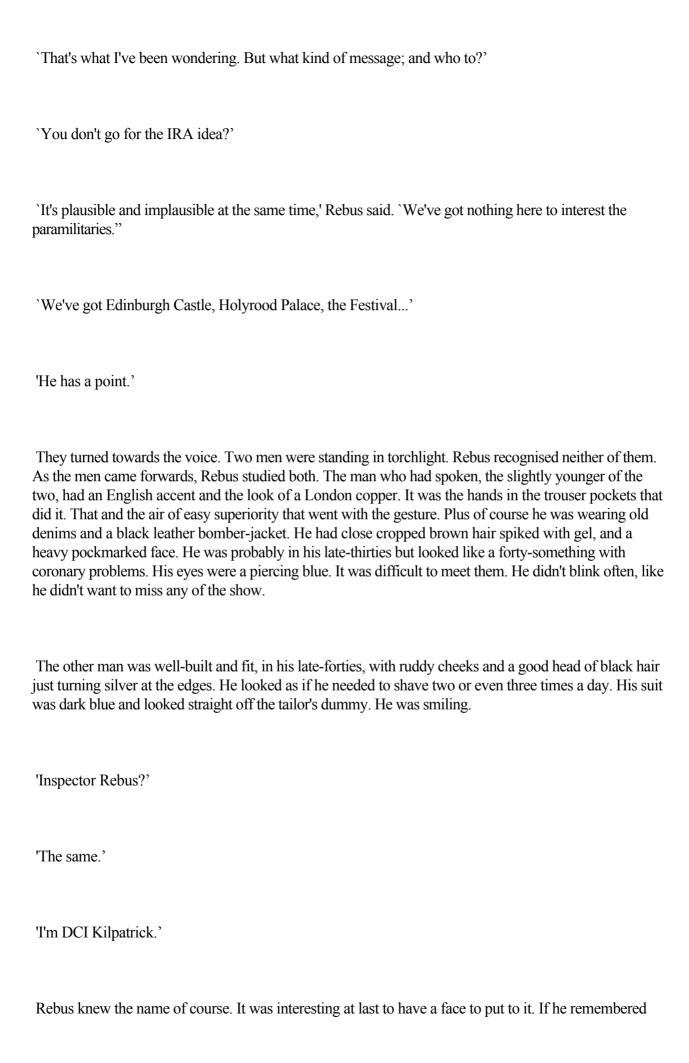
Holmes nodded. 'A shame there's no record of the tour parties.'

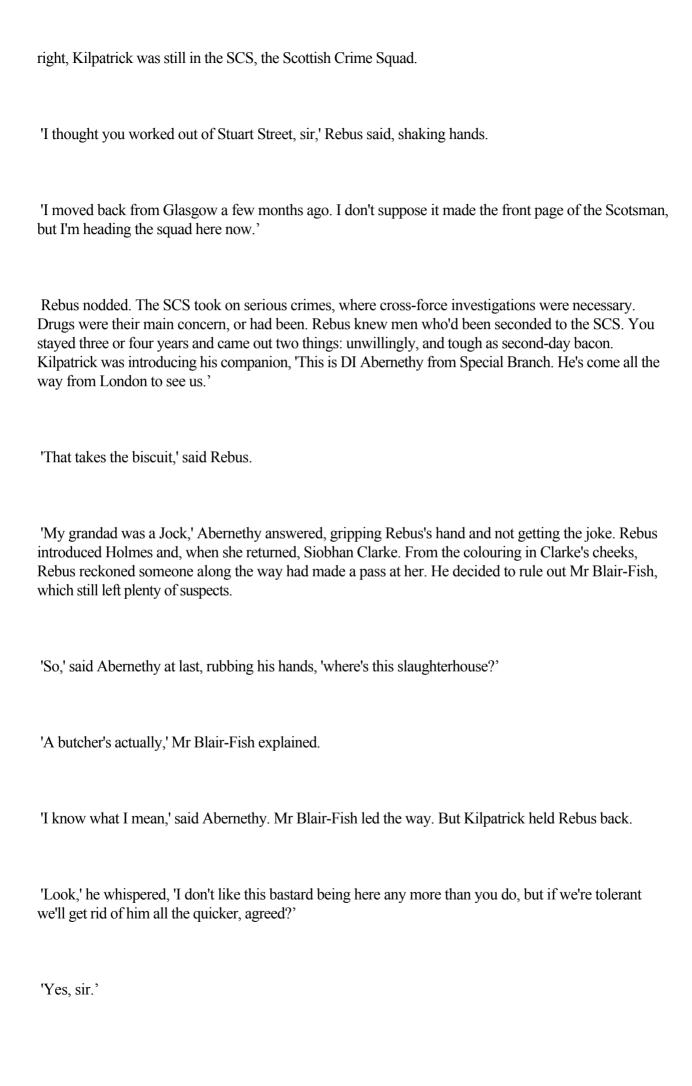
This had been checked, the tours were informal, parties of a dozen or more at a time. There was no written record. 'Could be they knew about the building work and reckoned the body would be down here for weeks.'

'Or maybe,' said Rebus, 'the building work is the reason they were down here in the first place. Someone might have tipped them off. We're checking everyone.'

'Is that why we're here just now? Giving the crew a once-over?'

Rebus nodded, and Holmes nodded back. Then he had an idea. 'Maybe it was a way of sending a message.'





Kilpatrick's was a Glaswegian accent, managing to be deeply nasal even when reduced to a whisper, and managing, too, to be full of irony and a belief that Glasgow was the centre of the universe. Usually, Glaswegians somehow added to all this a ubiquitous chip on their shoulder, but Kilpatrick didn't seem the type.
'So no more bloody cracks about biscuits.'
'Understood, sir.'
Kilpatrick waited a moment. 'It was you who noticed the paramilitary element, wasn't it?'
Rebus nodded. 'Good work.'
'Thank you, sir.'
Yes, and Glaswegians could be patronising bastards, too.
When they rejoined the group, Holmes gave Rebus a questioning look, to which Rebus replied with a shrug. At least the shrug was honest.
'So they strung him up here,' Abernethy was saying. He looked around at the setting. 'Bit melodramatic, eh? Not the IRA's style at all. Give them a lock-up or a warehouse, "something like that. But someone who likes a bit of drama set this up.'
Rebus was impressed. It was another possible reason for the choice of venue.
'Bang-bang,' Abernethy continued, 'then back upstairs to melt into the crowd, maybe take in a' late-night revue before toddling home.'

Clarke interrupted. 'You think there's some connection with the Festival?'
Abernethy studied her openly, causing Brian Holmes to straighten up. Not for the first time, Rebus wondered about Clarke and Holmes.
'Why not?'
Abernethy said. 'It's every bit as feasible as anything else I've heard.'
'But it was a six-pack.' Rebus felt obliged to defend his corner.
'No,' Abernethy corrected, 'a seven-pack. And that's not paramilitary style at all. A waste of bullets for a start.'
He looked to Kilpatrick. 'Could be a drug thing. Gangs like a bit of melodrama, it makes them look like they're in a film. Plus they do like to send messages to each other. Loud messages.'
Kilpatrick nodded. 'We're considering it.'
'My money'd still be on terrorists,' Rebus added. 'A gun like that-'
'Dealers use guns, too, inspector. They like guns. Big ones to make a big loud noise. I'll tell you something, I'd hate to have been down here. The report from a nine-millimetre in an enclosed space like this. It could blow out your eardrums.'
'A silencer,' Siobhan Clarke offered. It wasn't her day. Abernethy just gave her a look, so Rebus provided the explanation

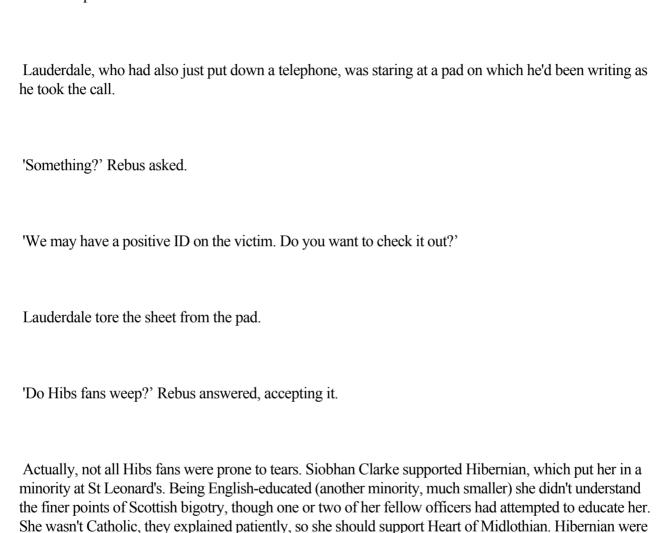
'Revolvers don't take silencers.'
Abernethy pointed to Rebus, but his eyes were on Clarke's. 'Listen to your Inspector, darling, you might learn something.'
Rebus looked around the room. There were six people there, four of whom would gladly punch another's lights out.
He didn't think Mr Blair-Fish would enter the fray.
Abernethy meantime had sunk to his knees, rubbing his fingers over the floor, over ancient dirt and husks.
'The SOCOs took off the top inch of earth,' Rebus said, but Abernethy wasn't listening. Bags and bags of the stuff had been taken to the sixth floor of Fettes HQ to be sieved and analysed and God knew what else by the forensics lab.
It occurred to Rebus that all the group could now see of Abernethy was a fat arse and brilliant white Reeboks. Abernethy turned his face towards them and smiled. Then he got up, brushing his palms together.
'Was the deceased a drug user?'
'No signs.'
'Only I was thinking, SaS, could be Smack and Speed.'
Again, Rebus was impressed, thoroughly despite himself. Dust had settled in the gel of Abernethy's hair,

small enough motes of comfort.
'Could be Scott and Sheena,' offered Rebus. In other words: could be anything. Abernethy just shrugged. He'd been giving them a display, and now the show was over.
'I think I've seen enough,' he said. Kilpatrick nodded with relief. It must be hard, Rebus reflected, being a top cop in your field, a man with a rep, sent to act as tour guide for a junior officer and a Sassenach at that.
Galling, that was the word.
Abernethy was speaking again. 'Might as well drop in on the Murder Room while I'm here.'
'Why not?' said Rebus coldly.
'No reason I can think of,' replied Abernethy, all sweetness and bite.
'And what you've got doesn't make much sense.'
5
St Leonard's police station, headquarters of the city's B Division, boasted a semi-permanent Murder Room. The present inquiry looked like it had been going on forever. Abernethy seemed to favour the scene. He browsed among the computer screens, telephones, wall charts and photographs. Kilpatrick touched Rebus's arm.
'Keep an eye on him, will you? I'll just go say hello to your Chief Super while I'm here.'
'Right, sir.'

Chief Inspector Lauderdale watched him leave. 'So that's Kilpatrick of the Crime Squad, eh? Funny, he looks almost mortal.'
It was true that Kilpatrick's reputation - a hard one to live up to - preceded him. He'd had spectacular successes in Glasgow, and some decidedly public failures too. Huge quantities of drugs had been seized, but a few terrorist suspects had managed to slip away.
'At least he looks human,' Lauderdale went on, 'which is more than can be said for our cockney friend.'
Abernethy couldn't have heard this - he was out of earshot - but he looked up suddenly towards them and grinned. Lauderdale went to take a phone call, and the Special Branch man sauntered back towards Rebus, hands stuffed into his jacket pockets.
'It's a good operation this, but there's not much to go on, is there?'
'Not much.'
'Not yet.'
'You worked with Scotland Yard on a case, didn't you?'
'That's right.'
'With George Flight?'
'Right again.'



There was no painless way of stopping Abernethy from leaving, so Rebus didn't even try. But he didn't think Kilpatrick would be happy. He picked up one of the phones. What did Abernethy mean about it being Rebus's problem? If there was a terrorist connection, it'd be out of CID's hands. It would become Special Branch's domain, MI5's domain. So what did he mean? He gave Kilpatrick the message, but Kilpatrick didn't seem bothered after all. There was relaxation in his voice, the sort that came with a large whisky. The Farmer had stopped drinking for a while, but was back off the wagon again. Rebus wouldn't mind a drop himself...



'It's the same in England,' they'd tell her. 'Wherever you've got Catholics and Protestants in the same place.'

the Catholic team. Look at their name, look at their green strip. They were Edinburgh's version of

Glasgow Celtic, just as Hearts were like Glasgow Rangers.

Manchester had United (Catholic) and City (Protestant), Liverpool had Liverpool (Catholic) and Everton (Protestant). It only got complicated in London. London even had Jewish teams.

Siobhan Clarke just smiled, shaking her head. It was no use arguing, which didn't stop her trying. They just kept joking with her, teasing her, trying to convert her. It was light-hearted, but she couldn't always tell how lighthearted. The Scots tended to crack jokes with a straight face and be deadly serious when they smiled. When some officers at St Leonard's found out her birthday was coming, she found herself unwrapping half a dozen Hearts scarves. They all went to a charity shop.

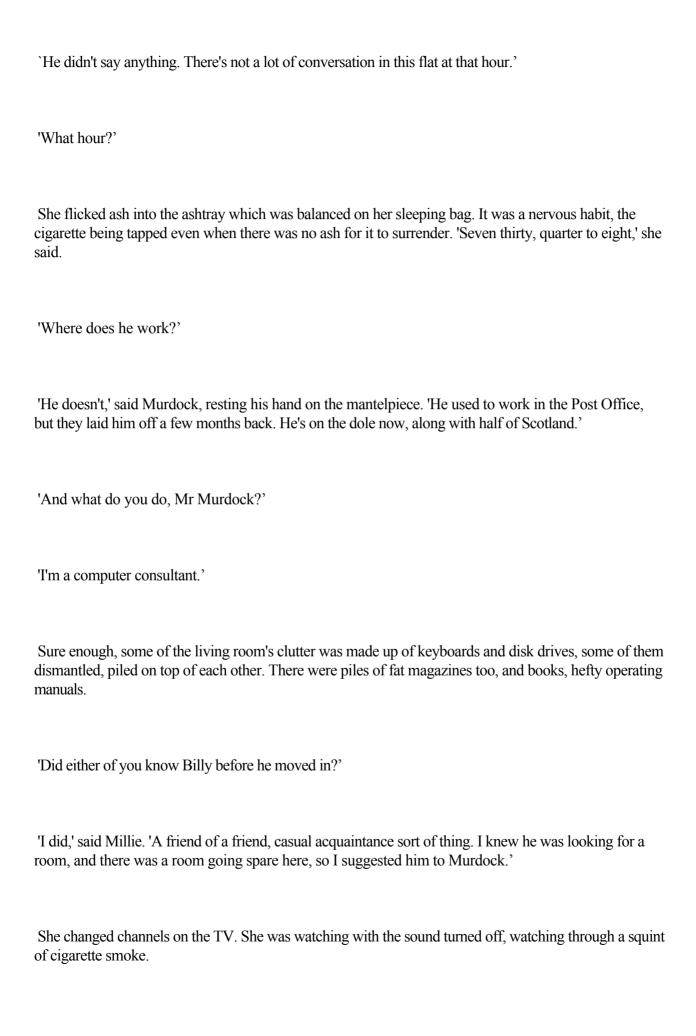
She'd seen the darker side of football loyalty, too. The collection tins at certain games. Depending on where you were standing, you'd be asked to donate to either one cause or the other. Usually it was for 'families' or 'victims' or 'prisoners' aid', but everyone who gave knew they might be perpetuating the violence in Northern Ireland. Fearfully, most gave. One pound sterling towards the price of a gun.

She'd come across the same thing on Saturday when, with a couple of friends, she'd found herself standing at the Hearts end of the ground. The tin had come round, and she'd ignored it. Her friends were quiet after that.
'We should be doing something about it,' she complained to Rebus in his car. 'Such as?'
'Get an undercover team in there, arrest whoever's behind it.'
'Behave.'
'Well why not?'
'Because it wouldn't solve anything and there'd be no charge we could make stick other than something paltry like not having a licence. Besides, if you ask me most of that cash goes straight into the collector's pocket. It never reaches Northern Ireland.'
'But it's the principle of the thing.'

'Christ, listen to you.'

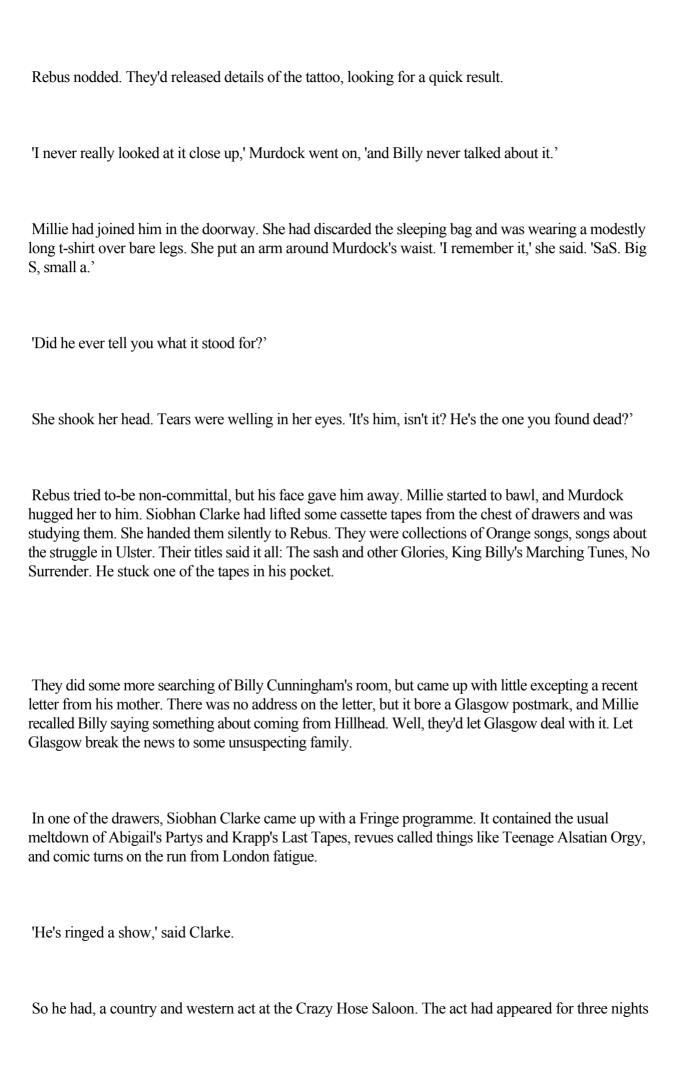






'Can we see Billy's room?'
'Why not?' said Murdock. He'd been glancing nervously towards Millie all the time she'd been talking. He seemed relieved to be in movement. He took them back into where the narrow entrance hall became a wider rectangle, off which were three doors. One was a cupboard, one the kitchen. Back along the narrow hall they'd passed the bathroom on one side and Murdock's bedroom on the other. Which left just this last door.
It led them into a very small, very tidy bedroom. The room itself would be no more than ten feet by eight, yet it managed to contain single bed, wardrobe, a chest of drawers and a writing desk and chair. A hi-fi unit, including speakers, sat atop the chest of drawers. The bed had been made, and there was nothing left lying around.
'You haven't tidied up, have you?'
Murdock shook his head. 'Billy was always tidying. You should see the kitchen.'
'Do you have a photograph of Billy?'
Rebus asked.
'I might have some from one of our parties. You want to look at them?'
'Just the best one will do.'
'I'll fetch it then.'
'Thank you.'







'How close?'
'Ninety, ninety-five.'
Lauderdale considered this. 'So should I say anything?'
'That's up to you, sir. A fingerprint team's on its way to the flat. We'll know soon enough one way or the other.'
One of the problems with the victim was that the last killing shot had blown away half his face, the bullet entering through the back of the neck and tearing up through the jaw. As Dr Curt had explained, they could do an ID covering up the bottom half of the face, allowing a friend or relative to see just the top half. But would that be enough? Before today's potential break, they'd been forced to consider dental work. The victim's teeth were the usual result of a Scottish childhood, eroded by sweets and shored up by dentistry. But as the forensic pathologist had said, the mouth was badly damaged, and what dental work remained was fairly routine. There was nothing unusual there for any dentist to spot definitively as his or her work.
Rebus arranged for the party photograph to be reprinted and sent to Glasgow with the relevant details. Then he went to Lauderdale's press conference.
Chief Inspector Lauderdale loved his duels with the media. But today he was more nervous than usual. Perhaps it was that he had a larger audience than he was used to, Chief Superintendent Watson and DCI Kilpatrick having emerged from somewhere to listen. Both sported faces too ruddy to be natural, whisky certainly the cause. While the journalists sat towards the front of the room, the police officers stood to the back. Kilpatrick saw Rebus and sidled over to him.
'You may have a positive ID?' he whispered.
'Maybe.'
'So is it drugs or the IRA?'

There was a wry smile on his face. He didn't really expect an answer, it was the whisky asking, that was all. But Rebus had an answer for him anyway.

'If it's anybody,' he said, 'it's not the IRA but the other lot.'

There were so many names for them he didn't even begin to list them: UDA, UVF, UFF, UR ... The U stood for Ulster in each case. They were proscribed organisations, and they were all Protestant. Kilpatrick rocked back a little on his heels. His face was full of questions, fighting their way to the surface past the burst blood vessels which cherried nose and cheeks. A drinker's face. Rebus had seen too many of them, including his own some nights in the bathroom mirror.

But Kilpatrick wasn't so far gone. He knew he was in no condition to ask questions, so he made his way back to the Farmer instead, where he spoke a few words. Farmer Watson glanced across to Rebus, then nodded to Kilpatrick Then they turned their attention back to the press briefing.

Rebus knew the reporters. They were old hands mostly, and knew what to expect from Chief Inspector Lauderdale. You might walk into a Lauderdale session sniffing and baying like a bloodhound, but you shuffled out like a sleepy faced pup. So they, stayed quiet mostly, and let him have his insubstantial say.

Except for Mairie Henderson. She was down at the front, asking questions the others weren't bothering to ask; weren't bothering for the simple reason that they knew the answer the Chief Inspector would give.

'No comment,' he told Mairie for about the twentieth time. She gave up and slumped in her chair. Someone else asked a question, so she looked around, surveying the room. Rebus jerked his chin in greeting. Mairie glared and stuck her tongue out at him. A few of the other journalists looked around in his direction. Rebus smiled out their inquisitive stares.

The briefing over, Mairie caught up with him in the corridor. She was carrying a legal notepad, her usual blue fineliner pen, and a recording walkman.

'Thanks for your help the other night,' she said.

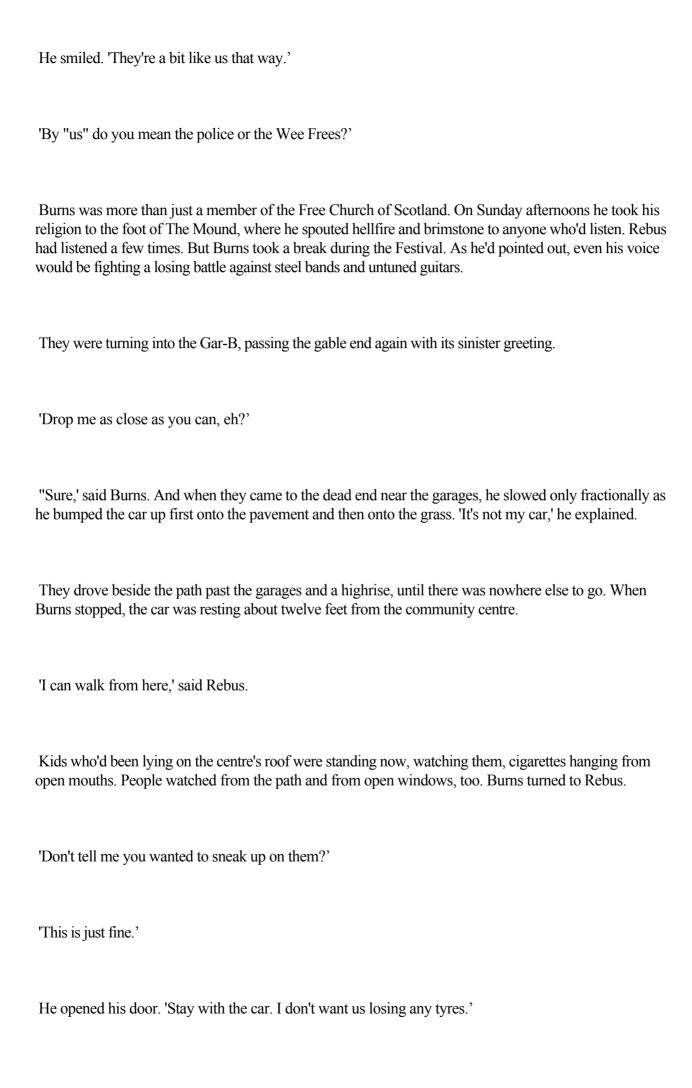
'No comment.'
She knew it was a waste of time getting angry at John Rebus, so exhaled noisily instead. 'I was first on the scene, I could have had a scoop.'
'Come to the pub with me and you can have as many scoops as you like.'
'That one's so weak it's got holes in its knees.'
She turned and walked off, Rebus watching her. He never liked to pass up the opportunity of looking at her legs.
6
Edinburgh City Mortuary was sited on the Cowgate, at the bottom of High School Wynd and facing St Ann's Community Centre and Blackfriars Street. The building was low-built red brick and pebbledash, purposely anonymous and tucked in an out of the way place. Steep sloping roads led up towards the High Street. For a long time now, the Cowgate had been a thoroughfare for traffic, not pedestrians. It was narrow and deep like a canyon, its pavements offering scant shelter from the taxis and cars rumbling past. The place was not for the faint-hearted. Society's underclass could be found there, when it wasn't yet time to shuffle back to the hostel.
But the street was undergoing redevelopment, including a court annexe. First they'd cleaned up the Grassmarket, and now the city fathers had the Cowgate in their sights.
Rebus waited outside the mortuary for a couple of minutes, until a woman poked her head out of the door.
'Inspector Rebus?'

'That's right.'
'He told me to tell you he's already gone to Bannerman's.'
'Thanks.'
Rebus headed off towards the pub.
Bannerman's had been just cellarage at one time, and hadn't been altered much since. Its vaulted rooms were unnervingly like those of the shops in Mary King's Close. Cellars like these formed connecting burrows beneath the Old Town, worming from the Lawnmarket down to the Canongate and beyond. The bar wasn't busy yet, and Curt was sitting by the window, his beer glass resting on a barrel which served as table. Somehow, he'd found one of the few comfortable chairs in the place. It looked like a minor nobleman's perch, with armrests and high back. Rebus bought a double whisky for himself, dragged over a stool, and sat down.
'Your health, John.'
'And yours.'
'So what can I do for you?'
Even in a pub, Rebus would swear he could smell soap and surgical alcohol wafting up from Curt's hands. He took a swallow of whisky. Curt frowned.
'Looks like I might be examining your liver sooner than I'd hoped.'
Rebus nodded towards the pack of cigarettes on the table. They were Curt's and they were untipped. 'Not if you keep smoking those.'



'You've lost me already.'
'Probably the version with the three-inch rather than four-inch barrel, which means a weight of thirty-two ounces.'
Rebus sipped his drink. There were whisky fumes in his nostrils now, blocking any other smells. 'Revolvers don't accept silencers.'
'Ah.' Curt nodded. 'I begin to see some light.'
'A confined space like that, shaped the way it was'
Rebus nodded past the bar to the room beyond. 'Much the same size and shape as this.'
'It would have been loud.'
'Bloody loud. Deafening, you might say.'
'Meaning what exactly?'
Rebus shrugged. 'I'm just wondering how professional all of this really was. I mean, on the surface, if you look at the style of execution, then yes, it was a pro job, no question. But then things start to niggle.'
Curt considered. 'So what now? Do we scour the city for recent purchasers of hearing-aids?'

Rebus smiled. 'It's a thought.'
'All I can tell you, John, is that those bullets did damage. Whether meant to or not, they were messy. Now, we've both come up against messy killers before. Usually the facts of the mess make it easier to find them. But this time there doesn't seem to be much evidence left lying around, apart from the bullets.
'I know.'
Curt slapped his hand on the barrel. 'Tell you what, I've got a suggestion.'
'What is it?'
He leaned forward, as if to impart a secret. 'Let me give you Caroline Rattray's phone number.'
'Bugger off,' said Rebus.
That evening, a marked patrol car picked him up from Patience's Oxford Terrace flat. The driver was a Detective Constable called Robert Burns, and Burns was doing Rebus a favour.
'I appreciate it,' said Rebus.
Though Burns was attached to C Division in the west end, he'd been born and raised in Pilmuir, and stil had friends and enemies there. He was a known quantity in the Gar-B, which was what mattered to Rebus.
'I was born in one of the pre-fabs,' Burns explained. 'Before they levelled them to make way for the high-rises. The high-rises were supposed to more "civilised", if you can believe that. Bloody architects and town planners. You never find one admitting he made a mistake, do you?'



Rebus walked towards the community centre's wide open doors. The teenagers on the roof watched him with practised hostility. There were paper planes lying all around, some of them made airborne again temporarily by a gust of wind. As Rebus walked into the building, he heard grunting noises above him. His rooftop audience were pretending to be pigs.

There was no preliminary chamber, just the hall itself. At one end stood a high basketball hoop. Some teenagers were in a ruck around the grounded ball, feet scraping at ankles, hands pulling at arms and hair. So much for noncontact sports. On a makeshift stage sat a ghetto blaster, blaring out the fashion in heavy metal. Rebus didn't reckon he'd score many points by announcing that he'd been in at the birth. Most of these kids had been born after Anarchy in the UK, never mind Communication Breakdown.

There was a mix of ages, and it was impossible to pick out Peter Cave. He could be nodding his head to the distorted electric guitar. He could be smoking by the wall. Or in with the basketball brigade. But no, he was coming towards Rebus from the other direction, from a tight group which included black t-shirt from Rebus's first visit.

'Can I help?'

Father Leary had said he was in his mid-twenties, but he could pass for, late-teens. The clothes helped and he wore them well. Rebus had seen church people before when they wore denim. They usually looked as if they'd be more comfortable in something less comfortable. But Cave, in faded denim jeans and denim shirt, with half a dozen thin leather and metal bracelets around his wrists, he looked all right.

'Not many girls,' Rebus stated, playing for a little more time.

Peter Cave looked around. 'Not just now. Usually there are more than this, but on a nice night...'

It was a nice night. He'd left Patience drinking cold rose wine in the garden. He had left her reluctantly. He got no initial bad feelings from Cave. The young man was fresh faced and clear-eyed and looked level headed too. His hair was long but by no means untidy, and his face was square and honest with a deep cleft in the chin.

'I'm sorry,' Cave said, 'I'm Peter Cave. I run the youth club.'
His hand shot out, bracelets sliding down his wrist. Rebus took the hand and smiled. Cave wanted to know who he was, a not unreasonable request.
'Detective Inspector Rebus.'
Cave nodded. 'Davey said a policeman had been round earlier. I thought probably he meant uniformed. What's the trouble, Inspector?'
'No trouble, Mr Cave.'
A circle of frowning onlookers had formed itself around the two of them. Rebus wasn't worried, not yet.
'Call me Peter.'
'Mr Cave,' Rebus licked his lips, 'how are things going here?'
"What do you mean?"
'A simple question, sir. Only, crime in Pilmuir hasn't exactly dropped since you started this place up.'
Cave bristled at that. 'There haven't been any gang fights.'
Rebus accepted this. 'But housebreaking, assaults there are still syringes in the playpark and aerosols lying'

'Aerosols to you too.' Rebus turned to see who had entered. It was the boy with the naked chest and denim jacket.
'Hello, Davey,' said Rebus. The ring had broken long enough to let denim jacket through.
The youth pointed a finger. 'I thought I said you didn't want to know my name?'
'I can't help it if people tell me things, Davey.'
'Davey Soutar,' Burns added. He was standing in the doorway, arms folded, looking like he was enjoying himself. He wasn't of course, it was just a necessary pose.
'Davey Soutar,' Rebus echoed.
Soutar had clenched his fists. Peter Cave attempted to intercede. 'Now, please. Is there a problem here, Inspector?'
'You tell me, Mr Cave.' He looked around him. 'Frankly, we're a little bit concerned about this gang hut.'
Colour flooded Cave's cheeks. 'It's a youth centre.'
Rebus was now studying the ceiling. Nobody was playing basketball any more. The music had been turned right down. 'If you say so, sir.'
'Look, you come barging in here 'I don't recall barging, Mr Cave. More of a saunter. I didn't ask for trouble. If Davey here can be persuaded to unclench his fists, maybe you and me can have a quiet chat outside.' He looked at the circle around them. 'I'm not one for playing to the cheap seats.'

Cave stared at Rebus, then at Soutar. He nodded slowly, his face drained of anger, and eventually Soutar let his hands relax. You could tell it was an effort. Burns hadn't put in an appearance for nothing.
'There now,' said Rebus. 'Come on, Mr Cave, let's you and me go for a walk.'
They walked across the playing fields. Burns had returned to the patrol car and moved it to a spot where he could watch them. Some teenagers watched from the back of the community centre and from its roof, but they didn't venture any closer than that.
'I really don't see, Inspector'
'You think you're doing a good job here, sir?'
Cave thought about it before answering. 'Yes, I do.'
'You think the experiment is a success?'
'A limited success so far, but yes, once again.'
He had his hands behind his back, head bowed a little. He looked like he didn't have a care in the world.
'No regrets?'
'None.'
'Funny then'



'You don't believe that?'

'Frankly, sir, not in this particular case, and the crime stats back me up. What you've got just now is a truce of, sorts, and it suits them because while there's a truce they can get busy carving up territory between them. Anyone threatens them, they can retaliate in spades ... or even with spades. But it won't last, and when they split back into their separate gangs; there's going to be blood spilled, no way round it. Because now there'll be more at stake. Tell me, in your club tonight, how many Catholics were there?'

Cave didn't answer, he was too busy shaking his head. 'I feel sorry for you, really I do. I can smell cynicism off you like sulphur. I don't happen to believe anything you've just said.'

'Then you're every bit as naive as I am cynical, and that means they're just using you. Which is good, because the only way of looking at this is that you've been sucked into it and you accept it, knowing the truth.'

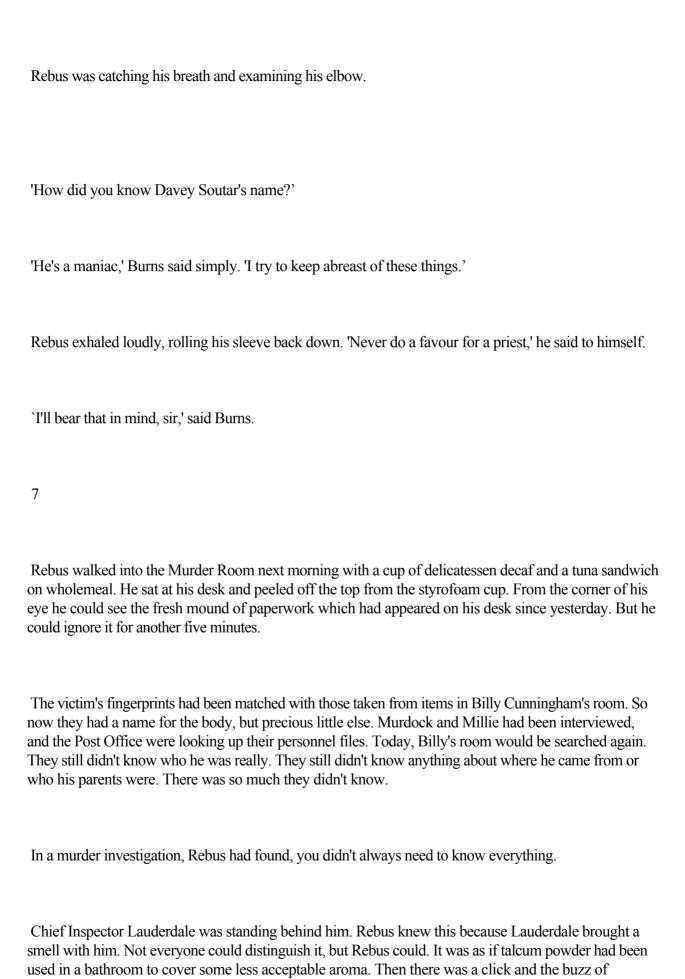
Cave's cheeks were red again. 'How dare you say that!' And he punched Rebus in the stomach, hard. Rebus had been punched by professionals, but he was unprepared and felt himself double over for a moment, getting his wind back. There was a burning feeling in his gut, and it wasn't whisky. He could hear cheering in the distance. Tiny figures were dancing up and down on the community centre roof. Rebus hoped they'd fall through it. He straightened up again.

'Is that what you call setting a good example, Mr Cave?'

Then he punched Cave solidly on the jaw. The young man stumbled backwards and almost fell.

He heard a double roar from the community centre. The youth of the Gar-B were clambering down from the roof, starting to run in his direction. Burns had started the car and was bumping it across the football pitch towards him. The car was outpacing the crowd, but only just. An empty can bounced off its rear windscreen. Burns barely braked as he caught up with Rebus. Rebus yanked the door open and got in, grazing a knee and an elbow. Then they were off again, making for the roadway.

'Well,' Burns commented, checking the rearview, 'that seemed to go off okay.'



Lauderdale's battery-shaver. Rebus straightened at the sound.



Watson took a gulp of coffee, swilling it around his mouth. Rebus looked to Kilpatrick, who obliged with a confirmation.
'You'll be based with us at Fettes, but you're going to be our eyes and ears on this murder inquiry, liaison if you like, so you'll still spend most of your time here at St Leonard's.'
'But why?'
'Well, Inspector, this case might concern the Crime Squad.'
'Yes, sir, but why me in particular?'
'You've been in the Army. I notice you served in Ulster in the late '60s.'
`That was quarter of a century ago,' Rebus protested. An age spent forgetting all about it.
'Nevertheless, you'll agree there seem to be paramilitary aspects to this case. As you commented, the gun is not your everyday hold-up weapon. It's a type of revolver used by terrorists. A lot of guns have been corning into the UK recently. Maybe this murder will connect us to them.'
'Wait a second, you're saying you're not interested in the shooting, you're interested in the gun?'
'I think it will become clearer when I show you our operation at Fettes. I'll be through here in –' he looked at his watch `- say twenty minutes. That should give you time to say goodbye to your loved ones.'
He smiled.

Rebus nodded. He hadn't touched his coffee. A cooling scum had formed on its surface. 'All right he said, getting to his feet.	t, sir,'
He was still a little dazed when he got back to the Murder Room. Two detectives were being told by a third. The joke was about a squid with no money, a restaurant bill, and the guy from the kitch washed up. The guy from the kitchen was called Hans.	
Rebus was joining the SCS, the Bastard Brigade as some called it. He sat at his desk. It took him minute to work out that something was missing.	ıa
'Which bollocks of you's eaten my sandwich?'	
As he looked around the room, he saw that the joke had come to an untimely end. But no one was paying attention to him. A message was being passed through the place, changing the mood. Laud came over to Rebus's desk. He was holding a sheet of fax paper.	
'What is it?' Rebus asked.	
'Glasgow have tracked down Billy Cunningham's mother.'	
'Good. Is she coming here?'	
Lauderdale nodded distractedly. 'She'll be here for the formal ID.'	
'No father?'	
'The father and mother split up a long time ago. Billy was still an infant. She told us his name thoug	gh.'
He handed over the fax sheet. 'It's Morris Cafferty.'	

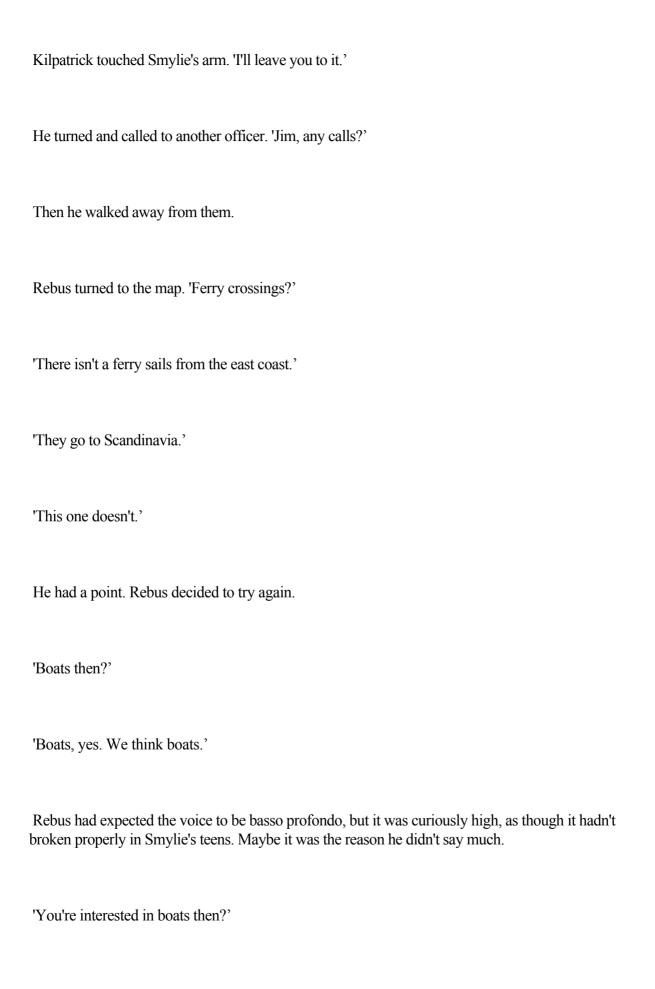


Lauderdale shrugged again. 'I wonder who'll tell Cafferty.'
'They better do it by phone. I wouldn't want to be in the same room with him.'
`Lucky my good suit's in my locker,' said Lauderdale. `There'll have to be another press conference.'
'Best tell the Chief Super first though, eh?'
Lauderdale's eyes cleared. 'Of course.'
He lifted Rebus's receiver to make the call. `What did he want with you, by the way?'
'Nothing much,' said Rebus. He meant it too, now.
'But maybe this changes things,' he persisted to Kilpatrick in the car. They were seated in the back, a driver taking them the slow route to Fettes. He was sticking to the main roads, instead of the alleys and shortcuts and fast stretches unpoliced by traffic lights that Rebus would have used.
'Maybe,' said Kilpatrick. 'We'll see.'
Rebus had been telling Kilpatrick all about Big Ger Cafferty. 'I mean,' he went on, 'if it's a gang thing, then it's nothing to do with paramilitaries is it? So I can't help you.'
Kilpatrick smiled at him. 'What is it, John? Most coppers I know would give their drinking arm for an assignment with SCS.'
'Yes, sir.'



civilian staff.
'We've got our own surveillance and drugs teams,' Kilpatrick added. 'We recruit from all eight Scottish forces.'
He kept his spiel going as he led Rebus through the SCS office. A few people looked up from their work, but by no means all of them. Two who did were a bald man and his freckle-faced neighbour. Their look wasn't welcoming, just interested.
Rebus and Kilpatrick were approaching a very large man who was standing in front of a wall-map. The map showed the British Isles and the north European mainland, stretching east as far as Russia. Some sea routes had been marked with long narrow strips of red material, like something you'd use in dressmaking. Only the big man didn't look the type for crimping-shears and tissue-paper cut-outs. On the map, the ports had been circled in black pen. One of the routes ended on the Scottish east coast. The man hadn't turned round at their approach.
'Inspector John Rebus,' said Kilpatrick, 'this is Inspector Ken Smylie. He never smiles, so don't bother joking with him about his name. He doesn't say much, but he's always thinking. And he's from Fife, so watch out. You know what they say about Fifers.'
'I'm from Fife myself,' said Rebus. Smylie had turned round to grip Rebus's hand. He was probably six feet three or four, and had the bulk to make the height work. The bulk was a mixture of muscle and fat, but mostly muscle. Rebus would bet the guy worked out every day. He was a few years younger than Rebus, with short thick fair hair and a small dark moustache. You'd take him for a farm labourer, maybe even a farmer. In the Borders, he'd definitely have played rugby.
'Ken,' Kilpatrick said to Smylie, 'I'd like you to show John around. He's going to be joining us temporarily. He's ex-Army, served in Ulster.'
Kilpatrick winked. 'A good man.'

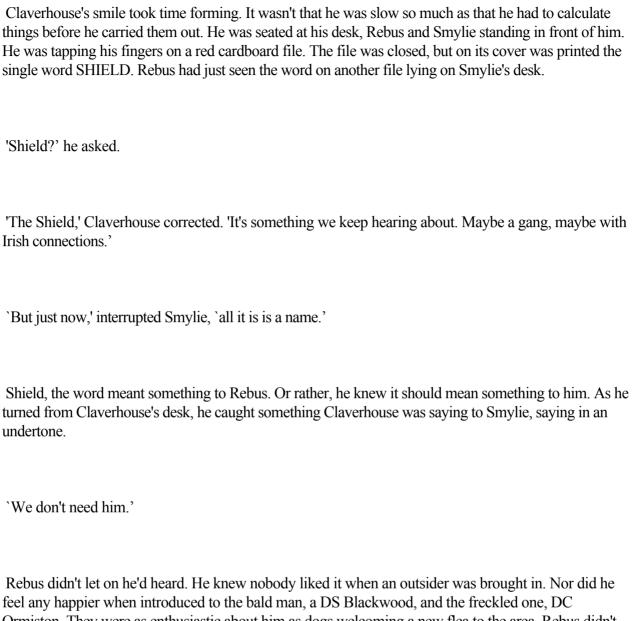
Ken Smylie looked appraisingly at Rebus, who tried to stand up straight, inflating his chest. He didn't know why he wanted to impress Smylie, except that he didn't want him as an enemy. Smylie nodded slowly, sharing a look with Kilpatrick, a look Rebus didn't understand.









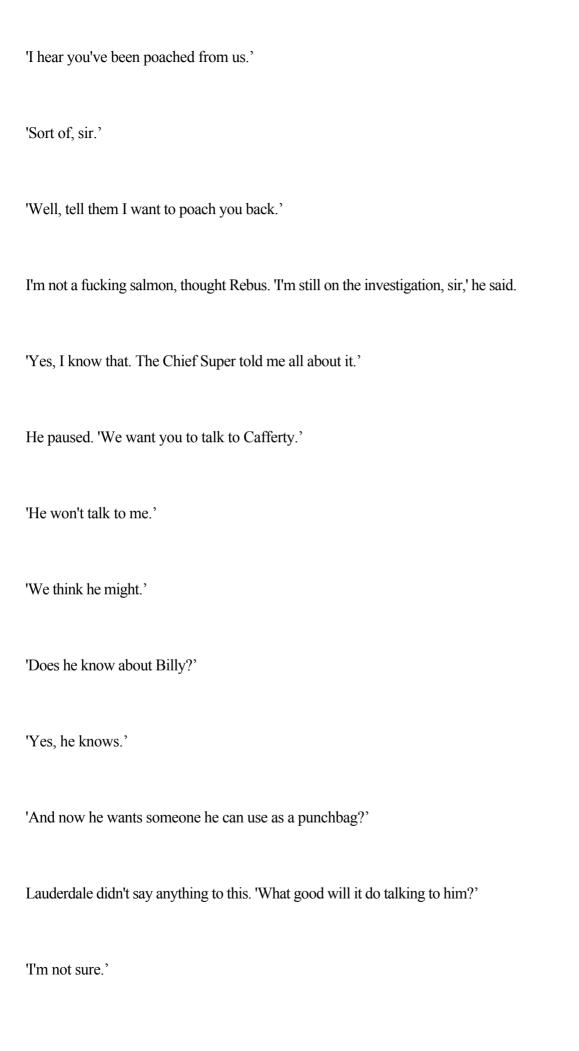


Rebus didn't let on he'd heard. He knew nobody liked it when an outsider was brought in. Nor did he feel any happier when introduced to the bald man, a DS Blackwood, and the freckled one, DC Ormiston. They were as enthusiastic about him as dogs welcoming a new flea to the area. Rebus didn't linger; there was a small empty desk waiting from him in another part of the room, and a chair which had been found in some cupboard. The chair didn't quite have three legs, but Rebus got the idea: they hadn't exactly stretched themselves to provide him with a wholesome working environment. He took one look at desk and chair, made his excuses and left. He took a few deep breaths in the corridor, then descended a few floors. He had one friend at Fettes, and saw no reason why he shouldn't visit her.

But there was someone else in DI Gill Templer's office. The nameplate on the door told him so. Her name was DI Murchie and she too was a Liaison Officer. Rebus knocked on the door.

'Enter!' It was like entering a headmistress's office. DI Murchie was young; at least, her face was. But she had made determined efforts to negate this fact.





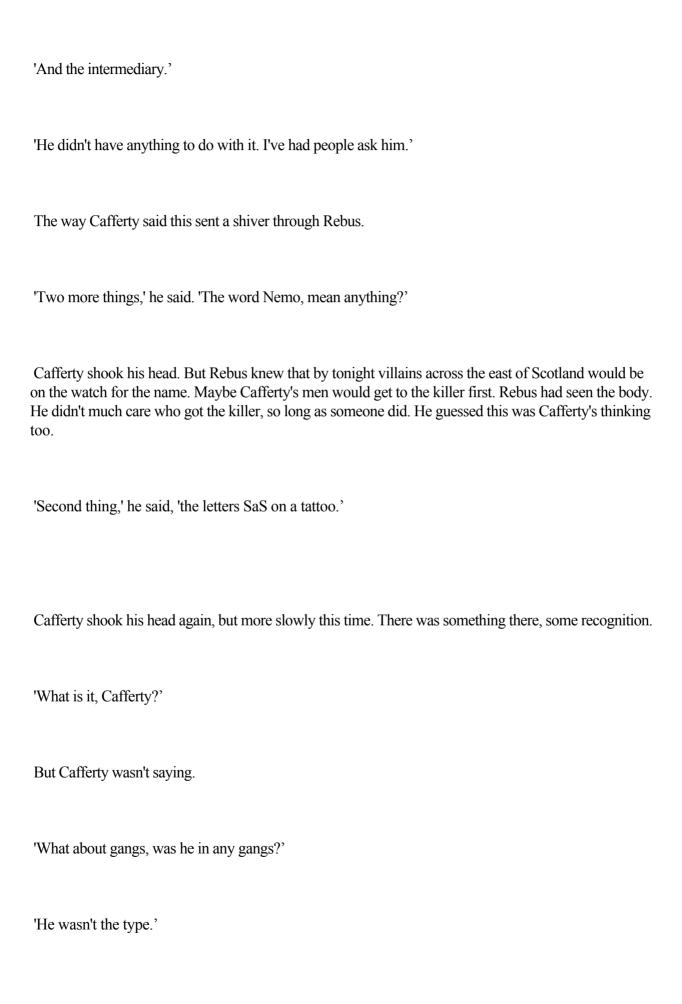
'Then why bother?'
'Because he's insisting. He wants to talk to CID, and not just any officer will do. He's asked to speak to you.'
There was silence between them. 'John? Anything to say?'
'Yes, sir. This has been a very, strange day.'
He checked his watch. 'And it's not even one o'clock yet.'
8
Big Ger Cafferty was looking good.
He was fit and lean and had purpose to his gait. A white t-shirt was tight across his chest, flat over the stomach, and he wore faded work denims and new-looking tennis shoes. He walked into the Visiting Room like he was the visitor, Rebus the inmate. The warder beside him was no more than a hired flunkey, to be dismissed at any moment. Cafferty gripped Rebus's hand just a bit too hard, but he wasn't going to try tearing it off, not yet.
'Strawman.'
'Hello, Cafferty.'
They sat down at opposite sides of the plastic table, the legs of which had been bolted to the floor.

They sat down at opposite sides of the plastic table, the legs of which had been bolted to the floor. Otherwise, there was little to show that they were in Barlinnie jail, a prison with a tough reputation from way back, but one which had striven to remake itself. The Visiting Room was clean and white, a few public safety posters decorating its walls. There was a flimsy aluminium ashtray, but also a No Smoking sign. The tabletop bore a few burn marks around its rim from cigarettes resting there too long.

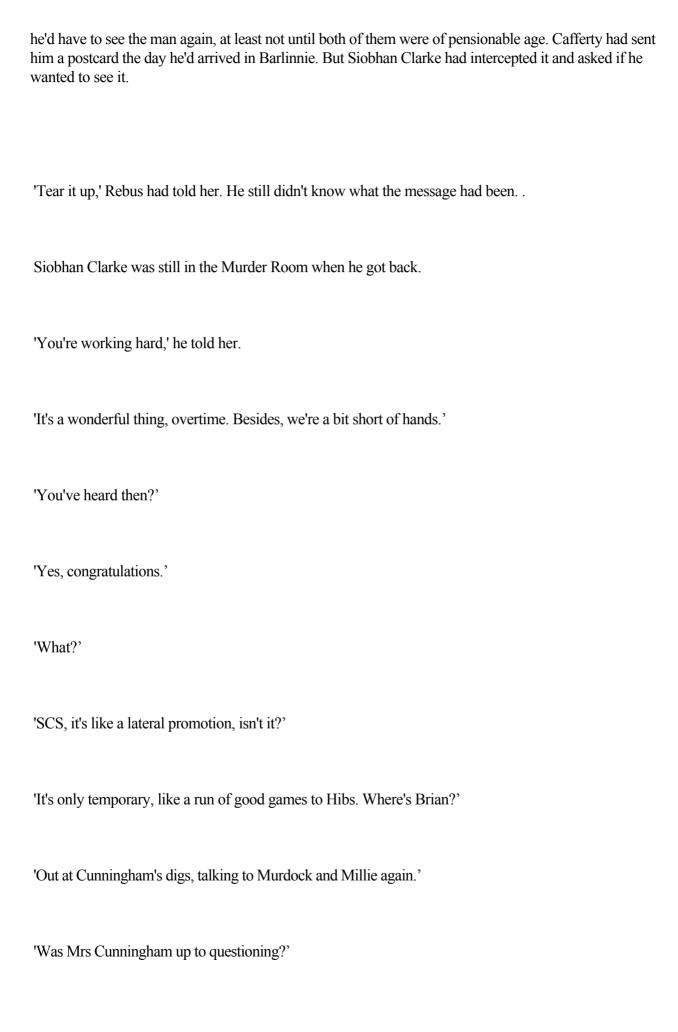
















'Great,' she said, meaning the opposite.

'What's wrong?'
'You hate old movies and I hate violence.'
Rebus looked at the Schwarzenegger. 'It's not even an 18. And who says I don't like old films?'
'What's your favourite black and white movie?'
'There are hundreds of them.'
'Name me five. No, three, and don't say I'm not fair.'
He stared at her. They were standing a few feet apart in the living room, Rebus with the videos still in his hands, Patience with her arms folded, her back erect. He knew she could probably smell the whisky on his breath, even keeping his mouth shut and breathing through his nose. It was so quiet, he could hear the cat washing itself somewhere behind the sofa.
'What are we fighting about?' he asked.
She was ready for this. 'We're fighting about consideration, as usual. To wit, your lack of any.'
'Ben Hur.'
'Colour.'



He'd gone to find it for her, and she'd followed him into his room. Such a tidy room. 'Here it is,' he'd said, turning towards her quickly, not realising how close behind him she was. 'What's all this Red Hand stuff?' she'd asked, looking past him at his walls. He'd waited till her eyes returned to his, then he'd kissed her, tongue rubbing at her teeth till she opened her mouth to him. 'Billy,' she said now, her hands filling themselves with his bedcover. She stayed that way for a few minutes, part of her mind staying alert, listening for sounds from the room she shared with Murdock. Then she moved across the bed to where the Hearts pennant was pinned to the wall. She pushed it aside with a finger. Underneath, taped flat against the wall, was a computer disk. She'd left it here, half hoping the police would find it when they searched the room. But they'd been hopeless. And watching them search, she'd become suddenly afraid for herself, and had started to hope they wouldn't find it. Now, she got her fingernails under it and unpeeled it, looking at the disk. Well, it was hers now, wasn't it? They might kill her for it, but she could never let it go. It was part of her memory of him. She rubbed her thumb across the label. The streetlight coming through the unwashed window wasn't quite enough for her to read by. but she knew what the label said anyway. It was just those three letters, SaS. Dark, dark, dark. Rebus recalled that line at least. If Patience had asked him to quote from a poem instead of giving her movie titles, he'd have been all right. He was standing at a window of St Leonard's, taking a break from his deskful of work, all the paperwork on Morris Gerald Cafferty. Dark, dark, dark.

She was trying to civilise him. Not that she'd admit it. What she said instead was that it would be nice if they liked the same things. It would give them things to talk about. So she gave him books of poetry, and played classical music at him, bought them tickets for ballet and modern dance. Rebus had been there before, other times, other women. Asking for something more, for commitment beyond the commitment.

He didn't like it. He enjoyed the basic, the feral. Cafferty had once accused him of liking cruelty, of being attracted to it; his natural right as a Celt. And hadn't Rebus accused Peter Cave of the same thing? It was coming back to him, pain on pain, crawling back along his tubes from some place deep within him.

His time in Northern Ireland.

He'd been there early in the history of 'the Troubles', 1969, just as it was all boiling over; so early that he hadn't really known what was going on, what the score was; none of them had, not on any side. The people were pleased to see them at first, Catholic and Protestant, offering food and drink and a genuine welcome. Then later the drinks were laced with weedkiller, and the welcome might be leading you into a 'honey trap'. The crunching in the sponge cake might only be hard seeds from the raspberry jam. Then again, it might be powdered glass.

Bottles flying through the dark, lit by an arc of flame. Petrol spinning and dripping from the rag wick. And when it fell on a littered road, it spread in an instant pool of hate. Nothing personal about it, it was just for a cause, a troubled cause, that was all.

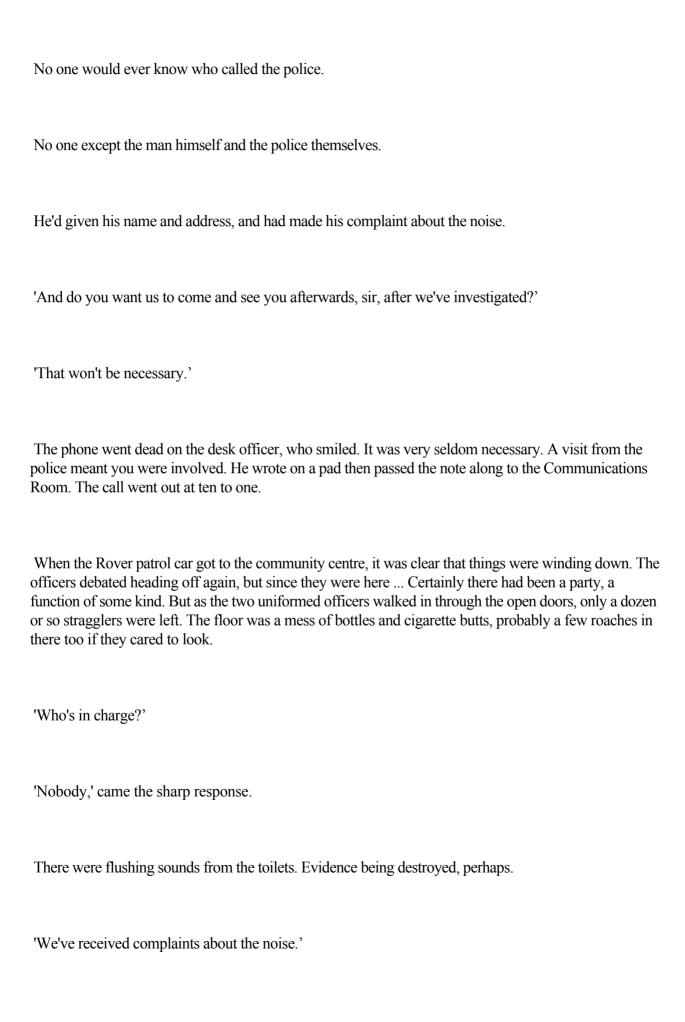
And later still it was to defend the rackets which had grown up around that aged cause. The protection schemes, black taxis, gun-running, all the businesses which had spread so very far away from the ideal, creating their own pool.

He'd seen bullet wounds and shrapnel blasts and gashes left by hurled bricks, he'd tasted mortality and the flaws in both his character and his body. When not on duty, they used to hang around the barracks, knocking back whisky and playing cards. Maybe that was why whisky reminded him he was still alive, where other drinks couldn't.

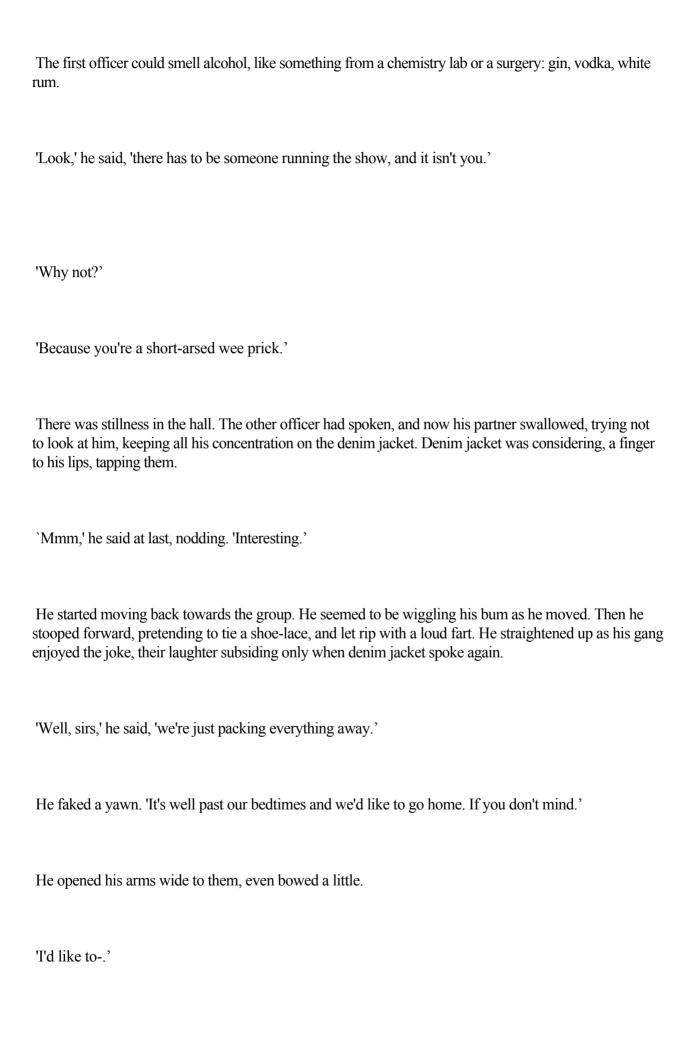
There was shame too: a retaliatory strike against a drinking club which had gotten out of hand. He'd done nothing to stop it. He'd swung his baton and even his SLR with the rest of them. Yet in the middle of the commotion, the sound of a rifle being cocked was enough to bring silence and stillness . . .

He still kept an interest in events across the water. Part of his life had been left behind there. Something about his tour of duty there had made him apply to join the Special Air Service. He went back to his desk and lifted the glass of whisky.

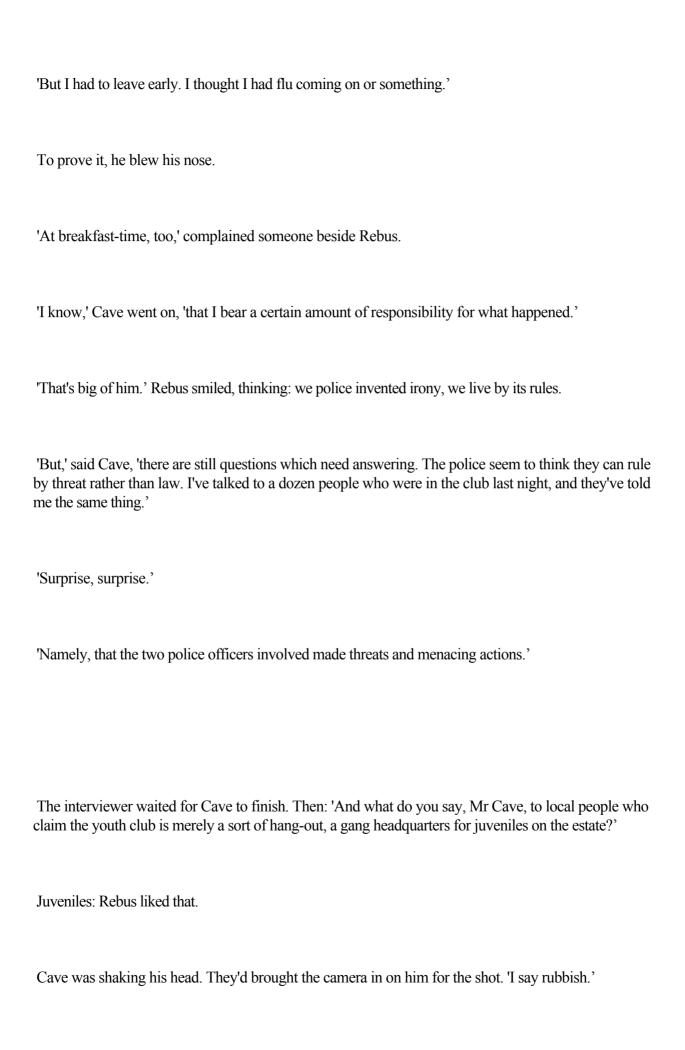
Dark, dark, dark. The sky quiet save for the occasional drunken yell.



'No noise here.'
The patrolman nodded. On a makeshift stage a ghettoblaster had been hooked up to a guitar amplifier, a large Marshall job with separate amp and speaker-bin. Probably a hundred watts, none of it built for subtlety. The amplifier was still on, emitting an audible buzz. 'This thing belongs out at the Exhibition Centre.'
'Simple Minds let us borrow it.'
'Whose is it really though?'
'Where's your search warrant?'
The officer smiled again. He could see that his partner was itching for trouble, but though neither of them had a welter of experience, they weren't stupid either. They knew where they were, they knew the odds. So he stood there smiling, legs apart, arms by his side, not looking for aggro. He seemed to be having a dialogue with one of the group, a guy with a denim jacket and no shirt underneath. He was wearing black square-toed biker boots with straps and a round silver buckle. The officer had always liked that style, had even considered buying himself a pair, just for the weekends.
Then maybe he'd start saving for the bike to go with them.
'Do we need a search warrant?' he said. 'We're called to a disturbance, doors wide open, no one barring our entry. Besides, this is a community centre. There are rules and regulations. Licences need to be applied for and granted. Do you have a licence for this soiree?'
'Swaah-ray?' the youth said to his pals. 'Fuckin' listen to that! Swaaah-rrrayl' And he came sashaying over towards the two uniforms, like he was doing some old-fashioned dance step. He turned behind and between them. 'Is that a dirty word? Something I'm not supposed to understand? This isn't your territory, you know. This is the Gar-B, and we're having our own wee festival, since nobody bothered inviting us to the other one. You're not in the real world now. You better be careful.'



'That'll be fine.'
The first officer touched his partner's arm and turned away towards the doors. They were going to get out. And when they got out, he was going to have words with his partner, no doubt about that.
'Right then, lads,' said denim jacket, 'let's get this place tidy. We'll need to put this somewhere for a start.'
The constables were near the door when, without warning, the ghetto-blaster caught both of them a glancing blow to the back of their skulls.
9
Rebus heard about it on the morning news. The radio came on at six twenty-five and there it was. It brought him out of bed and into his clothes. Patience was still trying to rouse herself as he placed a mug of tea on the bedside table and a kiss on her hot cheek.
'Ace in the Hole and Casablanca,' he said. Then he was out of the door and into his car.
At Drylaw police station, the day shift hadn't come on yet, which meant that he heard it from the horses' mouths, so to speak. Not a big station, Drylaw had requested reinforcements from all around, as what had started as an assault on two officers had turned into a miniature riot. Cars had been attacked, house windows smashed. One local shop had been ram-raided, with consequent looting (if the owner was to be believed). Five officers were injured, including the two men who had been coshed with a hi-fi machine. Those two constables had escaped the Gar-B by the skin of their arses.
'It was like Northern bloody Ireland,' one veteran said. Or Brixton, thought Rebus, or Newcastle, or Toxteth
The TV news had it on now, and police heavy-handedness was being discussed. Peter Cave was being interviewed outside the youth club, saying that his had been the party's organising hand.



And he blew his nose again. Wisely, the producer switched back to the studio.

Eventually, the police had managed to make five arrests. The youths had been brought to Drylaw. Less than an hour later, a mob from the Gar-B had gathered outside, demanding their release. More thrown bricks, more broken glass, until a massed charge by the police ranks dispersed the crowd. Cars and foot patrols had cruised Drylaw and the GarB for the rest of the night. There were still bricks and strewn glass on the road outside. Inside, a few of the officers involved looked shaken.

Rebus looked in on the five youths. They sported bruised faces, bandaged hands. The blood had dried to a crust on them, and they'd left it there, like war paint, like medals.

'Look,' one of them said to the others, 'it's the bastard who took a poke at Pete.'

'Keep talking,' retorted Rebus, 'and you'll be next.'

'I'm quaking.'

The police had stuck a video camera onto the rioters outside the station. The picture quality was poor, but after a few viewings Rebus made out that one of the stone throwers, face hidden by a football scarf, was wearing an open denim jacket and no shirt.

He stuck around the station a bit longer, then got back in his car and headed for the Gar-B. It didn't look so different. There was glass in the road, sounds of brittle crunching under his tyres. But the local shops were like fortresses: wire mesh, metal screens, padlocks, alarms. The would-be looters had run up and down the main road for a while in a hotwired Ford Cortina, then had launched it at the least protected shop, a place specialising in shoe repairs and keycutting. Inside, the owner's own brand of security, a sleepy-eyed Alsatian, had thrown itself into the fray before being beaten off and chased away. As far as anyone knew, it was still roaming the wide green spaces.

A few of the ground floor flats were having boards hammered into place across their broken windows. Maybe one of them had made the initial call. Rebus didn't blame the caller; he blamed the two officers. No, that wasn't fair. What would he have done if he'd been there? Yes, exactly. And there'd have been more trouble than this if he had...

He didn't bother stopping the car. He'd only be in the way of the other sight-seers and the media. With not much happening on the IRA story, reporters were here in numbers. Plus he knew he wasn't the Gar-B's most popular tourist. Though the constables couldn't swear who'd thrown the ghetto-blaster, they knew the most likely suspect. Rebus had seen the description back at Drylaw. It was Davey Soutar of course, the boy who couldn't afford a shirt. One of the CID men had asked Rebus what his interest was.

'Personal,' he'd said. A few years back, a riot like this would have prompted the permanent closure of the community hall. But these days it was more likely the Council would bung some more cash at the estate, guilt money. Shutting the hall down wouldn't do much good anyway. There were plenty of empty flats on the estate - flats termed 'unlettable'. They were kept boarded up and padlocked, but could soon be opened. Squatters and junkies used them; gangs could use them too. A couple of miles away in different directions, middle class Barnton and Inverleith were getting ready for work. A world away. They only ever took notice of Pilmuir when it exploded.

It wasn't much of a drive to Fettes either, even with the morning bottlenecks starting their day's business. He wondered if he'd be first in the office; that might show too willing. Well, he could check, then nip out to the canteen until everyone started arriving. But when he pushed open the office door, he saw that there was someone in before him. It was Smylie.

'Morning,' Rebus said. Smylie nodded back. He looked tired to Rebus, which was saying something, the amount of sleep Rebus himself had had. He rested against one of the desks and folded his arms. 'Do you know an Inspector called Abernethy?'

'Special Branch,' said Smylie.

'That's him. Is he still around?'

Smylie looked up. 'He went back yesterday, caught an evening plane. Did you want to see him?'

'Not really.'









through the middle to keep it from falling apart. It was typed on an old and irregular typewriter, with hand printed titles to its meagre articles and no photographs or drawings. It was priced not in old money but in new pence: five new pence to be exact, from which Rebus guessed it to be fifteen to twenty years old. There was no date, but it proclaimed itself 'issue number three'. To a large extent Brian Holmes was right: it belonged in a museum. The pieces were written in a style that could be termed 'Celtic hippy', and this style was so uniform (as were the spelling mistakes) that the whole thing looked to be the work of a single individual with access to a copying machine, something like an old Roneo.

As for the content, there were cries of nationalism and individualism in one paragraph, philosophical and moral lethargy the next. Anarcho-syndicalism was mentioned, but so were Bakunin, Rimbaud and Tolstoy. It wasn't, to Rebus's eye, the sort of stuff to boost advertising revenue.

For example: 'What Dalriada needs is a new commitment, a new set of mores which look to the existent and emerging youth culture. What we need is action by the individual without recourse or prior thought to the rusted machinery of law, church, state.

'We need to be free to make our own decisions about our nation and then act self-consciously to make those decisions a reality. The sons and daughters of Alba are the future, but we are living in the mistakes of the past and must change those mistakes in the present. If you do not act then remember: Now is the first day of the rest of your strife. And remember too: inertia corrodes.'

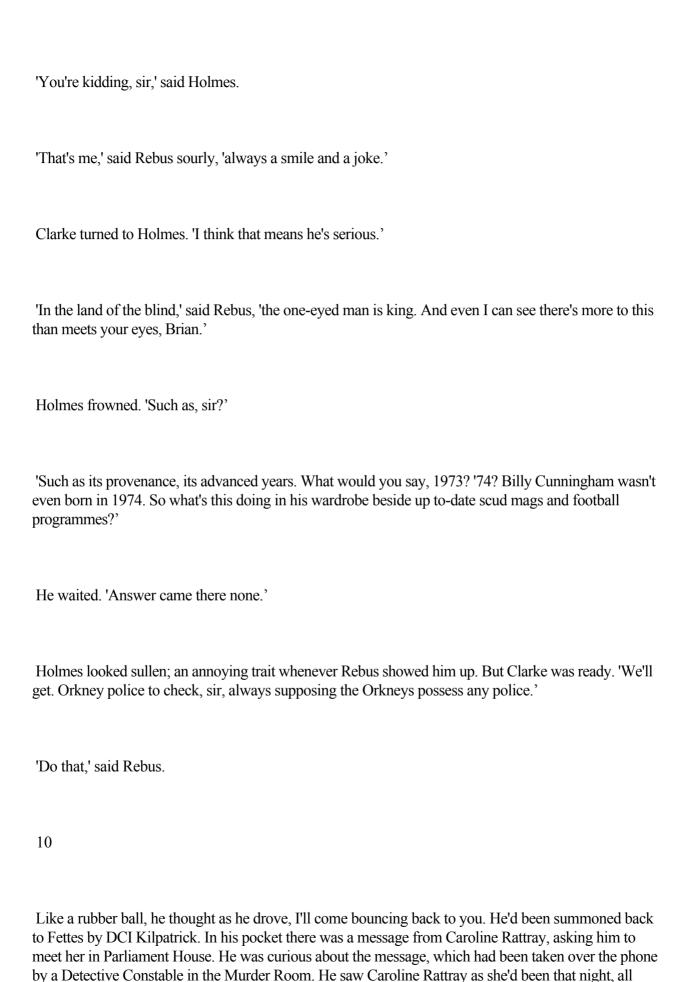
Except that 'mores' was spelt 'moeres' and 'existent' as 'existent'. Rebus put the pamphlet down.

'A psychiatrist could have a field day,' he muttered. Holmes and Clarke were seated on the other side of his desk. He noticed that while he'd been at Fettes, people. had been using his desktop as a dumping ground for sandwich wrappers and polystyrene cups. He ignored these and turned the pamphlet over. There was an address at the bottom of the back page: Zabriskie House, Brinyan, Rousay, Orkney Isles.

'Now that's what I call dropping out,' said Rebus. 'And look, the house is named after Zabriskie Point.'

'Is that in the Orkneys too?' asked Holmes.

'It's a film,' said Rebus. He'd gone to see it a long long time ago, just for the '60s soundtrack. He couldn't remember much about it, except for an explosion near the end. He tapped his finger against the pamphlet. 'I want to know more about this.'

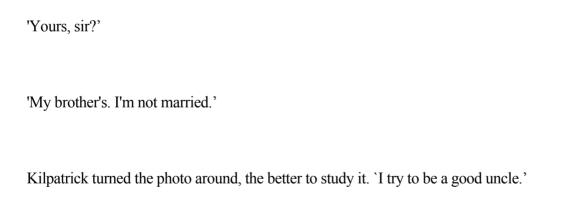


dressed up and then dragged down into Mary King's Close by Dr Curt. He saw her strong masculine face with its slanting nose and high prominent cheekbones. He wondered if Curt had said anything to her about him ... He would definitely make time to see her.

Kilpatrick had an office of his own in a corner of the otherwise open-plan room used by the SCS. Just outside it sat the secretary and the clerical assistant, though Rebus couldn't work out which was which. Both were civilians, and both operated computer consoles. They made a kind of shield between Kilpatrick and everyone else, a barrier you passed as you moved from your world into his. As Rebus passed them, they were discussing the problems facing South Africa.

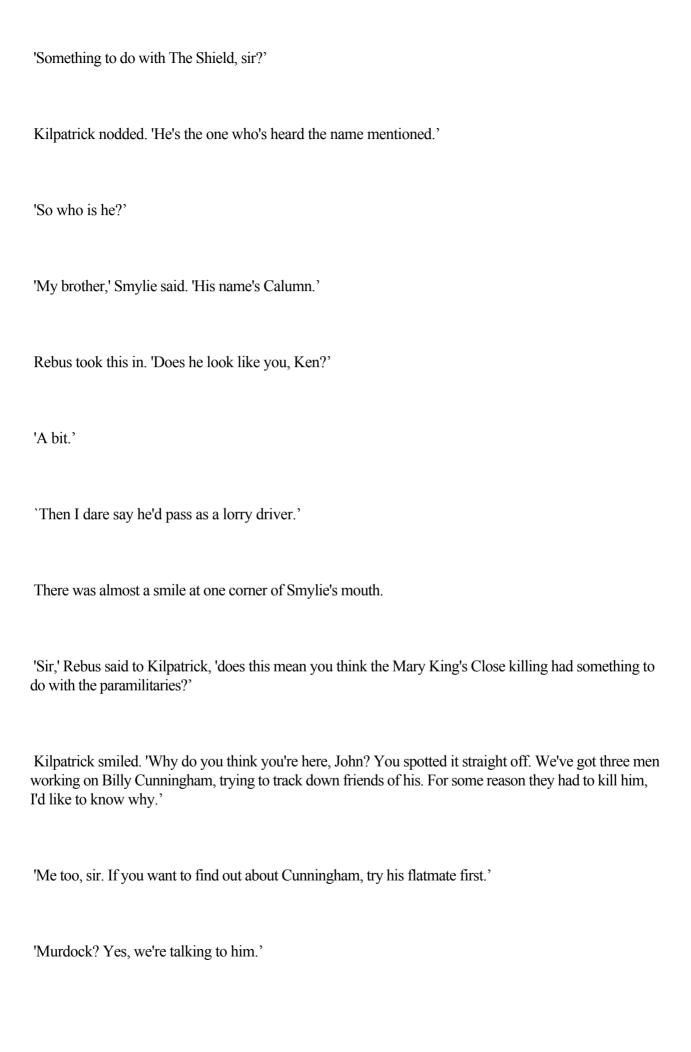
'It'll be like on Uist,' one of them said, causing Rebus to pause and listen. 'North Uist is Protestant and South Uist is Catholic, and they can't abide one another.'

Kilpatrick's office itself was flimsy enough, just plastic partitions, see-through above waist height. The whole thing could be dismantled in minutes, or wrecked by a few judicious kicks and shoulder-charges. But it was definably an office. It had a door which Kilpatrick told Rebus to close. There was a certain amount of sound insulation. There were two filing-cabinets, maps and print-outs stuck to the walls with Blu-Tak, a couple of calendars still showing July. And on the desk a framed photograph of three grinning gap-toothed children.

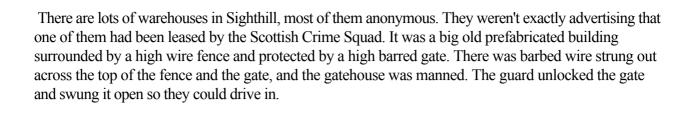


'Yes, sir.' Rebus sat down. Beside him sat Ken Smylie, hands crossed in his lap. The skin on his wrists had wrinkled up like a bloodhound's face.

'I'll get straight to the point, John,' said Kilpatrick. 'We've got a man undercover. He's posing as a long-distance lorry driver. We're trying to pick up information on arms shipments: who's selling, who's buying.'



'No, not Murdock, Murdock's girlfriend. I went round there when they reported him missing. There was something about her, something not quite right. Like she was holding back, putting on an act.'
Smylie said, 'I'll take a look.'
'Her and her boyfriend both work with computers. Think that might mean something?'
'I'll take a look,' Smylie repeated. Rebus didn't doubt that he would.
'Ken thinks you should meet Calumn,' Kilpatrick said.
Rebus shrugged. 'Fine by me.'
'Good,' said Kilpatrick. 'Then we'll take a little drive.'
Out in the main office they all looked at him strangely, like they knew precisely what had been said to him in Kilpatrick's den. Well, of course they knew. Their looks told Rebus he was resented more than ever. Even Claverhouse, usually so laid back, was managing a snide little grin.
DI Blackwood rubbed a smooth hand over the hairless crown of his head, then tucked a stray hair back behind his ear. His tonsure was positively monasterial, and it bothered him. In his other hand he held his telephone receiver, listening to someone on the line. He ignored Rebus as Rebus walked past.
At the next desk along, DS Ormiston was squeezing spots on his forehead.
'You two make a picture,' Rebus said. Ormiston didn't appear to get it, but that wasn't Rebus's problem. His problem was that Kilpatrick was taking him into his confidence, and Rebus still didn't know why.



'We got this place for a song,' Kilpatrick explained. 'The market's not exactly thriving just now.'

He smiled. 'They even offered to throw in the security, but we didn't think we'd need any help with that.'

Kilpatrick was sitting in the back with Rebus, Smylie acting as chauffeur. The steering wheel was like a frisbee in his paws. But he was a canny driver, slow and considerate. He even signalled as he turned into a parking bay, though there was only one other car in the whole forecourt, parked five bays away. When they got out, the Sierra's suspension groaned upwards. They were standing in front of a normal sized door whose nameplate had been removed. To its right were the much bigger doors of the loading bay. From the rubbish lying around, the impression was of a disused site. Kilpatrick took two keys from his pocket and unlocked the side door.

The warehouse was just that, no offices or partitions off, just one large space with an oily concrete floor and some empty packing cases. A pigeon, disturbed by their entrance, fluttered near the ceiling for a moment before settling again on one of the iron spars supporting the corrugated roof. It had left its mark more than once on the HGV's windshield.

'That's supposed to be lucky,' said Rebus. Not that the articulated lorry looked clean anyway. It was splashed with pale caked-on mud and dust. It was a Ford with a UK licence plate, K registration. The cab door opened and a large man heaved himself out.

He didn't have his brother's moustache and was probably a year or two younger. But he wasn't smiling, and when he spoke his voice was high-pitched, almost cracking from effort.

'You must be Rebus.'

They shook hands. Kilpatrick was doing the talking.

'We impounded this lorry two months back, or rather Scotland Yard did. They've kindly loaned it to us.'

Rebus hoisted himself onto the running-plate and peered in the driver's window. Behind the driving seat had been fixed a nude calendar and a dog-eared centrefold. There was space for a bunk, on which a sleeping bag was rolled up ready for use. The cab was bigger than some of the caravans Rebus had stayed in for holidays. He climbed back down.

There was a noise from the back of the lorry. Calumn Smylie was opening its container doors. By the time Rebus and Kilpatrick got there, the two Smylies had swung both doors wide and were standing inside the back, just in front of a series of wooden crates.

'We've taken a few liberties,' said Kilpatrick, hoisting himself into the back beside them, Rebus following. 'The stuff was originally hidden beneath the floor.'

'False fuel tanks,' explained Ken Smylie. 'Good ones too, welded and bolted shut.'

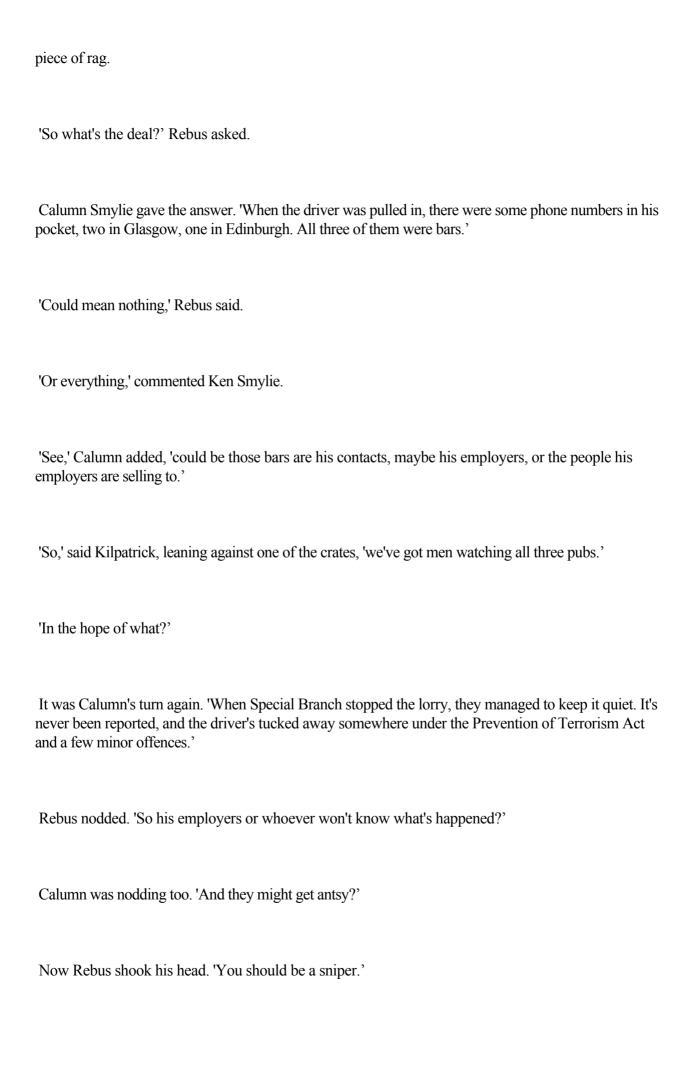
'The Yard cut into them from up here.'

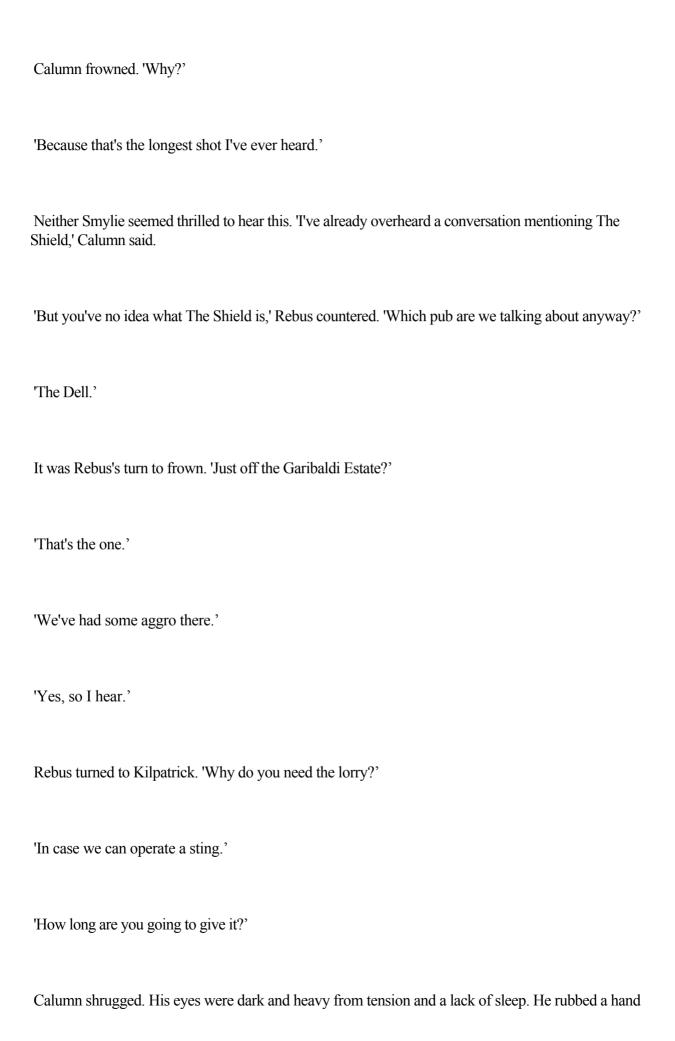
Kilpatrick stamped his foot. 'And inside they found what the tip-off had told them they'd find.'

Calumn Smylie lifted the lid off a crate so Rebus could look in. Inside, wrapped in oiled cloths, were eighteen or so AK 47 assault rifles. Rebus lifted one of them out by its folded metal butt. He knew how to handle a gun like this, even if he didn't like doing it. Rifles had gotten lighter since his Army days, but they hadn't gotten any more comfortable. They'd also gotten a deal more lethal. The wooden hand-grip was as cold as a coffin handle.

'We don't know exactly where they came from,' Kilpatrick explained. 'And we don't even know where they were headed. The driver wouldn't say anything, no matter how scary the Anti-Terrorist Branch got with him. He denied all knowledge of the load, and wasn't about to point a finger anywhere else.'

Rebus put the gun back in its crate. Calumn Smylie leaned past him to wipe off any fingerprints with a





'I can see it's been like a holiday for you,' Rebus said. He knew the plan must have been cooked up by the Smylie brothers. They seemed its real defenders. Kilpatrick's part in it was more uncertain.

'Better than that,' Calumn was saying.

'How so?'

Not many people know of Parliament House, home of the High Court of Justiciary, Scotland's highest court for criminal cases. There are few signposts or identifying markers outside, and the building itself is hidden behind St Giles' separated from it by a small anonymous car park containing a smattering of jaguars and BMWs. Of the many doors facing the prospective visitor, only one normally stands open. This is the public entrance, and leads into Parliament Hall, from off which stretch the Signet Library and Advocates Library.

'The holiday I'm having, you don't need to send postcards.'

There were fourteen courts in all, and Rebus guessed he'd been in all of them over the years. He sat on one of the long wooden benches. The lawyers around him were wearing dark pinstripe suits, white shirts with raised collars and white bow ties, grey wigs, and long black cloaks like those his teachers had worn. Mostly the lawyers were 100 talking, either with clients or with each other. If with each other, they might raise their voices, maybe even share a joke. But with clients they were more circumspect. One well-dressed woman was nodding as her advocate talked in an undertone, all the while trying to stop the many files under his arm from wriggling free.

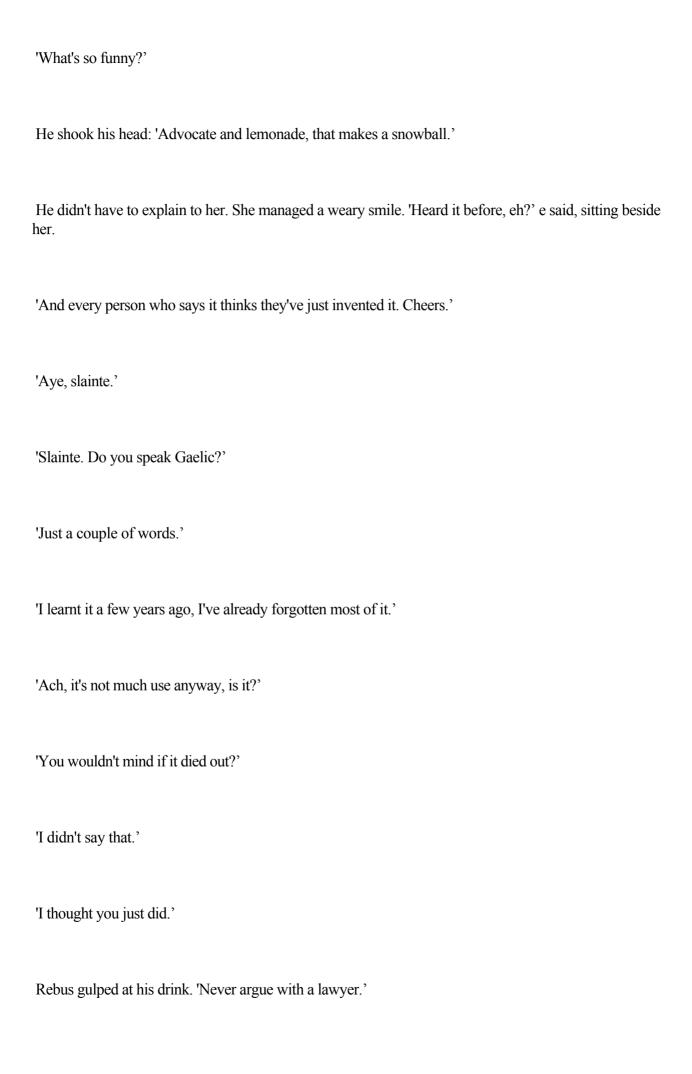
Rebus knew that beneath the large stained glass window there were two corridors lined with old wooden boxes. Indeed, the first corridor was known as the Boil Corridor. Each box was marked with a lawyer's name, and each had a slat in the top, though the vast majority of boxes were kept open more or less permanently. Here documents awaited collection and perusal. Rebus had wondered at the openness of the system, the opportunities for theft and espionage. But there had never been any reports of theft, and security men were in any case never far away. He got up now and walked over to the stained glass. He knew the King portrayed was supposed to be James V, but wasn't sure about the rest of it, all the figures or the coats of arms. To his right, through a wooden swing door with glass windows, he could see lawyers poring over books. Etched in gold on the glass were the words PRIVATE ROOM.

He knew another private room close to here. Indeed, just on the other side of St Giles and down some flights of stairs. Billy Cunningham had been murdered not fifty yards from the High Court.
He turned at the sound of heels clicking towards him. Caroline Rattray was dressed for work, from black shoes and stockings to powder-grey wig.
'I wouldn't have recognised you,' he said.
'Should I take that as a compliment?'
She gave him a big smile, and held it as she held his gaze. Then she touched his arm. 'I see you've noticed.'
She looked up at the stained glass. 'The royal arms of Scotland.'
Rebus looked up too. Beneath the large picture there were five smaller square windows, each showing a coat of arms. Caroline Rattray's eyes were on the central panel. Two unicorns held the shield of the red Lion Rampant. Above on a scroll were the words IN DEFENCE, and at the bottom a Latin inscription. Rebus read it.
'Nemo me impune lacessit.'
He turned to her. 'Never my best subject.'
'You might know it better as "Wha daur meddle wi' me?" It's the motto of Scotland, or rather, the motto of Scotland's kings.'
'A while since we've had any of them.'

'And of the Order of the Thistle. Sort of makes you the monarch's private soldier, except they only give it to crusty old sods. Sit down.'
She led them back to the bench Rebus had been sitting on. She had files with her, which she placed on the floor rather than the bench, though there was space. Then she gave him her full attention. Rebus didn't say anything, so she smiled again, tipping her head slightly to one side. 'Don't you see?'
'Nemo,' he guessed.
'Yes! Latin for nobody.'
'We already know that, Miss Rattray. Also a character in Jules Verne and in Dickens, plus the letters make the word "omen" backwards.' He paused. 'We've been working, you see. But does it get us any further forward? I mean, was the victim trying to tell us that no one killed him?'
She seemed to puncture, her shoulders sagging. It was like watching an old balloon die after Christmas.
'It could be something,' he offered. 'But it's hard to know what.'
'I see.'
'You could have told me about it on the phone.'
'Yes, I could.'
She straightened her back. 'But I wanted you to see for yourself.'

'You think the Order of the Thistle ganged up and murdered Billy Cunningham?'
Her eyes were holding his again, no smile on her lips. He broke free, staring past her at the stained glass. 'How's the prosecution game?'
'It's a slow day,' she said. 'I hear the victim's father is a convicted murderer. Is there a connection?'
'Maybe.'
'No concrete motive yet?'
'No motive.'
The longer Rebus looked at the royal arms, the more his focus was drawn to its central figure. It was definitely a shield. 'The Shield,' he said to himself.
'Sorry?'
'Nothing, it's just'
He turned back to her. She was looking eager about something, and hopeful too. 'Miss Rattray,' he said, 'did you bring me here to chat me up?'
She looked horrified, her face reddening; not just her cheeks, but forehead and chin too, even her neck coloured. 'Inspector Rebus,' she said at last.





Another smile. She lit a cigarette, Rebus declining.
'Don't tell me,' he said, 'you still see Mary King's Close in your head at night?'
She nodded slowly. 'And during the day. I can't seem to erase it.'
'So don't try. Just file it away, that's all you can do. Admit it to yourself, it happened, you were there, then file it away. You won't forget, but you won't harp on it either.'
'Police psychology?'
'Common sense, hard learnt. That's why you were so excited about the Latin inscription?'
'Yes; I thought I was involved.'
'You'll be involved if we ever catch the buggers. It'll be your job to put them away.'
'I suppose so.'
'Until then, leave it, to us.'
'Yes, I will.'
'I'm sorry though, sorry you had to see it. Typical of Curt, dragging you down there. There was no need to. Are you and him ?'

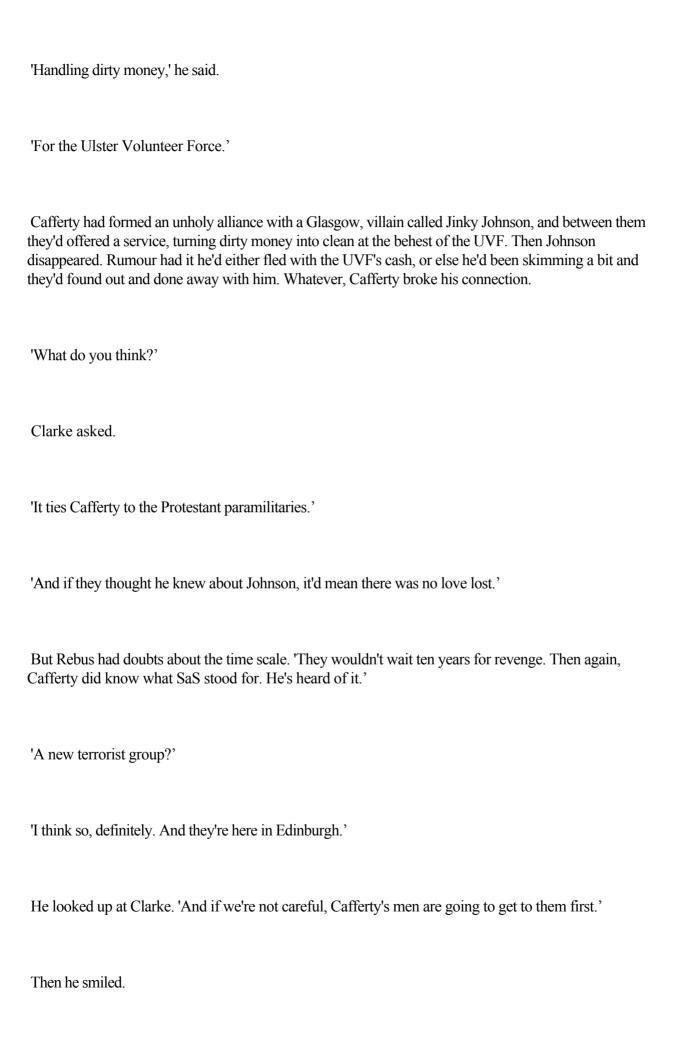
-	filled the bar. 'You don't think? We're just acquaintances. He had a spare ticket, I was rist almighty, you think I could with a pathologist?'
'They're hui	man, despite rumours to the contrary.'
'Yes, but he	s's twenty years older than me.'
'That's not a	always a consideration.'
'The though	at of those hands on me'
She shivere	ed, sipped her drink. 'What did you say back there about a shield?'
and shield, t	is head. He saw a shield in his mind, and you never got a shield without a sword. With sword hat was a line from an Orange song. He slapped the table with his fist, so hard that Caroline red frightened.
`Was it som	nething I said?'
'Caroline, y	ou're brilliant. I've got to go.'
	nd walked past the bar, then stopped and came back, taking her hand in his, holding it. 'I'll he promised. Then: 'If you like.'
cigarette, an	ill she'd nodded, then turned again and left. She finished her lemonade, smoked another d stubbed it into the ashtray. His hand had been hot, not like a pathologist's at all. The to empty her ashtray into a pail and wipe the table.

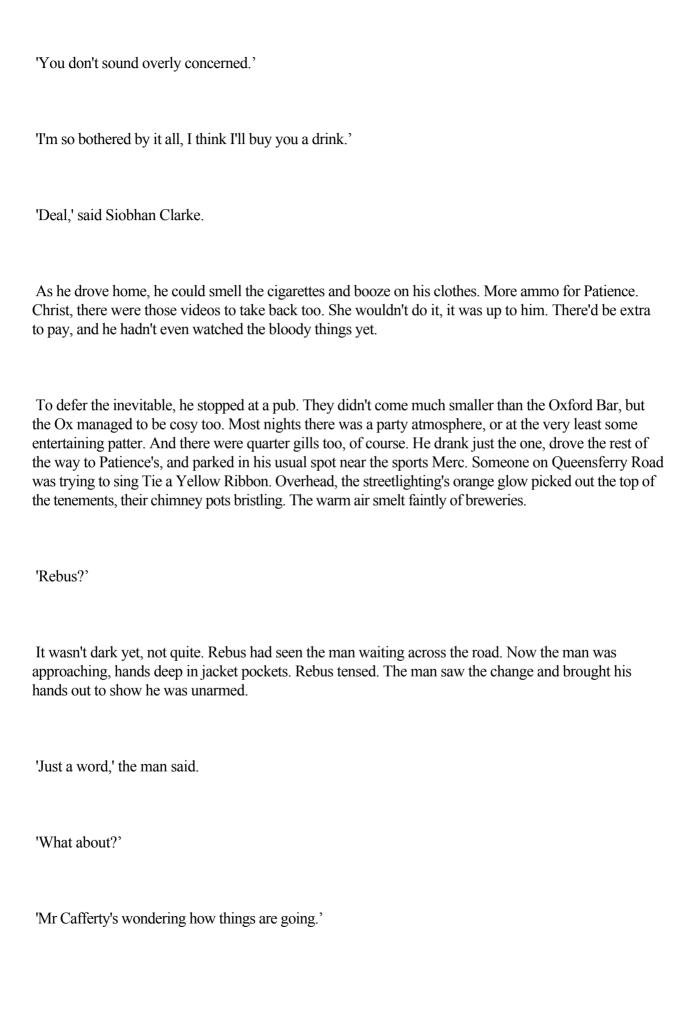


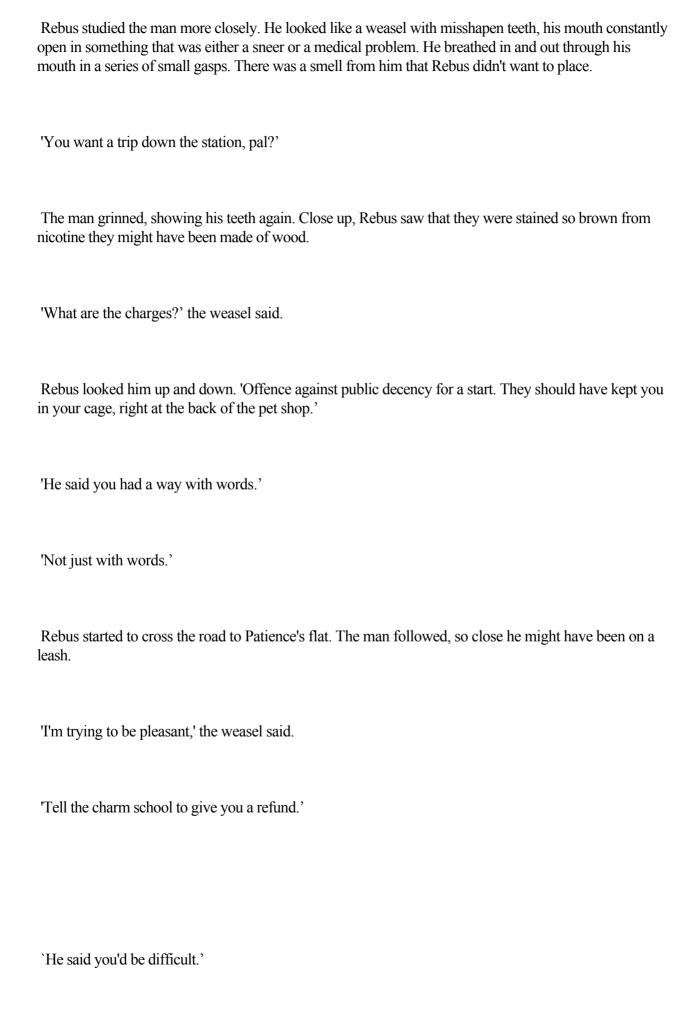


shrugged. 'I don't know, sir.'
'And then this source of yours mentions an organisation in the USA called Sword and Shield.'
'Sir, All I know is SaS must stand for something. Calumn Smylie's been hearing about an outfit called The Shield who might be in the market for arms. There's also a shield on the Scottish royal arms, as well as a phrase with the word Nemo. I know these are all pretty weak links, but all the same'
Kilpatrick looked to Smylie, who gave a look indicating he was on Rebus's side.
'Maybe,' Smylie said in proof, 'we could ask our friends in the States to check for us. They'd be doing the work, there's nothing to lose, and with the back-up they've got they could probably give us an answer in a few days. As I say, we haven't lost anything.'
'I suppose not. All right then.'
Kilpatrick's hands were ready for prayer. 'John, we'll give it a go.'
'Also, sir,' Rebus added, just pushing his luck a bit, 'we might do some digging into the original Sword and Shield. If the name's been revived, it wasn't just plucked out of the air.'
'Fair point, John. I'll put Blackwood and Ormiston onto it.'
Blackwood and Ormiston: they'd thank him for this, they'd bring him flowers and chocolates.
`Thank you, sir,' said Rebus.



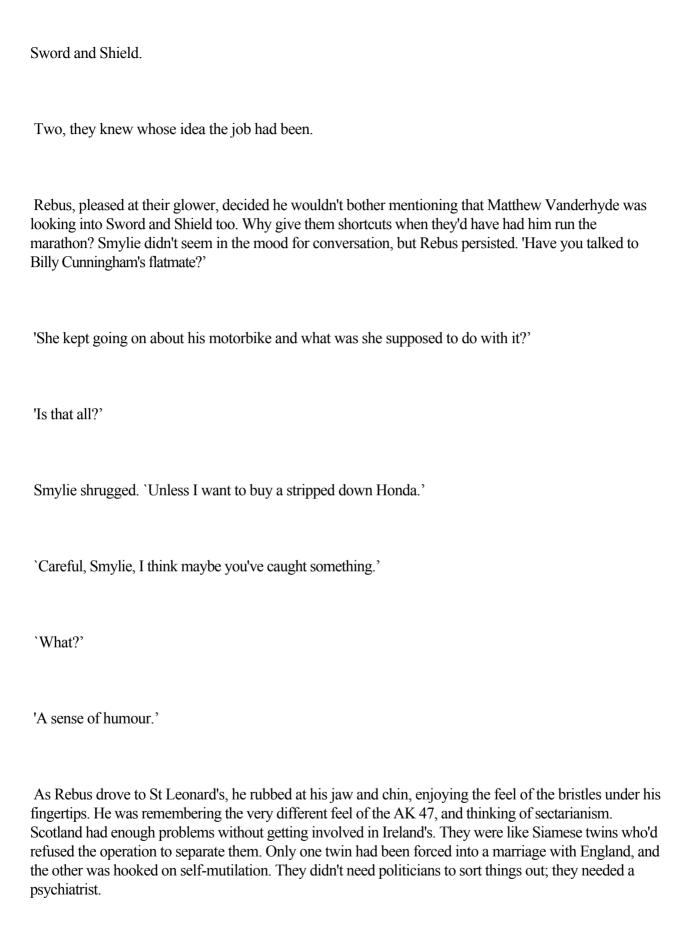






Rebus turned on the man. 'Difficult? You don't know just how difficult I can get if I really try. If I see you here again, you'd better be ready to square off.'
The man narrowed his eyes. 'That'd suit me fine. I'll be sure to mention your co-operation to Mr Cafferty.'
'Do that.'
Rebus started down the steps to the garden flat. The weasel leaned down over the rails.
'Nice flat.'
Rebus stopped with his key in the lock. He looked up at the man. 'Shame if anything happened to it.'
By the time Rebus ran back up the steps, the weasel had disappeared.
12
'Have you heard from your brother?'
It was next morning, and Rebus was at Fettes, talking with Ken Smylie.
'He doesn't phone in that often.'
Rebus was trying to turn Smylie into someone he could trust. Looking around him, he didn't see too many potential allies. Blackwood and Ormiston were giving him their double-act filthy look, from which

he deduced two things. One, they'd been assigned to look into what, if anything, remained of the original



The marching season, the season of the Protestant, was over for another year, give or take the occasional small fringe procession. Now it was the season of the International Festival, a 'festive time, a time to forget the small and insecure country you lived in. He thought again of the poor sods who'd

decided to put on a show in the Gar-B.

St Leonard's looked to be joining in the fun. They'd even arranged for a pantomime. Someone had owned up to the Billy Cunningham murder. His name was Unstable from Dunstable.

The police called him that for two reasons. One, he was mentally unstable. Two, he claimed he came from Dunstable. He was a local tramp, but not without resources. With needle and thread he had fashioned for himself a coat constructed from bar towels, and so was a walking sandwich-board for the products which kept him alive and kept him dying.

There were a lot of people out there like him, shiftless until someone (usually the police) shifted them. They'd been `returned to the community' - a euphemism for dumped - thanks to a tightening of the government's heart and purse strings. Some of them couldn't tighten their shoe laces without bursting into tears. It was a crying shame.

Unstable was in an interview room now with DS Holmes, being fed hot sweet tea and cigarettes. Eventually they'd turf him out, maybe with a couple of quid in his hand, his technicolor beercoat having no pockets.

Siobhan Clarke was at her desk in the Murder Room. She was being talked at by DI Alister Flower.

So someone had forgotten Rebus's advice regarding the duty roster.

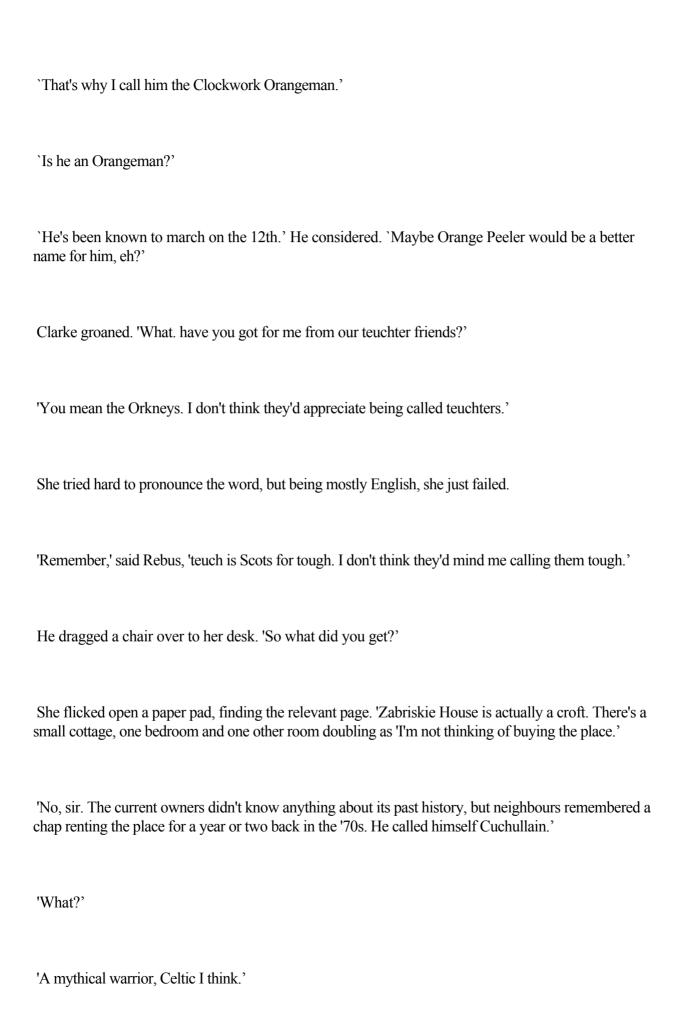
'Well,' Flower said loudly, spotting Rebus, 'if it isn't our man from the SCS. Have you brought the milk?'

Rebus was too slow getting the reference, so Flower obliged.

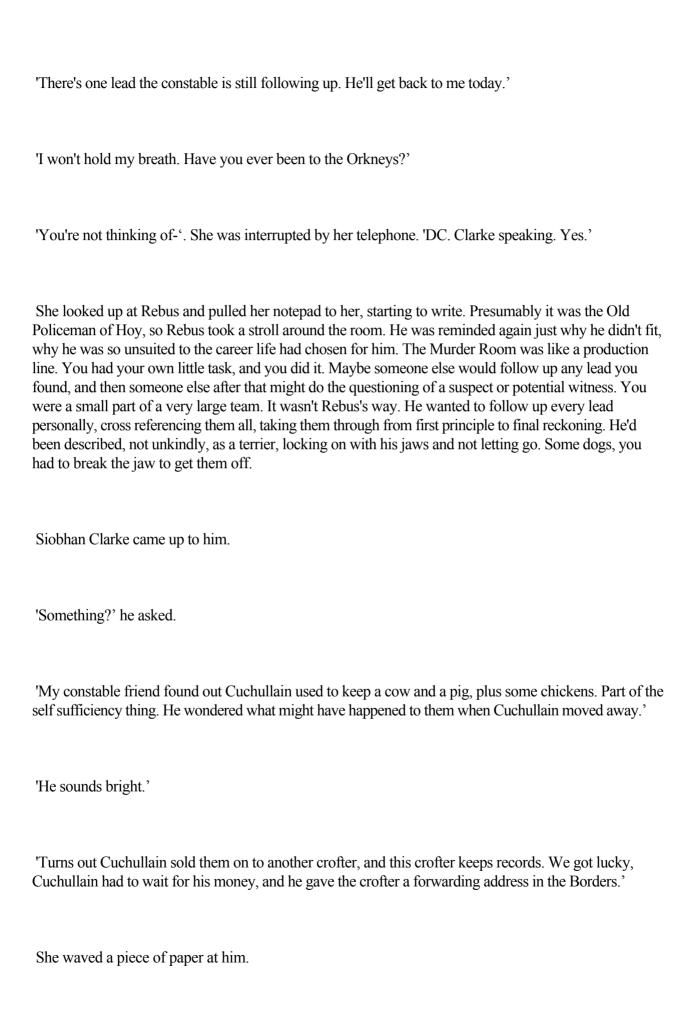
'The Scottish Co-Operative Society. SCS, same letters as the Scottish Crime Squad.'

'Wasn't Sean Connery a milkman with the Co-Op,' said Siobhan Clarke, 'before he got into acting?'









'Don't get too excited,' warned Rebus. 'We're still talking a twenty year old address for a man whose name we don't know.'
'But we do know. The crofter had a note of that too. It's Francis Lee.'
'Francis Lee?'
Rebus sounded sceptical. 'Wasn't he playing for Manchester City in the '70s? Francis Lee as in Frank Lee? As in Frank Lee, my dear, I don't give a damn?'
'You think it's another alias?'
'I don't know. Let's get the Borders police to take a look.'
He studied the Murder Room. 'Ach, no, on second thoughts, let's go take a look ourselves.'
13
Whenever John Rebus had cause or inclination to drive through any town in the Scottish Borders, one word came to his mind.
Neat.
The towns were simply laid out and almost pathologically tidy. The buildings were constructed from unadorned stone and had a square-built no-nonsense quality to them. The people walking briskly from bank to grocer's shop to chemist's were rosy checked and bursting with health, as though they scrubbed their faces with pumice every morning before sitting down to farmhouse fare. The men's limbs moved

with the grace of farm machinery. You could present any of the women to your own mother. She'd tell

them you weren't good enough for them.

Truth be told, the Borderers scared Rebus. He couldn't understand them. He understood though, that placed many more miles from any large Scottish conurbation than from the English border, there was bound to be some schizophrenia to the towns and their inhabitants.

Selkirk however was definably Scots in character, architecture, and language. Its annual Laminas Fair was not yet just a memory to see the townfolk through the winter. There were still rows of pennants waiting to be taken down, flapping in the slightest breeze. There were some outside the house which abutted the kirkyard wall. Siobhan Clarke checked the address and shrugged.

'It's the manse, isn't it?' Rebus repeated, sure that they had something wrong.

'It's the address I've got here.'

The house was large with several prominent gables. It was fashioned from dull grey stone, but boasted a lush and sweet-smelling garden. Siobhan Clarke pushed open the gate. She searched the front door for a bell but found none, so resorted to the iron knocker which was shaped like an open hand. No one answered. From nearby came the sound of a manual lawnmower, its pull and push as regular as a pendulum. Rebus looked in through the front window of the house, and saw no sign of movement.

'We're wasting our time,' he said. A waste of a long car journey too. 'Let's leave a note and get out of here.'

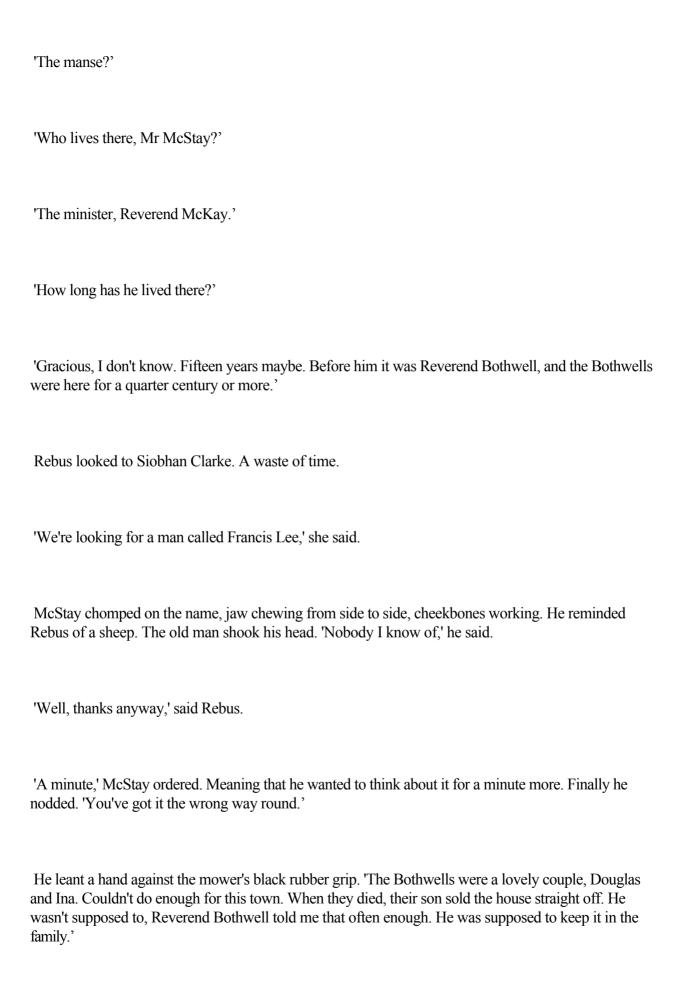
Clarke peered through the letterbox, then stood up again. 'Maybe we could ask around, now we're here.'

'Fine,' said Rebus, 'let's go talk to the lawnmower man.'

They walked round to the kirkyard gate and took the red gravel path around the perimeter of the church itself. At the back of the soot blackened building they saw an old man pushing a mower which in Edinburgh might have graced a New Town antique shop.

a voluminous handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his suntanned brow. His face and arms were as brown as oak, the face polished with sweat. The elderly skin was still tight across the skull, shiny like a beetle's back. He introduced himself as Willie McStay.
'Is it about the vandalism?' he asked.
'Vandalism? Here?'
'They've been desecrating the graves, daubing paint on the headstones. It's the skinheads.'
'Skinheads in Selkirk?'
Rebus was not convinced. 'How many skinheads are there, Mr McStay?'
McStay thought about it, grinding his teeth together as though he were chewing tobacco or a particularly tough piece of phlegm. 'Well,' he said, 'there's Alec Tunnock's son for a start. His hair's cropped awful short and he wears those boots wi' the laces.'
'Boots with laces, eh?'
'He hasna had a job since he left school.'
Rebus was shaking his head. 'We're not here about the headstones, Mr McStay. We were wondering about that house.'
He pointed towards it.

The gentleman stopped his work when he saw them crossing the trimmed grass towards him. It was like walking on a carpet. The grass could not have been shorter if he'd been using nail scissors. He produced



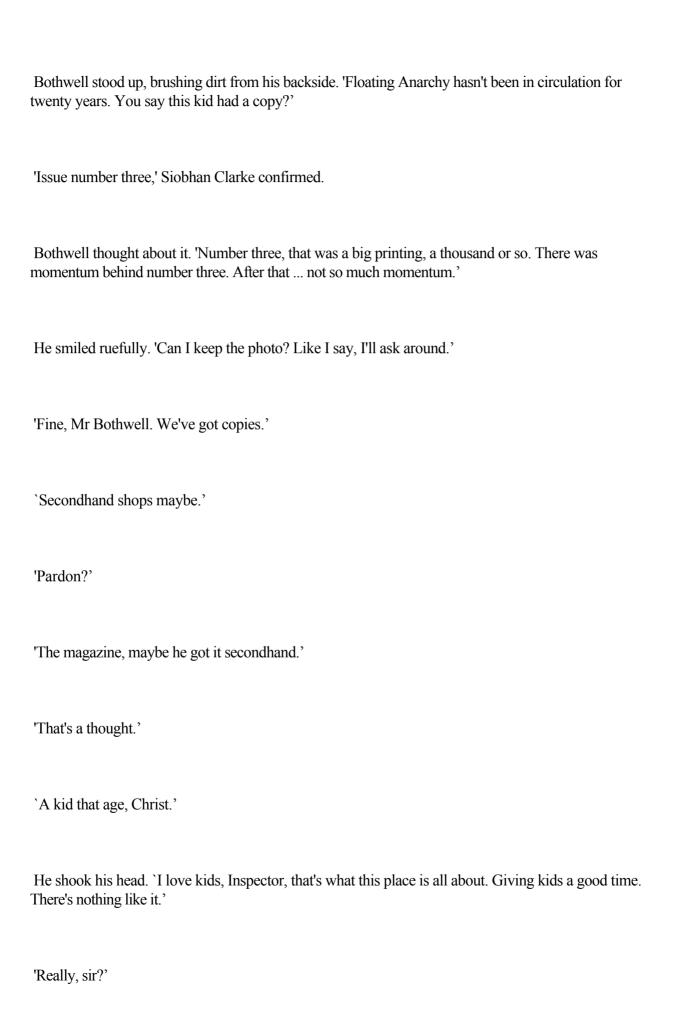
'But it's a manse,' Clarke said. 'Church of Scotland property. How could he sell it?'
'The Bothwells loved the house so much, they bought it off the Church. They were going to live there when Reverend Bothwell retired. The thing is, the son sold it back to the Church. He was a wastrel, that one, took the money and ran. Nobody'd look after their grave if it wasn't for me and a few other old folk here who remember them fondly.'
He shook his head. 'Young people, they've no sense of history or commitment.'
'What's this got to do with Francis Lee?'
Siobhan Clarke asked. McStay looked at her like she was a child who'd spoken out of turn, and addressed his answer to Rebus.
'Their son was called Lee. I think his middle name was Francis.'
Lee Francis Bothwell: Francis Lee. It was too close to be mere coincidence. Rebus nodded slowly.
'I don't suppose you've any idea,' he said, 'where we might find-' He broke off: 'Frankie Bothwell? Thanks, Mr McStay, thanks for your help.'
And he walked towards the gate. It took Siobhan Clarke a moment to catch up with him.
'So are you going to tell me?'
'You don't know Frankie Bothwell?'

He watched Saloon.'	d her try out the name in her mind. She shook her head furiously. 'He owns the Crazy Hos
Now she no	odded. `That Fringe programme in Billy Cunningham's room.'
'Yes, with a	a show at the Crazy Hose circled. Nice coincidence, eh?'
	at the car now. Rebus opened the passenger door but didn't get in. Instead he rested his are roof and looked across at her. 'If you believe in coincidence.'
mirror, and drew the ca	en them twenty or thirty yards when Rebus ordered her to stop. He'd been looking in his window got out of the car and started back towards the gates. Siobhan cursed under her breatr in to the kerb, and followed him. Idling by the gates was a red estate car she'd seen park y when they were leaving. Rebus had stopped two men who'd been walking towards William
	the two would have looked out of place in the back of a scrum. Siobhan was in time to cat her superior's argument.
`- and if yo	u don't lay off, so help me, I'll drop you so far in it you'll wish you'd brought a diving bell.'
joint. The m	be this point, Rebus jabbed his finger into the larger man's gut, all the way up to the second nan didn't look like he was enjoying it. His face was a huge ripe plum. But he kept his hand ind his back throughout. He was showing such self control, Siobhan might have taken him
Only she'd	yet to come across a Buddhist with razor scars carved down both cheeks.
	s more,' Rebus was saying, 'you can tell Cafferty we know all about him and the UVF, so on acting the innocent about terrorism.'

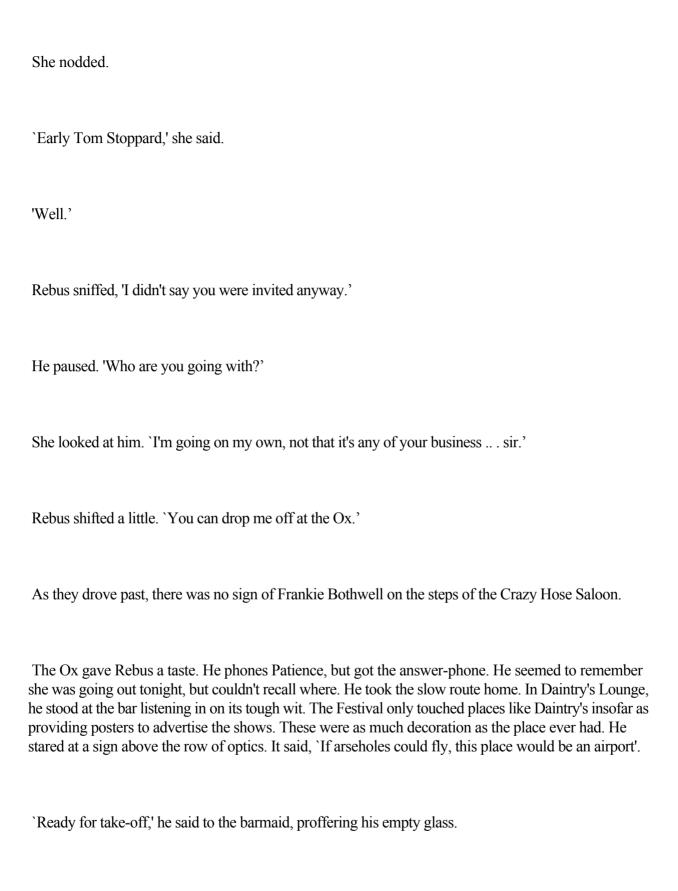
The bigger of the two men spoke. 'Mr Cafferty's getting very impatient. He wants a result.'
'I don't care if he wants world peace. Now get out of here, and if I hear you've been back asking questions, I'll see you both put away, and I don't care what I've got to do, understood?'
They didn't look overly impressed, but the two men walked away anyway, back to the gates and through them.
'Your fan club?' Siobhan Clarke guessed.
'Ach, they only want me for my body.'
Which, in a sense, was true.
It was late afternoon, and the Crazy Hose was doing no trade at all.
Those in the know just called it the Hose; those not in the know would say, 'Shouldn't it be Horse?'
But it was the Hose because its premises were an old decommissioned fire station, left vacant when they built a new edifice just up the street. And it was the Crazy Hose Saloon because it had a wild west theme and country and western music. The main doors were painted gloss black and boasted small square barred windows. Rebus knew the place was doing no trade, because Lee Francis Bothwell was sitting on the steps outside smoking a cigarette.
Although Rebus had never met Frankie Bothwell, he knew the reputation, and there was no mistaking the mess on the steps for anything else. He was dressed like a Las Vegas act, with the face and hair of McGarrett in Hawaii 5-0. The hair had to be fake, and Rebus would lay odds some of the face was fake too.
'Mr Bothwell?'



'Do you know this man?'
Rebus handed over a copy of the photo Murdock had given him, the one from the party. It had been cropped to show Billy Cunningham's face only. 'His name's Billy Cunningham.'
Bothwell took a while studying the photo, then shook his head.
'He came here to see a country and western show a couple of weeks back.'
'We're packed most nights, Inspector, especially this time of year. I can ask the bar staff, the bouncers, see if they know him. Is he a regular?'
'We don't know, sir.'
'See, if he's a regular, he'll carry the Cowpoke Card. You get one after three visits in any one month, entitles you to thirty per cent off the admission.'
Rebus was shaking his head. 'What's he done anyway?'
'He's been murdered, Mr Bothwell.'
Bothwell screwed up his face. 'Bad one.'
Then he looked at Rebus again. 'Not the kid in that underground street?'
Rebus nodded.







A little later, he found himself approaching Oxford Terrace from Lennox Street, so turned into Lennox Street Lane. What had once been stables in the Lane had now become first floor homes with ground floor garages. The place was always dead. Some of the tenements on Oxford Terrace backed onto the lane. Rebus had a key to Patience's garden gate. He'd let himself in the back door to the flat. As shortcuts went, it wasn't much of one, but he liked the lane.

He was about a dozen paces from the gate when somebody grabbed him. They got him from behind, pulling him by the coat, keeping the grip tight so that he might as well have been wearing a straitjacket. The coat came up over Rebus's head, trapping him, binding his arms. A knee came up into his groin. He lashed out with a foot, which only made it all the easier to unbalance him. He was shouting and swearing as he fell. The attacker had released his grip on the coat. While Rebus struggles to get out of it, a foot caught him on the side of the head. The foot was wearing a plimsoll, which explained why Rebus hadn't heard his attacker following him. It also explained why he was still conscious after the kick.

Another kick dug into his side. And then, just as his head was emerging from his coat, the foot caught him on the chin, and all he could see were the setts beneath him, slick and shining from what light there was. The attacker's hands were on him, rifling pockets. The man was breathing hard.

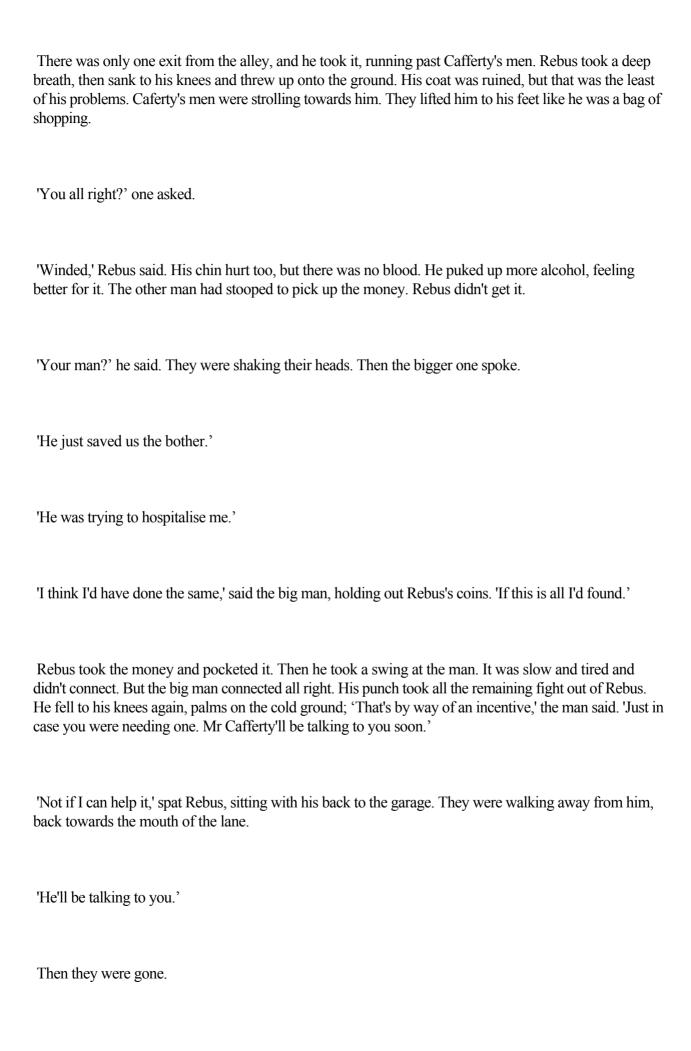
'Take the money,' Rebus said, trying to focus his eyes. He knew there wasn't much money to take, less than a fiver, all of it in small change. The man didn't seem happy with his haul. It wasn't much for a night's work.

'A'm gonny put you in the hospital.'

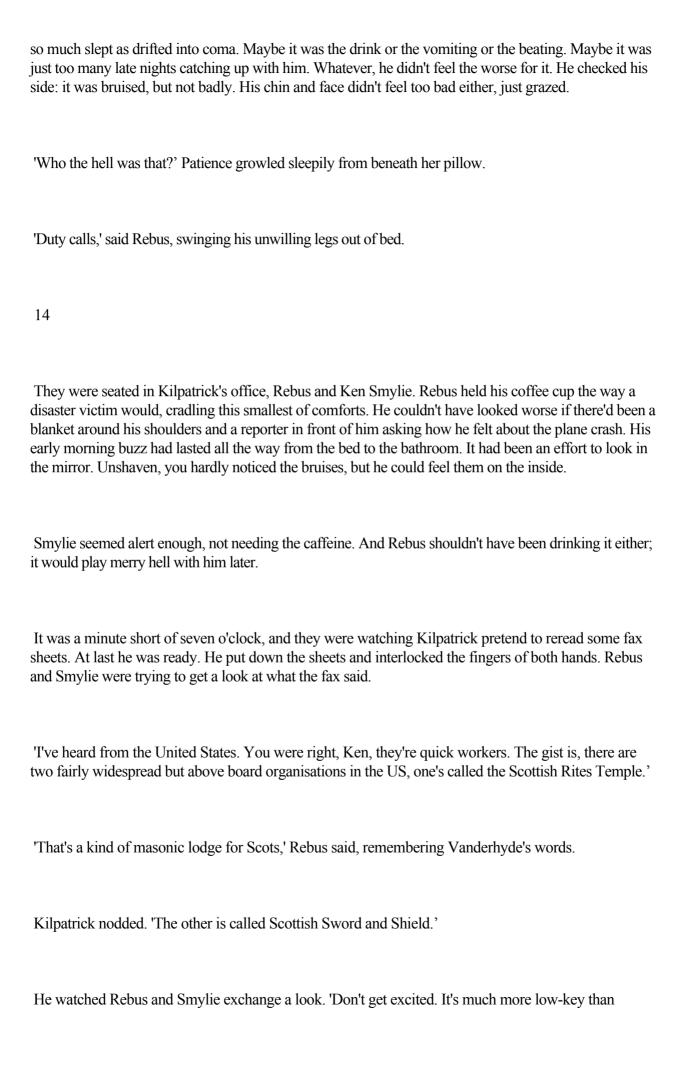
The accent was Glaswegian. Rebus could make out the man's build squat - but not yet his face. There was too much shadow. He was rearing up again, coins spilling from his hands to rain down on Rebus.

He'd given Rebus just enough time to shake off the alcohol. Rebus sprang from his crouch and hit the man square in the stomach with his head, propelling his assailant backwards. The man kept his balance, but Rebus was standing too now, and he was bigger than the Glaswegian. There was a glint in the man's hand. A cutthroat razor. Rebus hadn't seen one in years. It flashed in an arc towards him, but he dodged it, then saw that there were two other figures in the lane. They were watching, hands in pockets. He thought he recognised them as Cafferty's men, the ones from the churchyard.

The razor was swinging again, the Glaswegian almost smiling as he went about his business. Rebus slipped his coat all the way off and wrapped it around his left arm. He met the blade with his arm, feeling it cut into the cloth, and lashed out with the sole of his right foot, connecting with the man's knee. The man took a step back, and Rebus struck out again, connecting with a thigh this time. When the man attempted to come back at him, he was limping and easy to sidestep. But instead of aiming with the razor he barrelled into Rebus, pushing him hard against some garage doors. Then he turned and ran.



Cafferty's man, then whose? And why? Rebus struggled towards consciousness, even as he picked up the telephone.
'Heathen!' he gasped into it.
'Pardon?'
'To call at this ungodly hour.'
He'd recognised DCI Kilpatrick's voice. He ran the palm of his hand down his face, pulling open his eyelids. When he could focus, he tried finding the time on the clock, but in his struggle for the receiver he'd knocked it to the floor. 'What do you want sir?'
'I was hoping you could come in a bit early.'
'What? Cleaners on strike and you're looking for a relief?'
'Resounds like the dead, but he's still cracking jokes.'
'When do you want me?'
'Say, half an hour?'
'You say it, I'll do what I can.'
He put down the receiver and found his watch. It was on his wrist. The time was five past six. He hadn't





Scottish Rites, but it's not into the financing of gun-running. However,' he picked up the fax again, 'there's



take-off and landing, that view of the ground, so near and yet far enough to kill you stone dead if you hit it. Here it came again, the plane dropping fast now, too fast. His fingers were sore against the armrests. There was every chance of them locking there. He could see a surgeon amputating at the wrists...

And then they were down. Smylie was quick to stand up. The seat had been too narrow for him, with not enough legroom. He worked his neck and shoulders, then rubbed his knees.

'Welcome to Belfast,' he said 'We like to give visitors the tour,' Yates said.

He was Inspector Yates of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and both he and his car were in mufti. He had a face formed of fist-fights or bad childhood infections, scar tissue and things not quite in their right place. His nose veered leftwards, one earlobe hung lower than the other, and his chin had been stitched together not altogether successfully. You'd look at him in a bar and then look away again quickly, not risking the stare he deserved. He had no neck, that was another thing. His head sat on his shoulders like a boulder on the top of a hill.

'That's very kind,' said Smylie, as they sped into town, 'but we'd-'.

'-Lets you see what we're dealing with.' Yates kept looking in his rearview, conducting a conversation with the mirror. 'The two cities. It's the same in any war zone. I knew this guy, height of the trouble in Beirut, he was recruited as a croupier there. Bombs falling, gunmen on the rampage, and the casinos were still open. Now these,' he nodded out of the windscreen, 'are the recruiting stations: They had left the City Airport behind, shaved the commercial centre, and were passing through a wasteland. Until now, you couldn't have said which British city you were in. A new road was being built down by the docks. Old flats, no worse than those in the Gar-B, were being demolished. As Yates had commented, sometimes the divide was hidden.

Not far away, a helicopter hovered high in the sky, watching someone or something. Around them, whole streets had been bulldozed. The kerbstones were painted green and white.

'You'll see red, white and blue ones in other areas.'

On the gable-end of a row of houses was an elaborate painting. Rebus could make out three masked figures, their automatic weapons raised high. There was a tricolour above them, and a phoenix rising from flames above this.

'A nice piece of propaganda,' said Rebus.

Yates turned to Smylie. 'Your man knows what he's talking about. It's a work of art. These are some of the poorest streets in Europe, by the way.'

They didn't look so bad to Rebus. The gable-end had reminded him again of the Gar-B. Only there was more rebuilding going on here. New housing developments were rising from the old.

'See that wall?' said Yates. 'That's called an environmental wall built and maintained by the Housing Executive.'

It was a red brick wall, functional, with a pattern in the bricks. 'There used to be houses there. The other side of the wall is Protestant, once you get past the wasteland. They knock down the houses and extend the wall. There's the Peace Line too, that's an ugly old thing, made from iron rather than bricks. Streets like these, they're meat and drink to the paramilitaries. The loyalist areas are the same.'

Eyes were following their slow progress, the eyes of teenagers and children grouped at street corners. The eyes held neither fear nor hate, only mistrust. On a wall someone had daubed painted messages, old references to the H Block and Bobby Sands, newer additions in praise of the IRA, and promising revenge against the loyalist paramilitaries, the UVF and UFF predominantly. Rebus saw himself patrolling these streets, or streets like them, back when there had been more houses, more people on the move. He'd often been the 'back walker', which meant he stayed at the back of the patrol and faced the rear, his gun pointing towards the people they'd just passed, men staring at the ground, kids making rude gestures, shows of bravado, and mothers pushing prams. The patrol moved as cautiously as in any jungle.

'See, here we are,' Yates was saying, 'we're coming into Protestant territory now.'

More gable-ends, now painted with ten-foot-high Williams of Orange riding twenty-foot-high white horses. And then the cheaper displays, the graffiti, exhorting the locals to 'Fuck the Pope and the IRA'. The letters FTP were everywhere. Five minutes before, they had been FKB: Fuck King Billy. They were just routine, a reflex. But of course they were more. You couldn't laugh them off as name-calling, because the people who'd written them wouldn't let you. They kept shooting each other, and blowing each other up.



'I don't think we need a history lesson,' Rebus said quietly. Smylie was looking like he might explode.
'But it's all about history,' Yates said levelly. 'On the surface at least.'
'And underneath?'
'Paramilitaries are in the business of making money. They can't exist without money. So now they've become gangsters, pure and simple, because that's the easy way to make the money they need. And then it becomes self perpetuating. The IRA and UDA get together now and then and discuss things. They sit around a table together, just like the politicians want them to, but instead of talking about peace, they talk about carving up the country. You can extort from these taxi firms if we can extort from the building sites. You even get cases where the stuff the one side has stolen is passed on to the other for them to sell in their areas. You get times when the tension's high, then it's back to business as usual. It's like one of those mafia films, the money these bastards are making '
Yates shook his head. 'They can't afford peace. It'd be bad for business.'
'And bad for your business too.'
Yates laughed. 'Aye, right enough, overtime wouldn't be easy to come by. But then we might live to retirement age, too. That doesn't always happen just now.'
Yates had lifted his radio transmitter. 'Two-Six-Zero, I'm about five minutes from base. Two passengers.'
The radio spat static.
'Received and understood.'

He put down the receiver. 'Now this,' he said, 'this is Belfast too. South Belfast, you don't hear much about it because hardly anything ever happens here. See what I mean about two cities?'

Rebus had been noticing the change in their surroundings. Suddenly it looked prosperous, safe. There were wide treelined avenues, detached houses, some of them very new-looking. They'd passed the university, a red-brick replica of some older college. Yet they were still only ten minutes from 'the Troubles'. Rebus knew this face of the city, too. He'd only spent the one tour of duty here, but he remembered the big houses, the busy city centre, the Victorian pubs whose interiors were regarded as national treasures. He knew the city was surrounded by lush green countryside, winding lanes and farm tracks, at the end of which might sit silent milk-churns packed with explosives.

national treasures. He knew the city was surrounded by lush green countryside, winding lanes and farm tracks, at the end of which might sit silent milk-churns packed with explosives.
The RUC station on the Malone Road was a well disguised affair, tucked away behind a wooden fence with a discreet lookout tower.
'We have to keep up appearances for the locals,' Yates explained. 'This is a nice part of town, no mesh fences and machine guns.'
The gates had been opened for them, and closed quickly again.
'Thanks for the tour,' Rebus said as they parked. He meant it, something Yates acknowledged with a nod. Smylie opened his door and prised himself out. Yates glanced at the upholstery, then opened the glove compartment and lifted out his holstered pistol, bringing it with him.

'Mostly. There's a bit of Liverpool in there too. I was born in Bootle, we moved here when I was six.'

'Is your accent Irish?' Rebus asked.

'What made you join the RUC?' Smylie asked.

'I've always been a stupid bastard, I suppose.'

He had to sign both visitors into the building, and their identities were checked. Later, Rebus knew, some clerical assistant would add them to a computer file.

Inside, the station looked much like any police station, except that the windows were heavily protected and the beat patrols carried padded vests with them and wore holsters. They'd seen policemen during their drive, but had acknowledged none of them. And they'd passed a single Army patrol, young squaddies sitting at the open rear door of their personnel carrier (known as a 'pig' in Rebus's day, and probably still), automatic rifles held lightly, faces trained not to show emotion. In the station, the windows might be well protected but there seemed little sign of a siege mentality. The jokes were just as blue, just as black, as the ones told in Edinburgh. People discussed TV and football and the weather. Smylie wasn't watching any of it. He wanted the job done and out again as quick as could be.

Rebus wasn't sure about Smylie. The man might be a wonder in the office, as efficient as the day was long, but here he seemed less sure of himself. He was nervous, and showed it. When he took his jacket off, complaining of the heat, there were large sweat marks spreading from beneath his arms. Rebus had thought he'd be the nervous one, yet he felt detached, his memories bringing back no new fears. He was all right.

Yates had a small office to himself. They'd bought beakers of tea at a machine, and now sat these on the desk. Yates put his gun into a desk drawer, draped his jacket over his chair, and sat down. Pinned above him on the wall behind the desk was a sheet of computer print-out bearing the oversized words Nil Illegitimum Non Carborundum. Smylie decided to take a poke.

'I thought Latin was for the Catholics?'

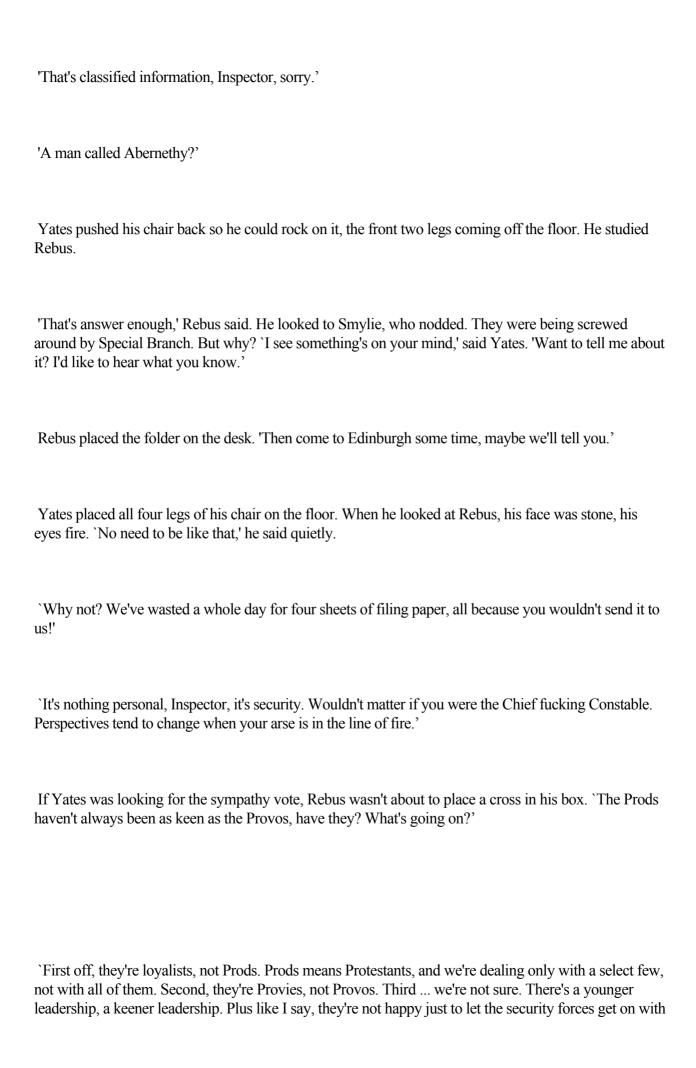
Yates stared at him. 'There are Catholics in the RUC. Don't get us confused with the UDR.'

Then he unlocked another drawer and pulled out a file, pushing it across the desk towards Rebus. 'This doesn't leave the room.'

Smylie drew his chair towards Rebus's, and they read the contents together, Smylie, the faster reader, fidgeting as he waited for Rebus to catch up.

'This is incredible,' Smylie said at one point. He was right. The RUC had evidence of a loyalist





the security forces, they're supposed to be lawabiding. That's changed. They feel threatened. Just now they're the majority, but it won't always be that way. Plus the British government's more concerned with its international image than with a few hard-line loyalists, so it's paying more attention to the Republic. Put all that together and you get disillusioned loyalists, and plenty of them. The loyalist paramilitaries used to have a bad image. A lot of their operations went wrong, they didn't have the manpower or the connections or the international support of the IRA.
'These days they seem to be better organised though, not so much blatant racketeering. A lot of the thugs have been put off the Road that is, put off the Shankill Road, as in banished.'
'But at the same time they're arming themselves,' Rebus said.
'It's true,' added Smylie. 'In the past, whenever we caught them red-handed on the mainland, we used to find gelignite or sodium chlorate, now we're finding rocket launchers and armour-piercing shells.'
'Red-handed.'
Yates smiled at that. 'Oh, it's getting heavy duty,' he agreed.
'But you don't know why?'
Tve given you all the reasons I can.'
Rebus wondered about that, but didn't say anything.
'Look, this is a new thing for us,' Yates said. 'We're used to facing off the Provies, not the loyalists. But now they've got Kalashnikovs, RPG-7s, frag grenades, Brownings.'
'And you're taking them seriously?'

it. See, the loyalist paramilitaries have always had a problem. They're supposed to be on the same side as

'Oh yes, Inspector, we're taking them seriously. That's why I want to know what you know.'
'Maybe we'll tell you over a beer,' Rebus said.
Yates took them to the Crown Bar. Across the street, most of the windows in the Europa Hotel were boarded up, the result of another bomb. The bomb had damaged the Crown, too, but the damage hadn't been allowed to linger. It was a Victorian pub, well preserved, with gas lighting and a wall lined with snugs, each with its own table and its own door for privacy. The interior reminded Rebus of several Edinburgh bars, but here he drank stout rather than heavy, and whiskey rather than whisky.
'I know this place,' he said.
'Been here before, eh?'
'Inspector Rebus,' Smylie explained, 'was in the Army in Belfast.'
So then Rebus had to tell Yates all about it, all about 1969. He wasn't getting it out of his system; he could still feel the pressure inside him. He remembered the republican drinking club again, and the way they'd gone in there swinging wildly, some of the toms more enthusiastic than others. What would he say if he met any of the men they'd beaten? Sorry didn't seem enough. He wouldn't talk about it, but he told Yates a few other stories. Talking was okay, j and drinking was okay too. The thought of the return flight didn't bother him so much after two pints and a nip. By the time they were in the Indian restaurant eating an early lunch in a private booth a long way from any other diners, Smylie had grown loquacious, but it was all mental arm wrestling, comparing and contrasting the two police forces, discussing manpower, back-up, arrest sheets, drug problems.

As Yates pointed out, leaving aside terrorism, Northern Ireland had one of the lowest crime rates going, certainly for serious crimes. There were the usual housebreakings and car-jackings, but few rapes and murders. Even the rougher housing schemes were kept in check by the paramilitaries, whose punishments went beyond incarceration.

Which brought them back to Mary King's Close. Were they any nearer, Rebus wondered, to finding out why Billy Cunningham had been tortured and killed and who had killed him? The letters SaS on an arm, the word Nemo on the floor, the style of the assassination and Cunningham's own sympathies. What did it all add up to? Yates meantime talked a little more freely, while helping Smylie polish off the remaining dishes. He admitted they weren't all angels in the RUC, which did not exactly surprise Rebus and Smylie, but Yates 'said they should see some of the men in the Ulster Defence Regiment, who were so fair-minded that their patrols had to be accompanied by RUC men keeping an eye on them

fair-minded that their patrols had to be accompanied by RUC men keeping an eye on them.
'You were here in '69, Inspector, you'll remember the B Specials? The UDR was formed to replace the B Spesh. The same madmen joined. See, if a loyalist wants to do something for his cause, all he has to do is join the UDR or the RUC Reserve. That fact has kept the UDA and UVF small.'
'Is there still collusion between the security forces and the loyalists?'
Yates pondered that one over a belch. 'Probably,' he said, reaching for his lager. 'The UDR used to be terrible, so did the Royal Irish Rangers. Now, it's not so widespread.'
'Either that or better hidden,' said Rebus.
'With cynicism like that, you should join the RUC.'
'I don't like guns.'
Yates wiped at his plate with a final sliver of nan bread. 'Ah yes,' he said, 'the essential difference between us. I get to shoot people.'
'It's a big difference;' Rebus suggested.

'All the difference in the world,' Yates agreed.

Smylie had gone quiet. He was wiping his own plate with bread.
'Do the loyalists get aid from overseas?' Rebus asked.
Yates sat back contentedly. 'Not as much as the republicans. The loyalists probably rake in £150,000 a year from the mainland, mostly to help families and convicted members. Two-thirds of that comes from Scotland. There are pockets of sympathisers abroad - Australia, South Africa, the US and Canada. Canada's the big one. The UVF have some Ingrams submachine guns just now that were shipped from Toronto. Why do you want to know?'
Rebus and Smylie shared a look, then Smylie started to talk. Rebus was happy to let him: this way, Yates only got to know what Smylie knew, rather than what Rebus suspected. Toronto: headquarters of The Shield. When Smylie had finished, Rebus asked Yates a question.
'This group, Sword and Shield, I didn't see any names on the file.'
'You mean individuals?'
Rebus nodded. 'Well, it's all pretty low-key. We've got suspicions, but the names wouldn't mean anything to you.'
'Try me.'
Yates considered, then nodded slowly. 'Okay.'
'For instance, who's the leader?'
'We haven't breached their command structure not yet.'





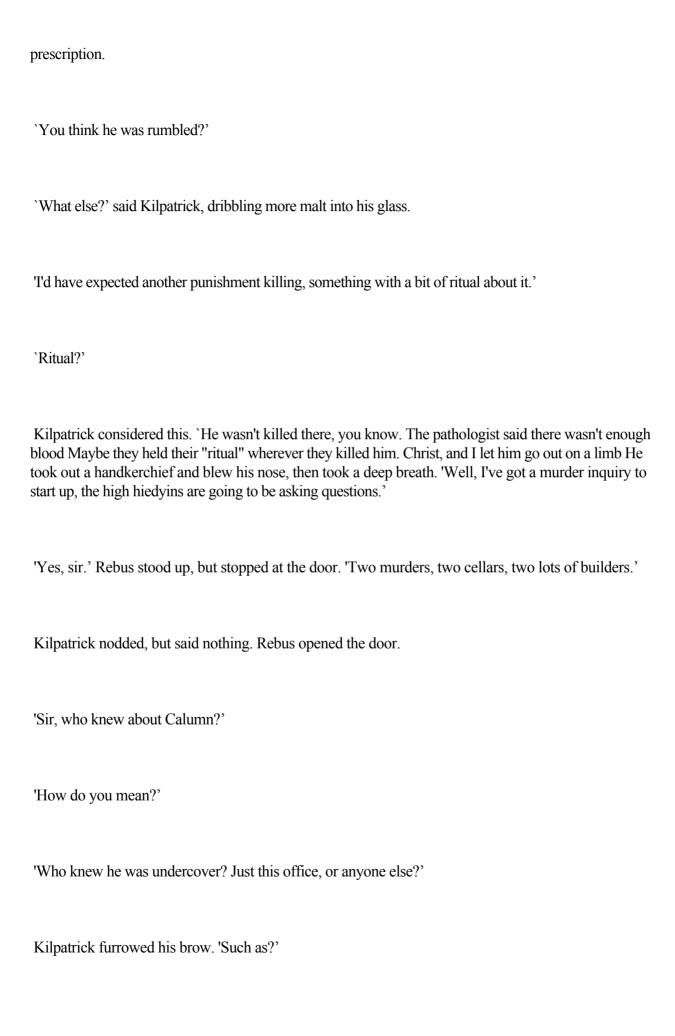
And Smylie got out, relieving the car's suspension. As soon as he'd closed the door, Ormiston moved off.
'What is it, Ormiston?'
`Best if the Chief tells you himself.'
'Give me a clue then.'
'A murder,' Ormiston said, changing up a gear. 'There's been a murder.'
The scene had been cordoned off.
It was a narrow street of tall tenements. St Stephen Street had always enjoyed a rakish reputation, something to do with its mix of student flats, cafes and junk shops. There were several bars, one of them catering mainly to bikers. Rebus had heard a story that Nico, ex-Velvet Underground, had lived here for a time. It could be true. St Stephen Street, connecting the New Town to Raeburn Place, was a quiet thoroughfare which still managed to exude charm and seediness in equal measures.

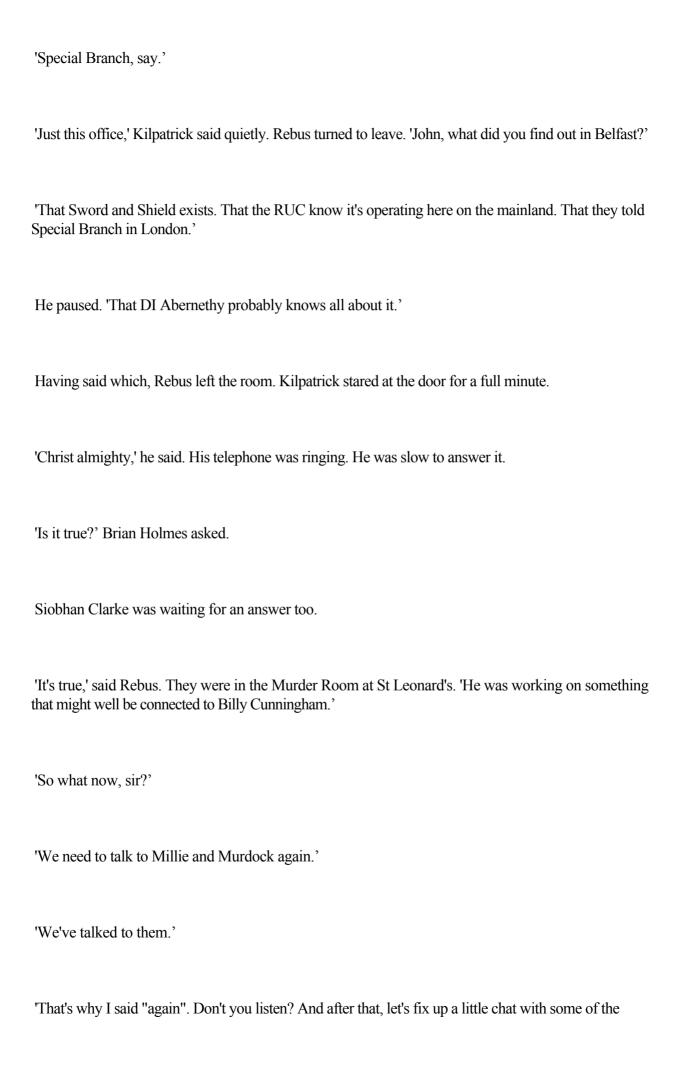
The tenements either side of the street boasted basements, and a lot of these were flats with their own separate stairwells and entrances. Patience lived in just such a flat not seven minutes' walk away. Rebus walked carefully down the stone steps. They were often worn and slippy. At the bottom, in a sort of damp courtyard, the owner or tenant of the flat had attempted to create a garden of terracotta pots and hanging baskets. But most of the plants had died, probably from lack of light, or perhaps from rough treatment at the hands of the builders. Scaffolding stretched up the front of the tenement, much of it covered with thick polythene, crackling in the breeze.

'Cleaning the facade,' someone said. Rebus nodded. The front door of the flat faced a whitewashed wall, and in the wall were set two doors. Rebus knew what these were, they were storage areas, burrowed out beneath the surface of the pavement. Patience had almost identical doors, but never used the space for anything; the cellars were too damp. One of the doors stood open. The floor was mostly moss, some of which was being scraped into an evidence bag by a SOCO.

Kilpatrick, watching this, was listening to Blackwood, who ran his left hand across his pate, tucking an imaginary hair, behind his ear. Kilpatrick saw Rebus.
'Hello, John.'
'Sir.'
'Where's Smylie?'
Ormiston was coming down the steps. Rebus nodded towards him. 'The Quiet Man there dropped him at HQ. So what's the big mystery?'
Blackwood answered. 'Flat's been on the market a few months, but not selling. Owner decided to tart it up a bit, see if that would do the trick. Builders turned up yesterday: Today one of them decided to take a look at the cellars. He found a body.'
'Been there long?'
Blackwood shook his head. 'They're doing the postmortem this evening.'
'Any tattoos?'
'No tattoos,' said Kilpatrick. 'Thing is, John, it was Calumn.'
The Chief Inspector looked genuinely troubled, almost ready for tears. His face had lost its colour, and had lengthened as though the muscles had lost all motivation. He massaged his forehead with a hand.
`Calumn?'

Rebus shook away his hangover. 'Calumn Smylie?'
He remembered the big man, in the back of the HGV with his brother. Tried imagine him dead, but couldn't. Especially not here, in a cellar
Kilpatrick blew his nose loudly, then wiped it. 'I suppose I'd better get back and tell Ken.'
'No need, sir.'
Ken Smylie was standing at street level, gripping the gloss-black railings. He looked like he might uproot the lot.
Instead he arched back his head and gave a high-pitched howl, the sound swirling up into the sky as a smattering of rain began to fall.
Smylie had to be ordered to go home, they couldn't shift him otherwise. Everyone else in the office moved like automatons. DCI Kilpatrick had some decisions to make, chief among them whether or not to tie together the two murder inquiries.
'He was stabbed,' he told Rebus. 'No signs of a struggle, certainly no torture, nothing like that.'
There was relief in his voice, a relief Rebus could understand. 'Stabbed and dumped. Whoever did it probably saw the For Sale sign outside the flat, didn't reckon on the body being found for a while.'
He had produced a bottle of Laphroaig from the bottom drawer of his desk, and poured himself a glass.
'Medicinal,' he explained. But Rebus declined the offer of glass. He'd taken three paracetamol washed down with Irn-Bru. He noticed that the level in the Laphroaig bottle was low. Kilpatrick must have a







'No, thanks, Mr Gowrie.'

They were seated in Arch Gowrie's 'front room', a parlour kept for visitors and special occasions. The real living room, with comfortable sofa, TV and video, drinks cabinet, was elsewhere on this sprawling ground floor. The house was at least three storeys high, and probably boasted an attic conversion too. It was sited in The Grange, a leafy backwater of the city's southern side. The Grange got few visitors; few strangers, and never much traffic, since it was not a wellknown route between any two other areas of the city. A lot of the huge detached houses, one-time merchants' houses with walled grounds and high wooden or metal gates, had been bought by the Church of Scotland or other religious denominations. There was a retirement home to one side of Gowrie's own residence, and what Rebus thought was a convent on the other side.

Archibald Gowrie liked to be called 'Arch'. Everyone knew him as Arch. He was the public face of the Orange Lodge, an eloquent enough apologist (not that he thought there was anything to apologise for), but by no means that organisation's most senior figure. However, he was high enough, and he was easy to find - unlike Millie and Murdock, who weren't home.

Gowrie had agreed readily to a meeting, saying he'd be free between seven and quarter to eight.

'Plenty of time, sir,' Rebus had said.

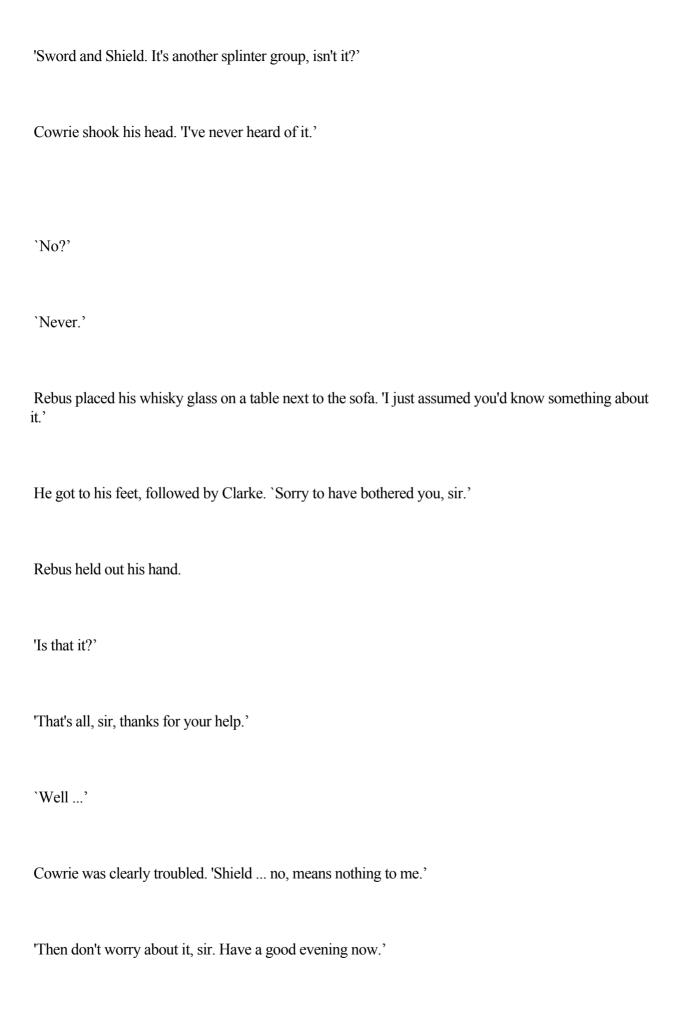
He studied Arch Gowrie now. The man was big and fiftyish and probably attractive to women in that way older men could be. (Though Rebus noticed Siobhan Clarke didn't seem too enthralled.) Though his hair - thinning nicely was silver, his thick moustache was black. He wore his shirt with the sleeves rolled up, showing darkly haired arms. He was always ready for business. In fact, 'open for business' had been his public motto, and he worked tirelessly whenever he got his teeth into a new development.

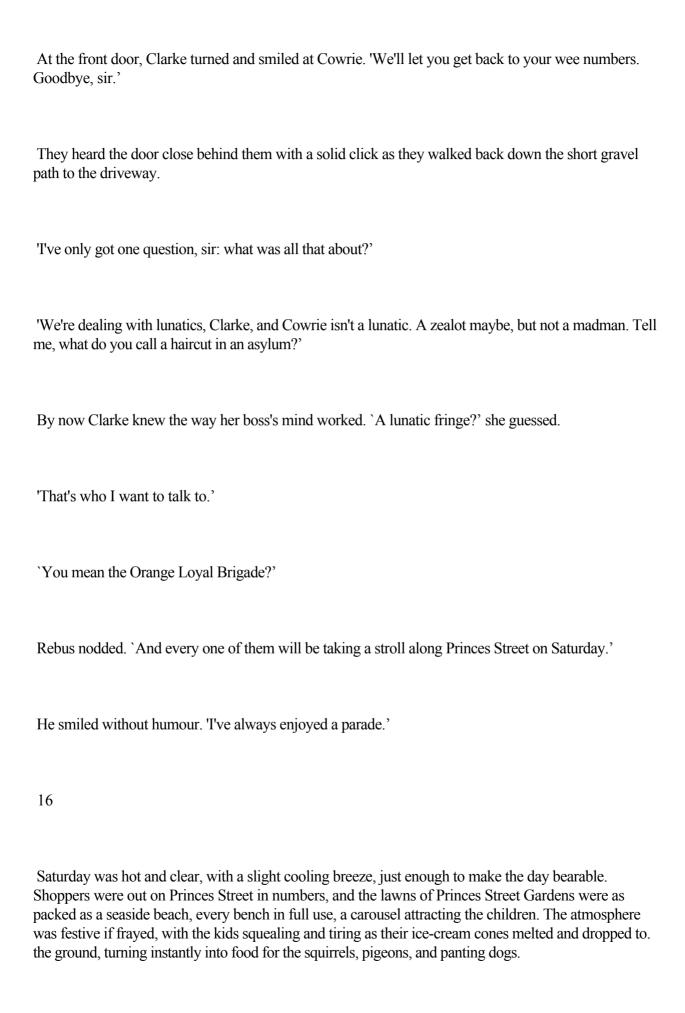
From what Rebus knew, Gowrie, had made his money initially as director of a company which had nippily shifted its expertise from ships and pipelines to building exploration platforms and oil rigs for the North Sea. That was back in the early '70s. The company had been sold at vast profit, and Gowrie had disappeared for several years before reappearing in the guise of property developer and investment guru. He was still a property developer, his name on several projects around the city as well as further afield. But he had diversified into wildly different areas: film production, hi-fi design, edible algae, forestry, two country house hotels, a woollen mill, and the Eyrie restaurant in the New Town. Probably Arch was best known for his part ownership of the Eyrie, the city's best restaurant, certainly its most exclusive, by far its most expensive. You wouldn't find nutritious Hebridean Blue Algae, on its menu, not even written in French, Rebus knew of only one large loss Gowrie had taken, as money man behind a film set predominantly in Scotland. Even boasting Rab Kinnoul as its star, the film had been an Easter turkey. Still, Gowrie wasn't shy: there was a framed poster for the film hanging in the entrance hall.

'Annul mirabilis,' Rebus mused. 'That's Latin, isn't it?'
Gowrie was horrified. 'Of course it's Latin! Don't tell me you never studied Latin at school? I though we Scots were an educated bunch. Miraculous year, that's what it means. Sure about that drink?'
'Maybe a small whisky, sir.' Kill or cure.
'Nothing for me, sir,' said Siobhan Clarke, her voice coming from the high moral ground.
'I won't be a minute,' said Gowrie. When he'd left the room, Rebus turned to her.
'Don't piss him off!' he hissed. 'Just keep your gob shut and your ears open.'
'Sorry, sir. Have you noticed?'
'What?'
'There's nothing green in this room, nothing at all.'
He nodded again. 'The inventor of red, white and blue grass will make a fortune.'
Gowrie came back into the room. He took a look at the two of them on the sofa, then smiled to himself and handed Rebus a crystal tumbler.
'I won't offend you by offering water or lemonade with that.'









The parade was due to set off from Regent Road at three o'clock, and by two-fifteen the pubs behind Princes Street were emptying their cargo of brolly-toting white-gloved elders, bowler hats fixed onto their sweating heads, faces splotched from alcohol. There was a show of regalia, and a few large banners were being unfurled. Rebus couldn't remember what you called the guy at the front of the march, the one who threw up and caught the heavy ornamental staff. He'd probably known in his youth. The flute players were practising, and the snare drummers adjusted their straps and drank from cans of beer.

People outside the Post Office on Waterloo Place could hear the flutes and drums, and peered along towards Regent Road. That the march was to set off from outside the old Royal High School, mothballed site for a devolved Scottish parliament, added a certain something to the affair.

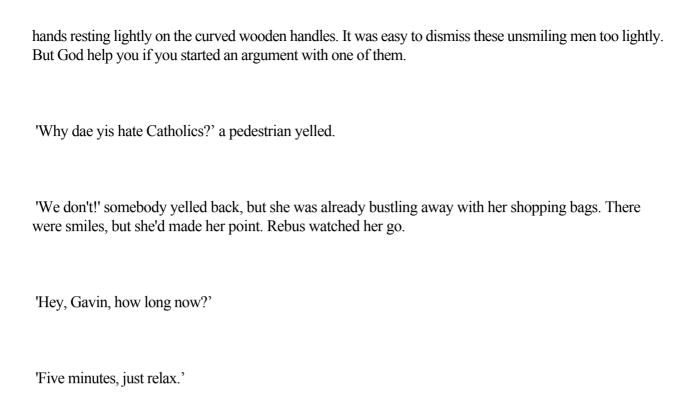
Rebus had been in a couple of the bars, taking a look at the Brigade members and supporters. They were a varied crew, taking in a few Doc Marten-wearing skinheads (just as Gowrie had predicted) as well as the bowler hats. There were also the dark suit/white shirt/dark tie types, their shoes as polished as their faces. Most of them were drinking like fury, though they didn't seem completely mortal yet. Empty cans were being kicked along Regent Road, or trodden on and left by the edges of the pavement. Rebus wasn't sure why these occasions always carried with them the air of threat, of barely suppressed violence, even before they started. Extra police had been drafted in, and were readying to stop traffic from coming down onto Princes Street. Metal-grilled barriers waited by the side of the road, as did the small groups of protesters, and the smaller group of protesters who were protesting against the protesters. Rebus wondered, not for the first time, which maniac on the Council had pushed through the okay for the parade.

The marching season of course had finished, the main parades being on and around the 12th of July, date of the Battle of the Boyne. Even then the biggest marches were in Glasgow. What was the point of this present parade? To stir things up, of course, to make a noise. To be noticed. The big drum, the lambeg, was being hammered now. There was competition from a few bagpipe buskers near Waverley Station, but they'd be silenced by the time the parade reached them.

Rebus wandered freely among the marchers as they drank and joked with each other and adjusted their uniforms. A Union Jack was unfurled, then ordered to be rolled up again, bearing as it did the initials of the British National Party. There didn't seem to be any collecting tins or buckets, the police having pressed for a quick march with as little interaction with the public as possible. Rebus knew this because he'd asked Farmer Watson, and the Farmer had confirmed that it would be so.

'Here's tae King Billyl' A can was raised. 'God bless the Queen and King William of Orange!'

'Well said, son.' The bowler hats said little, standing with the tips of their umbrellas touching the ground,



Rebus looked towards the man who had just spoken, the man who was probably called Gavin MacMurray and therefore in charge. He seemed to have appeared from nowhere. Rebus had read the file on Gavin MacMurray: two arrests for breach of the peace and actual bodily harm, but a lot more information to his name than that. Rebus knew his age (38), that he was married and lived in Currie, and that he ran his own garage. He knew Inland Revenue had no complaints against him, that he drove a red Mercedes Benz (though he made his money. from more prosaic Fords, Renaults and the like), and that his teenage son had been in trouble for fighting, with two arrests after pitched battles outside Rangers matches and one arrest after an incident on the train home from Glasgow.

So Rebus assumed the teenager standing close beside Gavin MacMurray must be the son, Jamesie. Jamesie had pretensions of all obvious kinds. He wore sunglasses and a tough look, seeing himself as his father's lieutenant. His legs were -apart, shoulders back. Rebus had never seen anyone itching so badly for action of some kind. He had his father's low square jaw, the same black hair cut short at the front. But while Gavin MacMurray was dressed in chainstore anonymity, Jamesie wanted people to look at him. Biker boots, tight black jeans, white t-shirt and black leather jacket. He wore a red bandana around his right wrist, a studded leather strap around the left. His hair, long and curling at the back, had been shaved above both ears.

Turning from son to father was like turning from overt to covert strength. Rebus knew which he'd rather tackle. Gavin MacMurray was chewing gum with his front teeth, his head and eyes constantly in movement, checking things, keeping things in check. He kept his hands in his windcheater pockets, and wore silver-framed spectacles which magnified his eyes. There seemed little charisma about him, little of the rouser or orator. He looked chillingly ordinary.

Because he was ordinary, they all were, all these semi inebriated working men and retired men, quiet family types who might belong to the British Legion or their local Ex-Servicemen's Club, who might inhabit the bowling green on summer evenings and go with their families on holiday to Spain or Florida or Largs. It was only when you saw them in groups like this that you caught a whiff of something else. Alone, they had nothing but a nagging complaint; together, they had a voice: the sound of the lambeg, dense as a heartbeat; the insistent flutes; the march. They always fascinated Rebus. He couldn't help it. It was in his blood. He'd marched in his youth. He'd done a lot of things back then.

There was a final gathering of lines, MacMurray readying his troops. A word with the policeman in charge, a conversation by two-way radio, then a nod from MacMurray. The opening fat-firy of snare drums, the lambeg pumping away, and then the flutes. They marched on the spot for a few moments, then moved off towards Princes Street, where traffic had been stopped for them, where the Castle glared down on them, where a lot of people but by no means everyone paused to watch.

A few months back, a pro-republican march had been banned from this route. That was why the protesters were particularly loud in their jeers, thumbs held down. Some of them were chanting Na-Zis, Na-Zis, and then being told to shut up by uniformed police. There would be a few arrests, there always were. You hadn't had a good day out at a march unless there'd been at least the threat of arrest.

Rebus followed the march from the pavement, sticking to the Gardens side, which was quieter. A few more marchers had joined in, but it was still small beer, hardly worth the bother. He was beginning to wonder what he'd thought would happen. His eyes moved back through the procession from the tosser at the front, busy with his muckle stick, through the flutes and drums, past bowler hats and suits, to the younger marchers and stragglers. A few pre-teenage kids had joined in on the edges, loving every minute. Jamesie, right near the back, told them in no uncertain terms that they should leave, but they didn't listen to him. `Tough' always was a relative term.

But now one of the stragglers clutched Jamesie's arm and they shared a few words, both of them grinning. The straggler was wearing sunglasses with mirrored lenses, and a denim jacket with no shirt beneath.

`Hello,' said Rebus quietly. He watched Jamesie and Davey Soutar have their conversation, saw Jamesie pat Davey on the shoulder before Davey moved away again, falling back until he left the procession altogether, squeezing between two of the temporary barriers and vanishing into the crowd.

Jamesie seemed to relax a bit after this. His walk became looser, less of an act, and he swung his arms in time to the music. He seemed to be realising that it was a bright summer's day, and at last peeled off his leather jacket, slinging it over one shoulder, showing off his arm muscles and several tattoos. Rebus

walked a bit faster, keeping close to the edge of the pavement. One of the tattoos was professional, and showed the ornately overlaid letters RFC: Rangers Football Club. But there was also the maroon emblem of Heart of Midlothian FC, so obviously Jamesie liked to play safe. Then there was a kilted, busby-wearing piper, and further down his arm towards the leather wristband a much more amateur job, the usual shaky greeny blue ink.

The letters SaS.

Rebus blinked. It was almost too far away for him to be sure. Almost. But he was sure. And suddenly he didn't want to talk to Gavin MacMurray any more. He wanted a word with his son.

He stopped on the pavement, letting the march pull away from him. He knew where they were heading. A left turn into Lothian Road, passing the windows of the Caledonian Hotel. Something for the rich tourists to get a picture of. Then another left into King"s Stables Road, stopping short of the Grassmarket. Afterwards, they'd probably head down into the Grassmarket itself for the post-march analysis and a few more beers. The Grassmarket being trendy these days, there'd be a lot of Fringe drinkers there too. A fine cocktail of cultures for a Saturday afternoon.

He followed the trail to one of the rougher pubs on the Cowgate, just the other side of Candlemaker Row from the Grassmarket. At one time, they'd hung miscreants from the gallows in the Grassmarket. It was a cheerier prospect these days, though you wouldn't necessarily know it from a visit to the Merchant's Bar where, at ten p.m. each night, the pint glasses were switched for flimsy plastic imposters, relieving the bar of ready weapons. It was that kind of place.

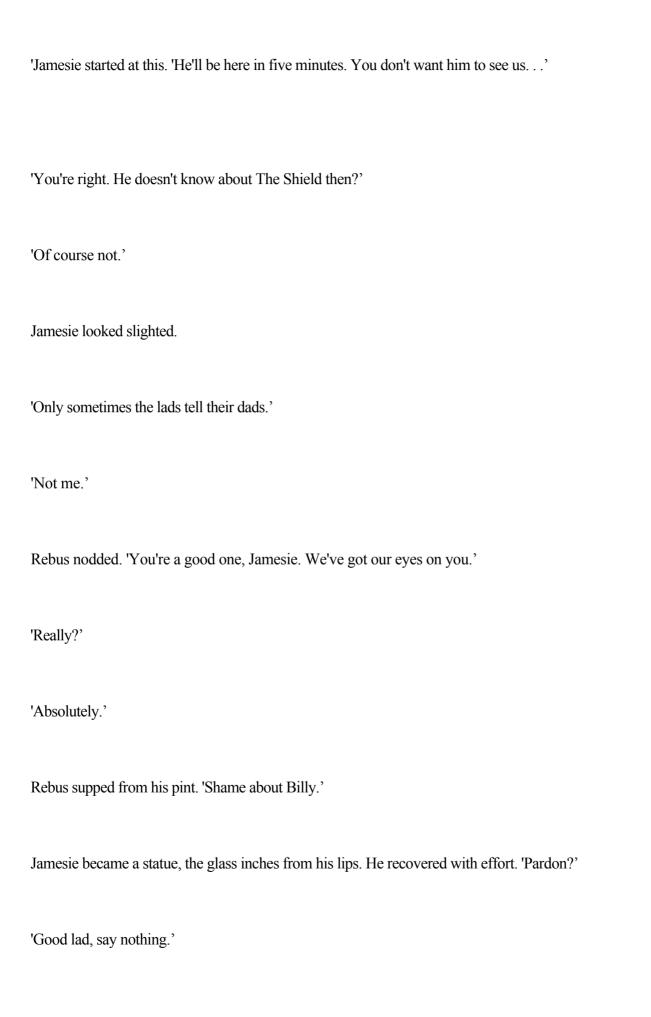
Inside, the bar was airless, a drinkers' fug of smoke and television heat. You didn't come here for a good time, you came out of necessity. The regulars were like dragons, each mouthful cooling the fire inside them. As he entered the bar, he saw no one he recognised, not even the barman. The barman was a new face, just out of his teens. He poured pints with an affected disdain, and took the money like it was a bribe. From the sounds of atonal song, Rebus knew the marchers were upstairs, probably emptying the place.

Rebus took his pint - still in a glass glass - and headed up to the dance hall. Sure enough, the marchers were about all there was. They'd shed jackets, ties, and inhibitions, and were milling around, singing to off -key flutes and downing pints and shorts. Getting the drink in had become a logistical nightmare, and more marchers were coming in all the time.

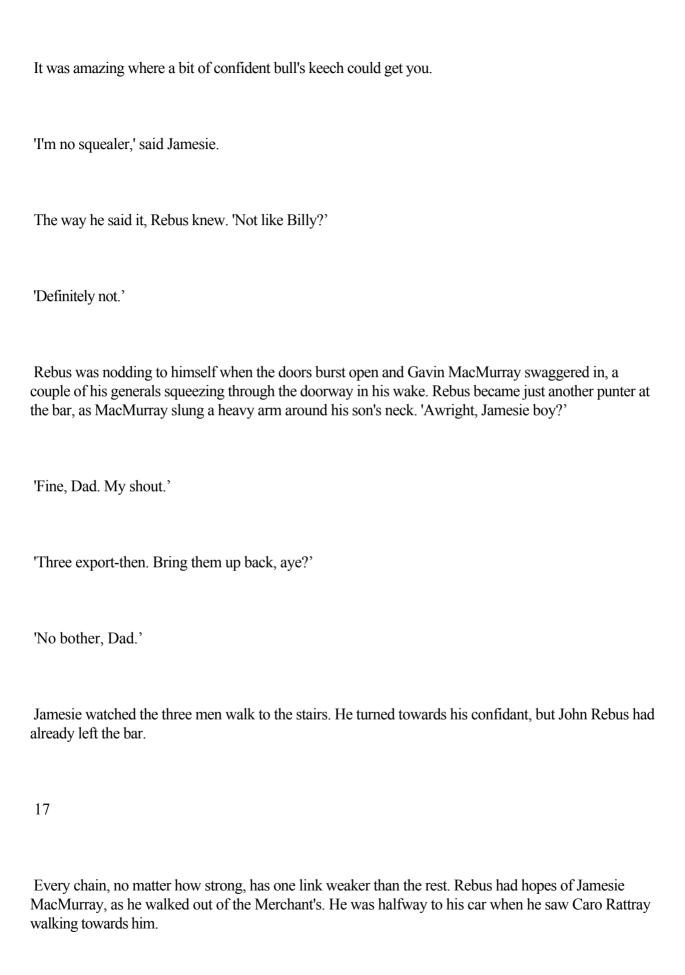


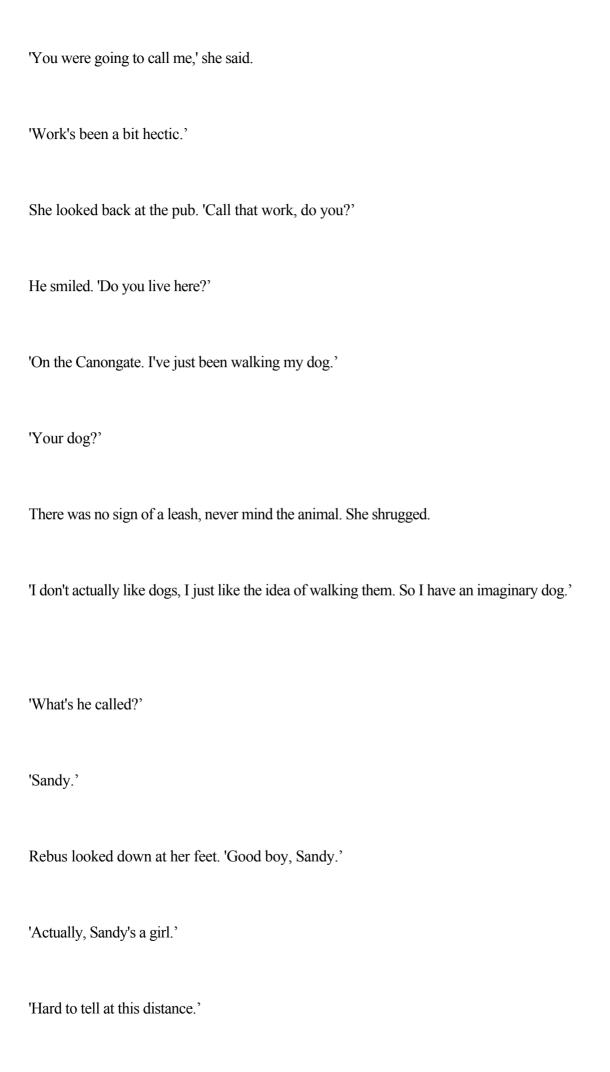


Rebus turned towards him. 'I just do.'
Jamesie looked around him, licking his lips. Rebus handed him one of the pints. 'Here, get this down you.'
'Ta.'
He lowered his voice. 'You're in The Shield?'
'What makes you think that?'
Now Jamesie smiled. 'How's Davey, by the way?'
'Davey?'
'Davey Soutar,' said Rebus. 'You two know each other, don't you?'
'I know Davey.'
He blinked. 'Christ, you are in The Shield. Hang on, did I see you at the parade?'
'I bloody hope so.'
Now Jamesie nodded slowly. 'I thought I saw you.'
'You're a sharp lad, Jamesie. There's a bit of your dad in you.'











'Gentleman friend then,' he persisted.
'Doesn't have the same connotations though, does it?'
Rebus sighed.
'I know, I know,' she said, 'never argue with an advocate.'
Rebus looked out of the back window onto a drying green. Overhead, the few clouds were basking in the space they had. 'Sandy's digging up your flower bed.'
'What do you want to drink?'
'Tea, please.'
'Sure? I've only got decaf.'
'That's perfect.'
He meant it. While she made noises in the kitchen, he walked through the living room. Diningtable and chairs and wall units at the back, sofa, chairs, bookcases towards the front. It was a nice room. From the small front window, he looked down onto slow-walking tourists and a shop selling tartan teddy-bears.

"This is a nice part of town,' he said, not really meaning it. .

'Are you kidding? Ever tried parking round here in the summer?'
'I never try parking anywhere in the summer.'
He moved away from the window. A flute and some sheet music sat on a spindly music-stand in one corner. On a unit were small framed photos of the usual gap-toothed kids and kind-looking old people.
'Family,' she said, coming back into the room. She lit a cigarette, took two deep puffs on it, then stubbed it into an ashtray, exhaling and wafting the smoke away with her hand. 'I hate smoking indoors,' she explained.
'Then why do it?'
'I smoke when I'm nervous.'
She smiled slyly and returned to the kitchen, Rebus following. The aroma of the cigarette mingled with the richer aroma of the perfume she wore. Had she just applied some? It hadn't been this strong before.
The kitchen was small, functional. The whole flat had the look of recent but not radical redecoration.
'Milk?'
'Please. No sugar.'
Their conversation, he realised, was assuming a studied banality.

The kettle clicked off. 'Can you take the mugs?'

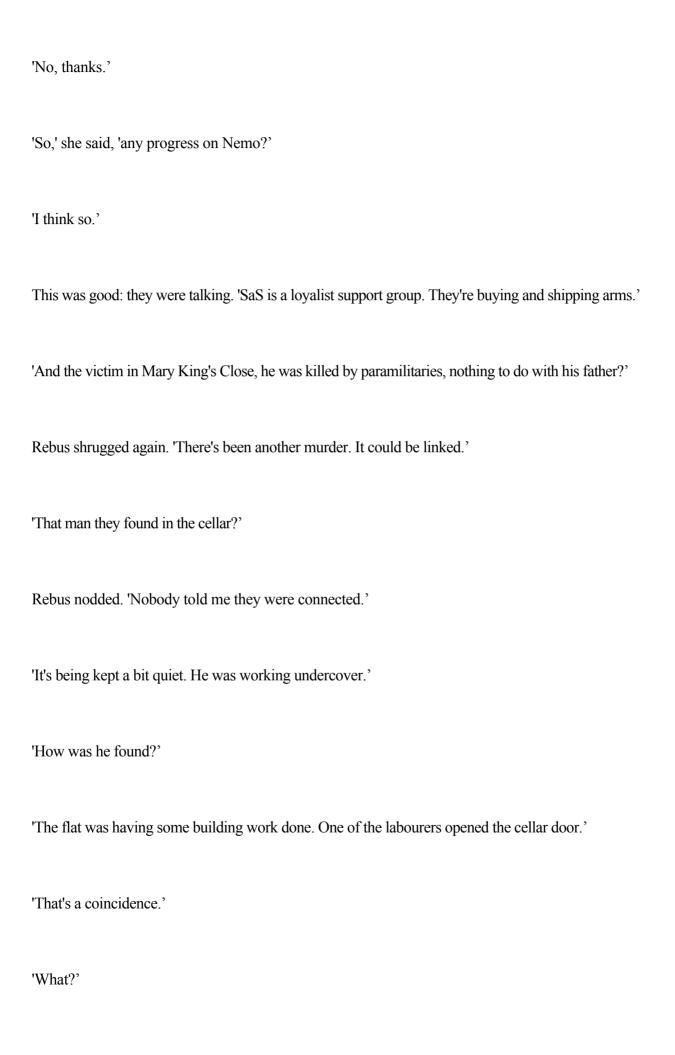
She had already poured a splash of milk into either plain yellow mug. There wasn't much room at all in the kitchen, something Rebus realised as he went to pick up the mugs. He was right beside her as she stirred the teabags in the pot. Her head was bent down, affording a view of the long black hairs curling from her nape, and the nape of her neck itself. She half turned her face towards him, smiling, her eyes finally finding his. Then she moved her body around too. Rebus kissed her forehead first, then her cheek. She had closed her eyes. He burrowed his fare in her neck, inhaling deeply: shampoo and perfume and skin. He kissed her again, then came up for air. Caroline opened her eyes slowly.

'Well now,' she said.
He felt suddenly as though he'd been flung down a tunnel, watching the circle of light at the entrance shrink to a full stop. He tried desperately to think of something to say. There was perfume in his lungs.
'Well now,' she repeated. What did that mean? Was she pleased, shocked, bemused? She turned back to the teapot and put its lid on.
I better go,' Rebus said. She became very still. He couldn't see her face, not enough of it. 'Hadn't I-'
'I've no commitments, John.' Her hands were resting lightly on the work surface, either side of the pot. 'What about you?'
He knew what she meant; she meant Patience. 'There's someone,' he said.
'I know, Dr Curt told me.'

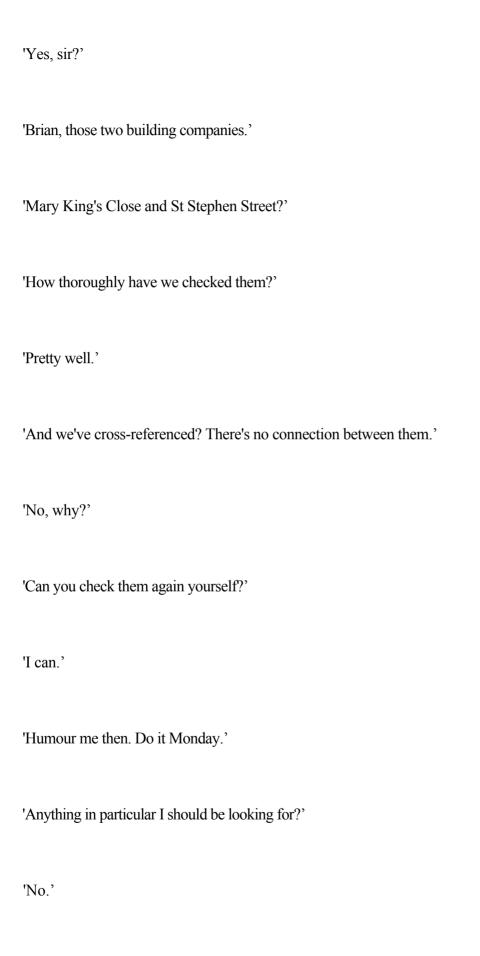
'What?' She turned to him.

'I'm sorry, Caroline, I shouldn't have done that.'











Yes.'
'It's Giorgio, isn't it?'
'Sorry?'
That perfume.'
She leaned close, sniffed his shirt. 'Giorgio of Beverly Hills.'
Patience'
'You'll have to tell me about her one of these days.'
'You think I'm seeing someone?'
She threw the small sharp kitchen knife at the sink and ran from the room. Rebus stood there, listening until he heard the front door slam. He poured the milk down the sink.
He took back the videos - still unwatched - then went for a drive. The Dell Bar sat on an unlovely stretch of main road outside the Gar-B. It didn't get much passing trade, but there was a line of cars parked outside. Rebus slowed as he drove past. He could go in, but what good would it do? Then he saw something, and pulled his car up kerbside. Next to him a van was parked, with fly-posters pasted or its sides. The posters advertised the play which was soon td go on in the Gar-B gang hut. The theatre group was called Active Resistance. Some of them must be drinking inside. A few vehicles further on the car he wanted. He bent down at the driver's side window. Ken Smylie tried to ignere him, then

'What are you doing here?' he asked.

wound the window down angrily:

'I was about to ask the same,' said Rebus.
Smylie nodded towards the Dell. He had his hands on the steering-wheel. They weren't just resting on it, they were squeezing it. 'Maybe there's someone drinking fin there killed Calumn.'
'Maybe there is,' Rebus said quietly: he didn't fancy being Smylie's punchbag. 'What are you going to do about it?'
Smylie stared at him. 'I'm going to sit here.'
'And then what? Break the neck of every man who comes out? You know the score, Ken.'
'Leave me alone.'
'Look, Ken-' Rebus broke off, as the Dell's door swung open and two punters sauntered out, cigarettes in mouths, sharing some joke between them. 'Look,' he said, 'I know how you feel. I've got a brother too. But this isn't doing any good.'
'Just go away.'
Rebus sighed, straightened up. 'Fair enough then. But if there's any hassle, radio for assistance. Just do that for me, okay?'
Smylie almost smiled. 'There won't be any trouble, believe me.'
Rebus did, the way he believed TV advertising and weather reports. He walked back towards his car. The two drinkers were getting into their Vauxhall. As the passenger yanked open his door, it nearly caught Rebus.

The man didn't bother to apologise. He gave Rebus a look like it was Rebus's fault, then got into his seat.
Rebus had seen the man before. He was about five-ten, broad in the chest, wearing jeans and black t-shirt and a denim jacket. He had a face shiny with drink, sweat on his forehead and in his wavy brown hair. But it wasn't until Rebus was back in his own car and halfway home that he put a name to the face. The man Yates had told him about, shown him a photo of, the ex-UVF man they'd lost in Glasgow. Alan Fowler. Drinking in the Gar-B like he owned the place.
Maybe he did at that.
Rebus retraced his route, cruising some of the narrow streets, checking parked cars. But he'd lost the Vauxhall. And Ken Smylie's car was no longer outside the Dell.
18
Monday morning at St Leonard's, Chief Inspector Lauderdale was having to explain a joke he'd just made.
'See, the squid's so meek, Hans can't bring himself to thump it either.'
He caught sight of Rebus walking into the Murder Room. 'The prodigal returns! Tell us, what's it like working with the glamour boys?'
'It's all right,' said Rebus. 'I've already had one return flight out of them.'
Lauderdale clearly had not been expecting this

He captured a few laughs for his trouble. Rebus didn't mind being the butt. He knew the way it was. In a murder inquiry, you worked as a team. Lauderdale, as team manager, had the job of boosting morale, keeping things lively. Rebus wasn't part of the team, not exactly, so he was open to the occasional low tackle with studs showing.
He went to his desk, which more than ever resembled a rubbish tip, and tried to see if any messages had been left for him. He had spent the rest of his weekend, when not avoiding Patience, trying to track down Abernethy or anyone else in Special Branch who'd talk to him. Rebus had left message after message, so far without success.
DI Flower, teeth showing, advanced on Rebus's desk.
'We've got a confession,' he said, 'to the stabbing in St Stephen Street. Want to talk to the man?'
Rebus was wary. 'Who is it?'
'Unstable from Dunstable. He's off his trolley this time, keeps asking for a curry and talking about cars. I told him he'd have to settle for a bridie and his bus fare.'
'You're all heart, Flower.'
Rebus saw that Siobhan Clarke had finished getting ready. 'Excuse me.'
'Ready, sir?' Clarke asked.
'Plenty ready. Let's go before Lauderdale or Flower can think of another gag at my expense. Not that their jokes ever cost me more than small change.'

'So it's true then,' he said, recovering well, 'they're all high flyers over at SCS.'

They took Clarke's cherry-red Renault 5, following bus after bus west through the slow streets until they could take a faster route by way of The Grange, passing the turnoff to Arch Gowrie's residence. 'And you said The Grange didn't lead anywhere,' Clarke said, powering through the gears. True enough, it was the quickest route between St Leonard's and Morningside. It was just that as a policeman, Rebus had never had much cause to heed Morningside, that genteel backwater where old ladies in white face powder, like something out of a Restoration play, sat in tea shops and pondered aloud their next choice from the cake-stand. Morningside wasn't exclusive the way Grange was. There were students in Morningside, living at the top of roadside tenements, and people on the dole, in rented flats housing too many bodies, keeping the rent down. But when you thought of Morningside you thought of old ladies and that peculiar pronunciation they had, like they'd all understudied Maggie Smith in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie. The Glaswegians joked about it. They said Morningside people thought sex was what the coal came in. Rebus doubted there were coal fires in Morningside any longer, though there would certainly be some wood-burning stoves, brought in by the young professionals who probably outnumbered the old ladies these days, though they weren't nearly so conspicuous. It was to serve these young professionals, as well as to cater for local businesses, that a thriving little computer shop had opened near the corner of Comiston Road and Morningside Drive. 'Can I help you?' the male assistant asked, not looking up from his keyboard. 'Is Millie around?' Rebus asked. 'Through the arch.'

There was a single step up to the arch, through which was another part of the shop, specialising in

'Thanks.'

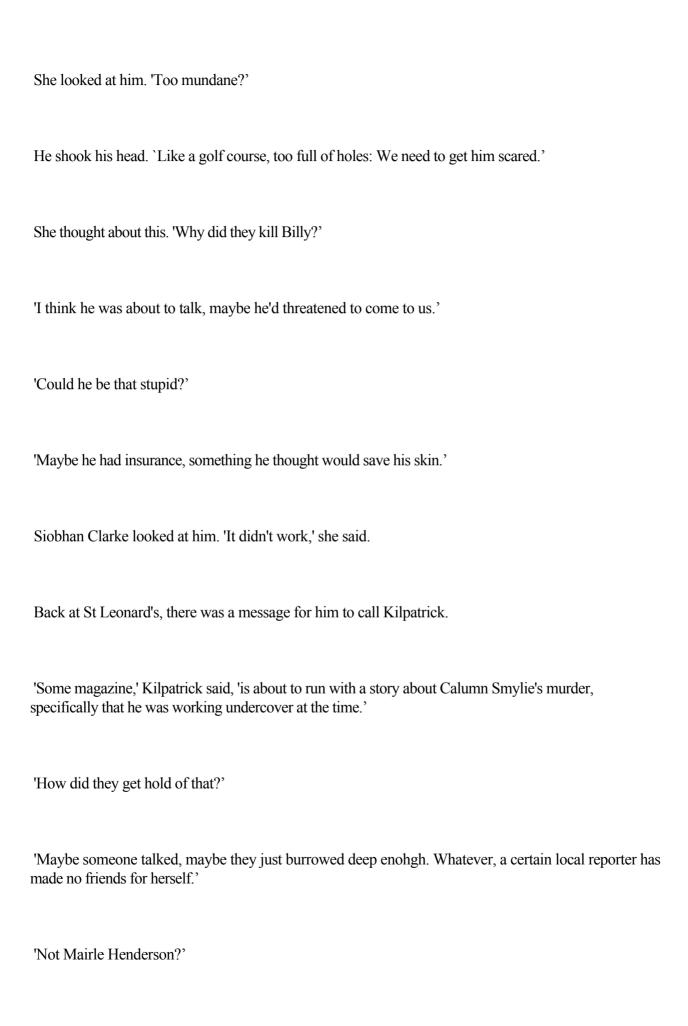


'What about his motorbike?'
She smiled. 'That thing. You could hardly call it a bike. A friend of his asked if he could have it. Billy's mum said she didn't mind.'
'You liked Billy?'
'I liked him a lot. He was genuine. You never got bullshit with Billy. If he didn't like you, he'd tell you to your face. I hear his dad's some kind of villain.'
'They didn't know one another.'
She slapped the coffee-maker. 'This thing takes ages. Is that what you want to ask me about, Billy's dad?'
'Just a few general questions. Before he died, did Billy seem worried about anything?'
'I've been asked already, more than once.'
She looked at Clarke. 'You first, and then that big bastard with the voice like something caught in a mousetrap.'
Rebus smiled: it was a fair description of Ken Smylie. 'Billy was just the same as ever, that's all I can say.'
'Did he get along okay with Mr Murdock?'

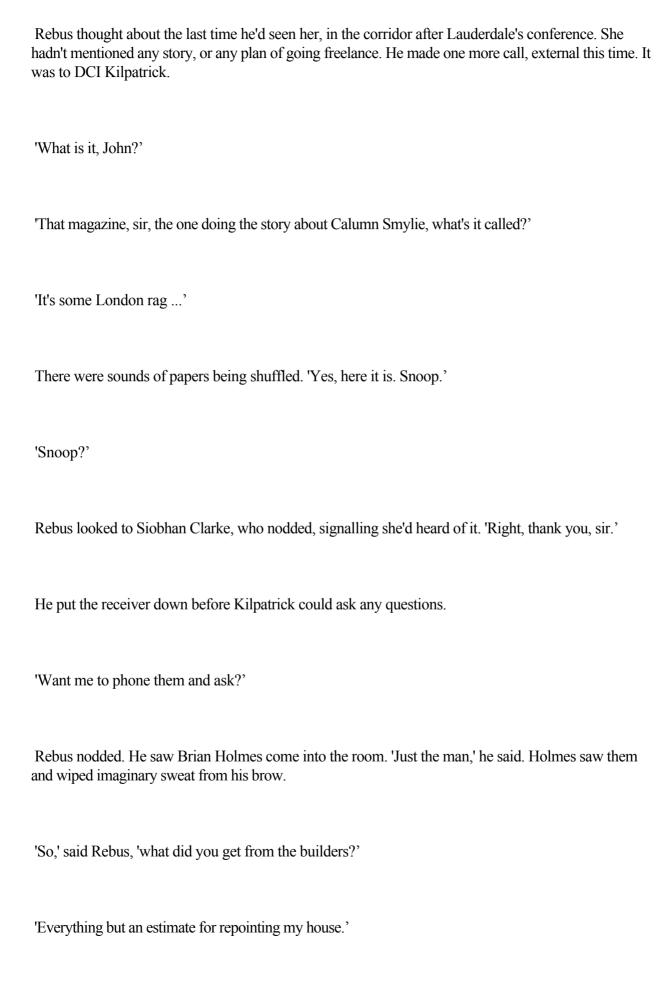
'What sort of question is that? Christ, you're scraping the barrel if you think Murdock would've done anything to Billy.'
'You know what it's like in mixed flats though, where there's a couple plus one, jealousy can be a problem.'
An electric buzzer announced the arrival of a customer. They could hear Steve talking to someone.
'We've got to ask, Millie,' Clarke said soothingly.
'No you don't. It's just that you like asking!' So much for the good mood. Even Steve and the customer seemed to be listening. The coffee machine started dolloping boiled water into the filter.
'Look,' said Rebus, 'let's calm down, eh? If you like, we can come back. We could come to the flat 'It never ends, does it? What is this? Trying to get a confession out of me?'
She clasped her hands together. 'Yes, I killed him. It was me.'
Slfe held her hands out, wrists prominent. 'I've forgotten my cuff's,' Rebus said, smiling. Millie looked to Siobhan Clarke, who shrugged.
'Great, I can't even get myself arrested.'
She sloshed coffee into a mug. 'And I thought it was the easiest thing in the world.'
'Are we really so bad, Millie?'
She smiled, looked down at her mug. 'I suppose not, sorry about that.'

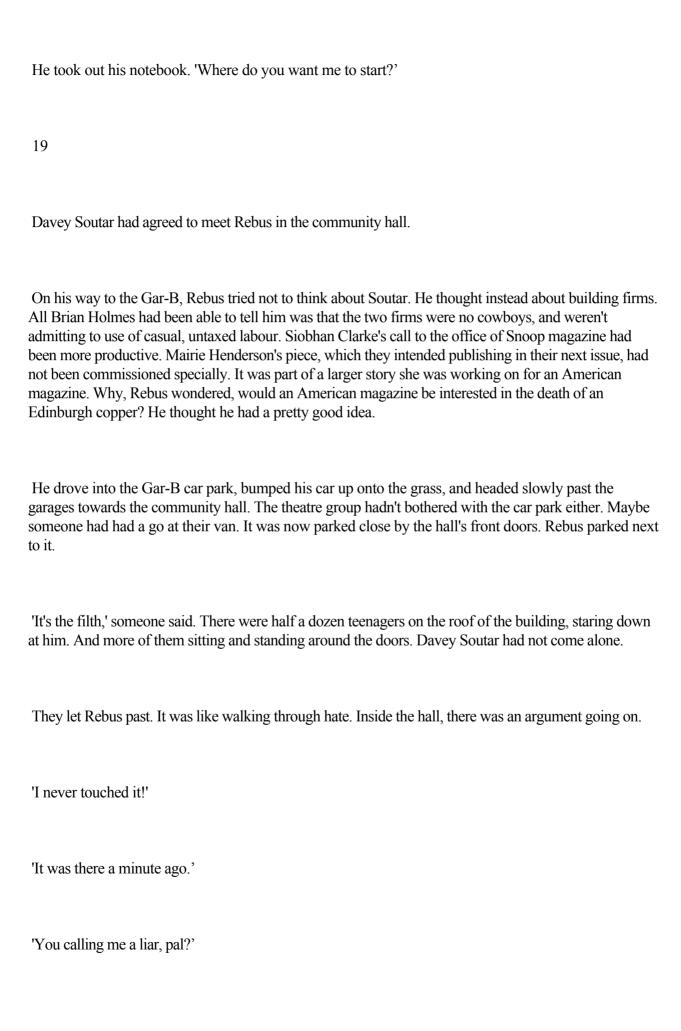
'You	're under a lot of strain,' said Siobhan Clarke, 'we appreciate that. Maybe if we sit down, eh?'
	ney sat at Millie's desk, like customers and assistant. Clarke, who liked computers, had actually d up a couple of brochures.
'That	's got a twenty-five megahertz microprocessor,' Millie said, pointing to one of the brochures.
'Wha	at size memory?'
'Four	meg RAM, I think, but you can select a hard disk up to one-sixty.'
`Doe	es this one have a 486 chip?'
and h	d girl, thought Rebus. Clarke was calming Millie down, taking her mind off both Billy Cunningham er recent outburst. Steve brought the customer through to show him a certain screen. He gave the of them a look full of curiosity.
'Sorr	y, Steve,' said Millie, 'forgot your coffee.'
Hers	smile would not have passed a polygraph.
Rebu	as waited till Steve and the customer had retreated. 'Did Billy ever bring friends back to the flat?'
Tve ş	given you a list.'
Rebu	us nodded. 'Nobody else you've thought of since?'



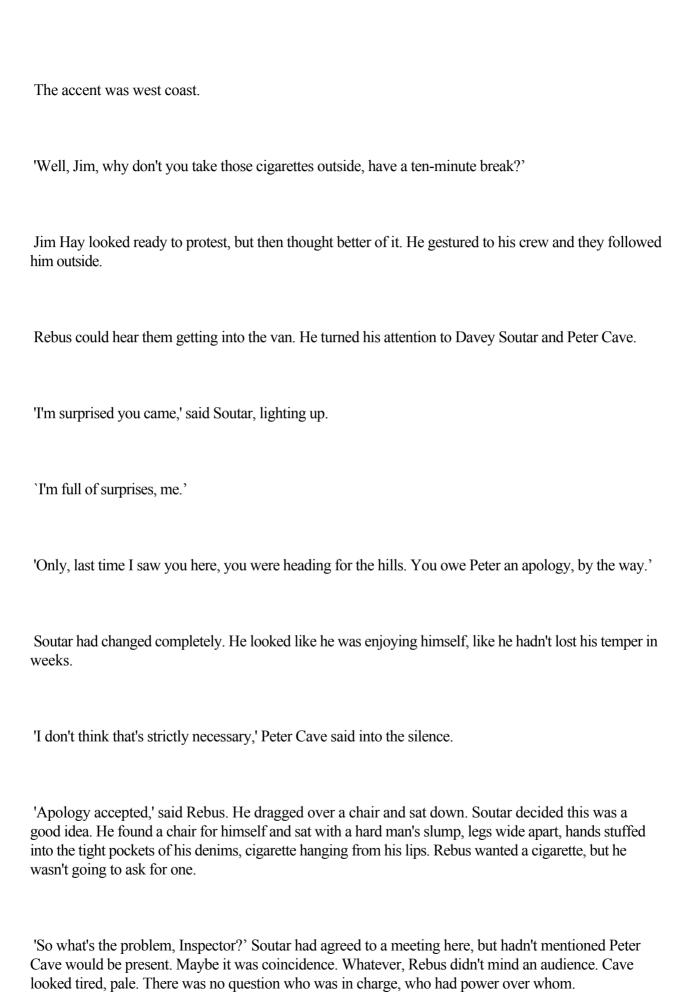


'That's the name. You know her, don't you?'
'Not particularly,' Rebus lied. He knew Kilpatrick was fishing. If someone in the notoriously tight-upped SCS was blabbing, who better to point the finger at than the new boy? He phoned the news desk while Siobhan fetched them coffee.
'Mairie Henderson, please. What? Since when? Right, thanks.'
He put the phone down. 'She's resigned,' he said, not quite believing it. 'Since last week. She's gone freelance apparently.'
'Good for her,' said Siobhan, handing over a cup. But Rebus wasn't so sure. He called Mairie's home number, but got her answering machine. Its message was succinct: 'I'm busy with an assignment, so I can't promise a quick reply unless you're offering work. If you are offering work, leave your number. You can see how dedicated I am. Here comes the beep.'
Rebus waited for it. 'Mairie, it's John Rebus. Here are three numbers you can get me on.'
He gave her St Leonard's, Fettes, and Patience's flat, not feeling entirely confident about this last, wondering if any message from a woman would reach him with Patience on the intercept.
Then he made an internal call to the station's liaison officer.
'Have you seen Mairie Henderson around?'
'Not for a wee while. The paper seems to have switched her for someone else, a right dozy wee nyafl.'
'Thanks.'









'I just have a few things to ask, there's no question of charges or anything criminal, all right?' Soutar obliged with a grunt, examining the laces of his basketball boots. He was shirtless again, still wearing the worn denim jacket. It was filthy, and had been decorated with pen drawings and dark-inked words, names mostly. Grease and dirt were erasing most of the messages and symbols, a few of which had already been covered with fresh hieroglyphs in thicker, darker ink. Soutar slid a hand from his pocket and ran it down his chest, rubbing the few fair curling hairs over his breast bone. Ire was giving Rebus a friendly look, his lips slightly parted. Rebus wanted to smash him in the face. 'I can walk any time I want?' he said to Rebus. 'Any time.' The chair grated against the floor as Soutar pushed it back and stood up. Then he laughed and sat down again, wriggling to get comfortable, making sure his crotch was visible. 'Ask me a question then,' he said. 'You know the Orange Loyal Brigade?' 'Sure. That was easy, try another.' But Rebus had turned to Cave. 'Have you heard of it, too?' 'I can't say I -' 'Hey! It's me the questions are for!' 'In a second, Mr Soutar.'

Davey Soutar liked that: Mr Soutar. Only the dole office and the census taker had ever called him Mr.
'The Orange Loyal Brigade, Mr Cave, is an extreme hard line Protestant group, a small force but an organised one, based in east central Scotland.'
Soutar confirmed this with a nod.
'The Brigade were kicked out of the Orange Lodge for being too extreme. This may give you some measure of them. Do you know what they're committed to, Mr Cave? Maybe Mr Soutar can answer.'
Mr again! Soutar chuckled. 'Hating -the Papes,' he said.
'Mr Soutar's right.'
Rebus's eyes hadn't moved from Cave's since he'd first turned to him. 'They hate Catholics.'
'Papes,' said Soutar. 'Left-footers, Tigs, bogmen, Paddies.'
'And a few more names beside,' added Rebus. He left a measured pause. 'You're a Roman Catholic, aren't you?'
As if he'd forgotten. Cave merely nodded, while Soutar slid his eyes sideways to look at him. Suddenly Rebus turned to Soutar. `Who's head of the Brigade, Davey?'
`Er Ian Paisleyl' He laughed, and got a smile from Rebus.
'No, but really.'





'Pete was straight with us,' he admitted. He was staying on his feet.
'And that didn't bother you? I mean, you came to his club, bringing your gang with you. And the Catholic gang came along too. What did Jamesie say about that?'
`It's nothing to do with him.'
'You could see it was a good thing though, eh? Meeting the Catholic gang, divvying up the ground between you. It's the way it works in Ulster, that's what you've heard. Who told you? Jamesie? His dad?'
'His dad?'
'Or was it The Shield?'
'I never even-' Davey Soutar stopped. He was breathing hard as he pointed at Rebus. 'You're in shits up past the point of breathing.'
'When I must be standing on your shoulders. Come on. Davey.'
`It's Mr Soutar.'
'Mr Soutar then.'
Rebus had his hands open, palms up. He was sitting back in his chair, rocking it on its back legs. 'Come on, sit down. It's no big deal. Everybody knows about The Shield, knows you're part of it. Everybody except Mr Cave here.'





coloured wires. Hard to defuse when you didn't know which wire to attack first.

The doors were opening again, and he looked up. Davey Soutar was standing there. Behind him there were others, more than a dozen of them. Soutar was breathing hard. Rebus glanced at his watch and hoped it was right. There was an Emergency Exit at the other end of the hall, but where did Rebus go from there? Instead, he climbed onto the stage and watched them advance. Soutar wasn't saying anything. The whole procession took place in silence, except for breathing and the shuffle of feet on the floor. They were at the front of the stage now. Rebus picked up a length of wood, part of the broken set. Soutar, his eyes on the wood, began to climb onto the stage.

He stopped when he heard the sirens. He froze for a moment, staring up at Rebus. The policeman was smiling. 'Think I'd come here without my cavalry, Davey?'

The sirens were drawing closer. 'Your call, Davey,' Rebus said, managing to sound relaxed. 'If you want another riot, here's your chance.'

But all Davey Soutar did was ease himself back off the stage. He stood there, eyes wide and unblinking, as if sheer will of thought might cause Rebus to implode. A final snarl, and he turned and walked away. They followed him, all of them. Some looked back at Rebus. He tried not to look too relieved, lit another cigarette instead. Soutar was crazy, a force gone mad, but he was strong too. Rebus was just beginning to realise how very strong he was.

He went home exhausted that evening, 'home' by now being a very loose term for Patience's flat.

He was still shaking a bit. When Soutar had left the hall that first time, he'd taken it all out on Rebus's car. There were fresh dents, a smashed headlamp, a chipped windscreen. The actors in the van looked like they'd witnessed a frenzy. Then Rebus had told them about their sets.

He'd thought about the theatre group on his way, under police escort, out of the Gar-B. They'd been parked outside the Dell the night he'd seen the Ulsterman there. He still had their flyer; the one that had doubled as a paper plane.

At St Leonard's, he found them in the Fringe programme, Active Resistance Theatre; active as opposed to passive, Rebus supposed. He placed a couple of calls to Glasgow. Someone would get back to him. The rest of the day was a blur.

As he was locking what was left of his car, he sensed a shape behind him.
'Damn you, weasel-face!' But he turned to see Caroline Rattray.
'Weasel-face?'
'I thought you were someone else.'
She put her arms round him. 'Well I'm not, I'm me. Remember me? I'm the one who's being trying to phone you for God knows how long. I know you got my messages, because someone in your office told me.'
That would be Ormiston. Or Flower. Or anyone else with a grudge.
'Christ, Caro.'
He pulled away from her. 'You must be crazy.'
'For coming here?' She looked around. 'This is where she lives?'
She sounded completely unconcerned. Rebus didn't need this. His head felt like it was splitting open above the eyes. He needed to bathe and to stop thinking, and it would take a great effort to stop him thinking about this case.
'You're tired,' she said. Rebus wasn't listening. He was too busy looking at Patience's parked car, at her gateway, then along the street, willing her not to appear. 'Well, I'm tired too, John.'



The Caly being the Caledonian Hotel. Rebus nodded assent.
'Great,' he said.
'See you then.'
She leaned into him again, kissing his lips. He drew away as quickly as he could, remembering her perfume. One more waft of that, and Patience would go nuclear.
'See you, Caro.'
He watched her get into her car, then walked quickly down the steps to the flat.
The first thing he did was run a bath. He looked at himself in the mirror and got a shock. He was looking at his father. In later years, his father had grown a short grey beard. There was grey in Rebus's stubble too.
'I look like an old man.'
There was a knock at the bathroom door. 'Have you eaten?'
Patience called.
'Not yet. Have you?'
'No, shall I stick something in the microwave?'

'Sure, great.'
He added foam-bath to the water.
'Pizza?'
'Whatever.'
She didn't sound too bad. That was the thing about being a doctor, you saw so much pain every day, it was easy to shrug off the more minor ailments like arguments at home and suspected infidelities. Rebus stripped off his clothes and dumped them in the laundry basket. Patience knocked again.
'By the way, what are you doing tomorrow?'
'You mean tomorrow night?' he called back.
'Yes.'
'Nothing I know of. I might be working'
'You better not be. I've invited the Bremners to dinner.'
'Oh, good,' said Rebus, putting his foot in the water without checking the temperature. The water was scalding. He lifted the foot out again and screamed silently at the mirror.

'Speaking.'

lovers. Neither spoke his or her thoughts. We Scots, Rebus thought, we're not very good at going publi We store up our true feelings like fuel for long winter nights of whisky and recrimination. So little of us ever reaches the surface, it's a wonder we exist at all.
'Another cup?'
'Please, Patience.'
'You'll be here tonight,' she said. 'You won't be working.'
It was neither question nor order, not explicitly.
So he tried phoning Caro from Fettes, but now she was the one having messages left for her: one on he answering machine at home, one with a colleague at her office. He couldn't just say, 'I'm not coming', not even to a piece of recording tape. So he'd just asked her to get in touch. Caro Rattray, elegant, apparently available, and mad about him. There was something of the mad in her, something vertiginous. You spent time with her and you were standing on a cliff edge. And where was Caro? She was standing right behind you.
When his phone rang, he leapt for it.
'Inspector Rebus?'
The voice was male, familiar.

They had breakfast together, talking around things, their conversation that of acquaintances rather then



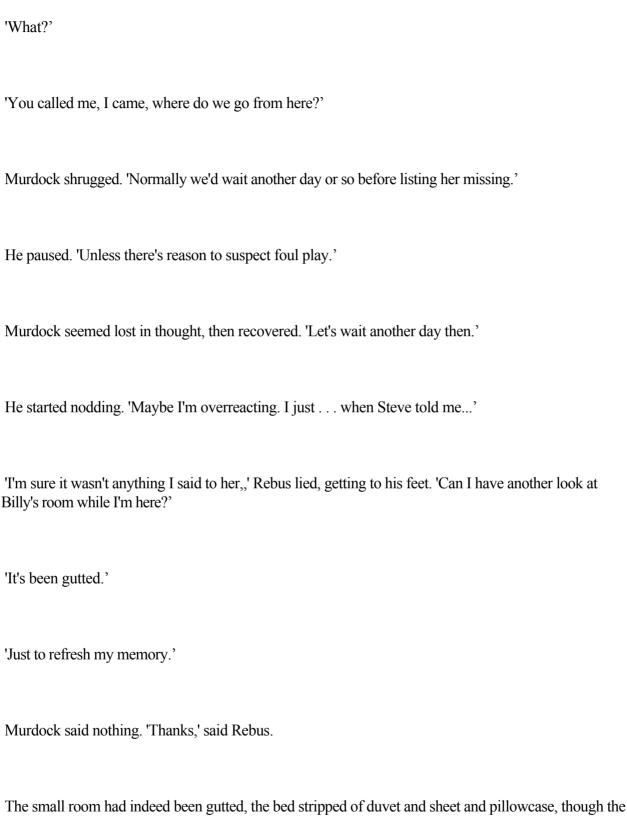
He went alone, knowing he should take some back-up, but loath to approach anyone. Out of the four - Ormiston, Blackwood, 'Bloody' Claverhouse, Smylie - Smylie would still be his choice, but Smylie was as predictable as the Edinburgh weather, even now turning overcast. The pavements were still Festival busy, but not for much longer, and as recompense September would be quiet. It was the city's secret month, a retreat from public into private.

As if to reassure him, the cloud swept away again and the sun appeared. He wound down his window, until the bus fumes made him roll it back up again. The back of the bus advertised the local newspaper, which led him to thoughts of Mairie Henderson. He needed to find her, and it wasn't often a policeman thought that about a reporter.
He parked the car as close to Murdock's tenement as he could find a space, pressed the intercom button beside the main door, and got the answering buzz which unlocked the door.
Your feet made the same sound on every tenement stairwell, like sandpaper on a church floor. Murdock had opened the door to his flat. Rebus walked in, Lachlan Murdock did not look in good fettle. His hair was sprouting in clumps from his head, and he pulled on his beard like it was a fake he'd glued on too well. They were in the living room. Rebus sat down in front of the TV. It was where Millie had been sitting the first time he'd visited. The ashtray was still there, but the sleeping bag had gone. ,And so had Millie.
`I haven't seen her since yesterday.'
Murdock was standing, and showed no sign of sitting down. He walked to the window, looked out, came back to the fireplaceHis eyes were everywhere that wasn't Rebus.
'Morning or evening?'
'Morning. I got back last night and she'd packed and left.'
'Packed?'
'Not everything, just a holdall. I thought maybe she'd gone to see a pal, she does that sometimes.'

'Not this time?'

Murdock shook his head. 'I phoned Steve at her work this morning; and he said the police had been to see her yesterday, a young woman and an older man. I thought of you. Steve said she was in a terrible state afterwards, she'd to come home early. What did you say to her?'
'Just a few questions about Billy.'
'Billy.'
The dismissive shake of the head told Rebus something.
`She got on better with Billy than you did, Mr Murdock?'
'I didn't dislike the guy.'
'Was there anything between the two of them?'
But Murdock wasn't about to answer that. He paced the room again, flapping his arms as though attempting flight. 'She hasn't been the same since he died.'
'It was upsetting for her.'
'Yes, it was. But to run off'
'Can I see her room?'
`What?'

Rebus smiled. 'It's what we usually do when someone goes missing.'
Murdock shook his head again. `She wouldn't want that. What if she comes back, and sees someone's been through her- stuff? No, I can't let you do that.'
Murdock looked ready for physical resistance if necessary.
'I can't force you,' Rebus said calmly. 'Tell me a bit more about Billy.'
This quietened Murdock. 'Like what?'
'Did he like computers?'
'Billy? He liked video games, so long as they were violent. I don't know, I suppose he was interested in computers.'
'He could work one?'
'Just about. What are you getting at?'
'Just interested. Three people sharing a flat, two of them work with computers, the third doesn't.'
Murdock nodded. 'You're wondering what we had in common. Look around the city, Inspector, you'll see flats full of people who're only there because they need a room or the rent money. In an ideal world, I wouldn't have needed someone in the spare room at all.'
Rebus nodded. 'So what should we do about Miss Docherty?'



The small room had indeed been gutted, the bed stripped of duvet and sheet and pillowcase, though the pillow still lay there. It was stained brown, leaking feathers. The bare mattress was pale blue with similar brown patches. There seemed a little more space in the room, but not much. Still, Rebus doubted Murdock would have any trouble finding a new tenant, not with the student season approaching.

He opened the wardrobe to a clanging of empty wire hangers. There was a fresh sheet of newspaper on the floor. He closed the wardrobe door. Between the corner of the bed and the wardrobe there was a clear patch of carpet. It lay hard up against the skirting-board beneath the still unwashed window. Rebus crouched down and tugged at the carpet's edge. It wasn't tacked, and lifted an inch or so. He ran his fingers underneath it, finding nothing. Still crouched, he lifted the mattress, but saw only bedsprings and the carpet beneath, thick balls of dust and hair marking the furthest reach of the hoover.

He stood up, glancing at the bare walls. There were small rips in the wallpaper where Blu-Tak had been removed. He looked more closely at one small pattern of these. The wallpaper had come away in two longer strips. Wasn't this where the pennant had hung? Yes, you could see the hole made by the drawing-pin. The pennant had hung from a maroon cord which had been pinned to the wall. Meaning the pennant had been hiding these marks. They didn't look so old. The lining paper beneath was clean and fresh, as though the Sellotape had been peeled off recently.

Rebus put his fingers to the two stripes. They were about three inches apart and three inches long. Whatever had been taped there, it had been square and thin. Rebus knew exactly what would fit that description.

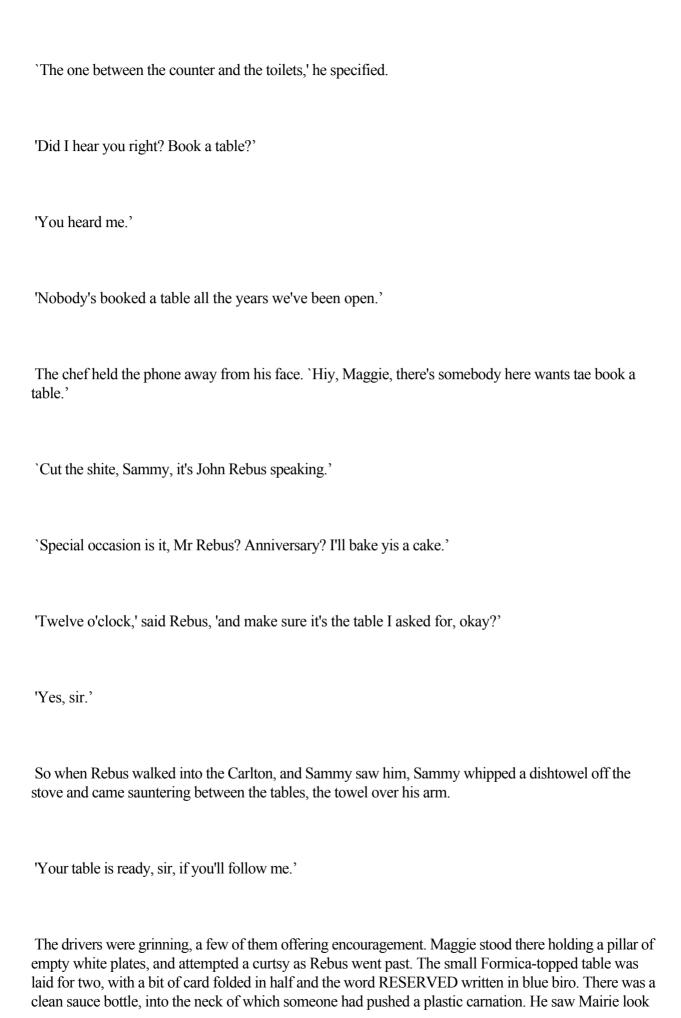
Out in the hall, Murdock was waiting to leave.

'Sorry to keep you waiting, sir,' Rebus said.

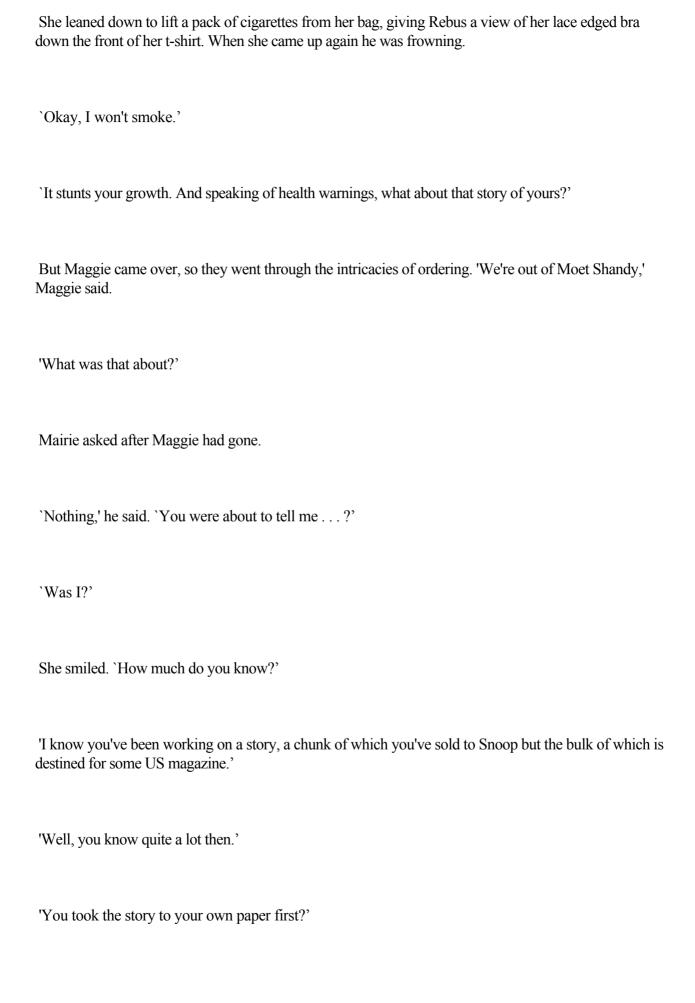
The Canton sounded like another old ladies' tea-room, but in fact was a transport cafe with famed large helpings. When Mairie Henderson finally got back to Rebus, he suggested taking her to lunch there. It was on the shore at Newhaven, facing the Firth of Forth just about where that broad inlet became inseparable from the North Sea.

Lorries bypassing Edinburgh or heading to Leith from the north would usually pause for a break outside the Carlton. You saw them in a line by the sea wall, between Starbank Road and Pier Place. The drivers thought the Carlton well worth a detour, even if other road users and the police didn't always appreciate their sentiments.

Inside, the Carlton was a clean well-lit place and as hot as a truck engine. For air conditioning, they kept the front door wedged open. You never ate alone, which was why Rebus phoned in advance and booked a table for two.



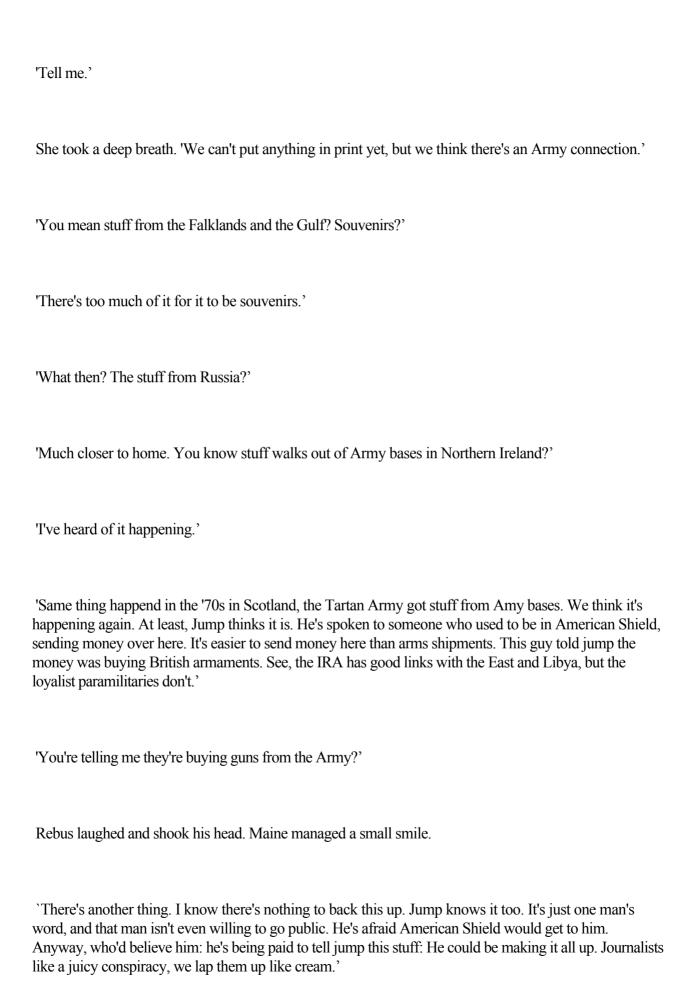


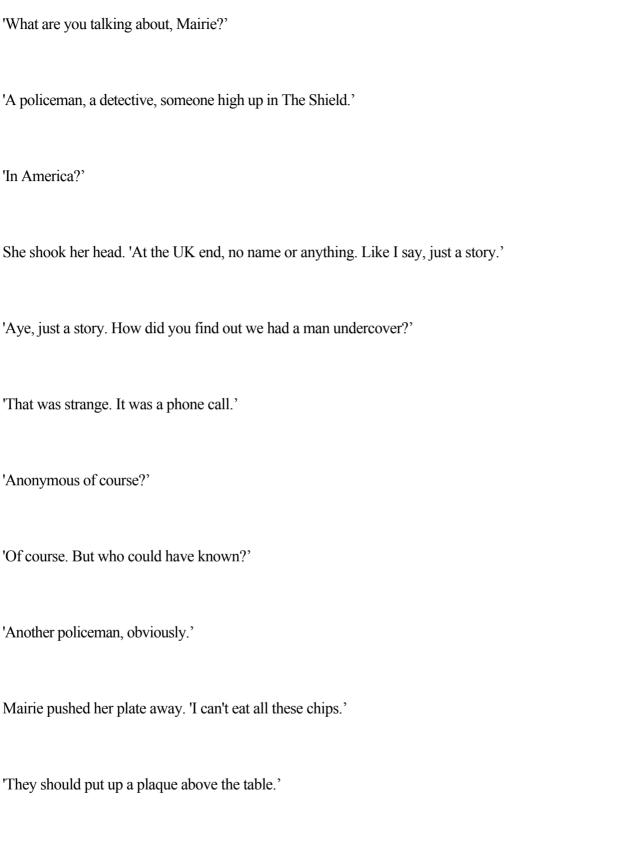




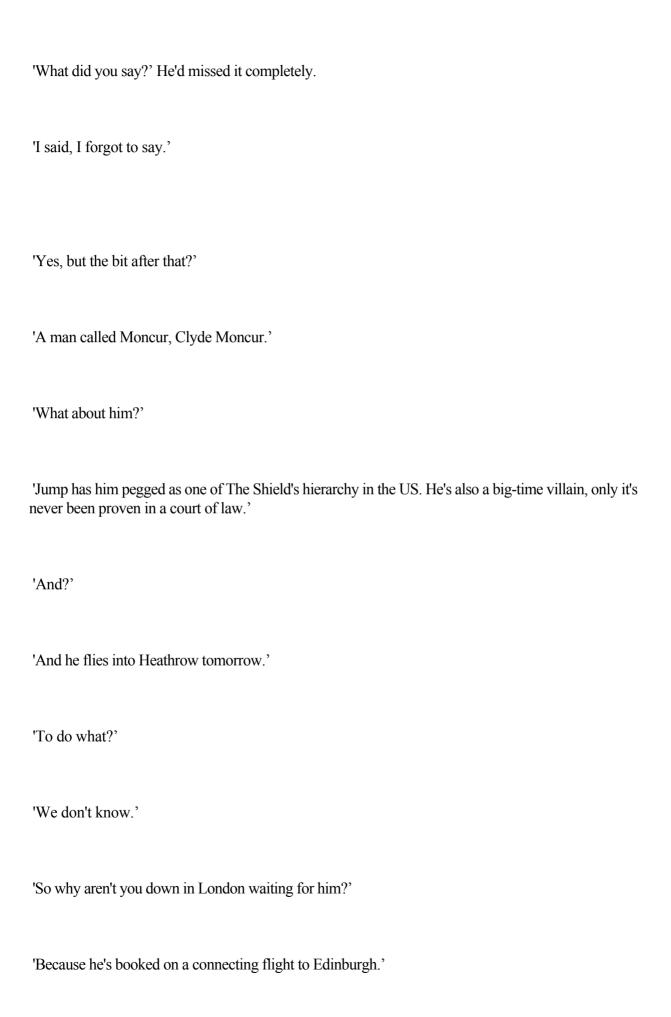
Maggie was coming with their food. She heard Mairie's closing words and gave her a cold look as she placed the fry-up in front of her. For Rebus, there was a half-portion of lasagne and a green salad.
'How did Cantona find you?'
Rebus asked.
'Someone I met when I was on a journalism course in New York. This guy knew Cantona was looking for someone who could do some digging in Scotland. I was the obvious choice.'
She attacked four chips with her fork. Chewing, she reached for the salt, vinegar, and tomato sauce. After momentary consideration, she poured some brown sauce on as well.
'I knew you'd do that,' Rebus said. 'And it still disgusts me.'
'You should see me with mustard and mayonnaise. I hear you got moved to SCS.'
'It's true.'
'Why?'
'If I didn't know better, I'd say they were keeping an eye on me.'
'Only, they were there at Mary King's Close, a murder that looks like an execution. Then next thing you're off to SCS, and I know SCS are investigating gun-running with an Irish slant.'

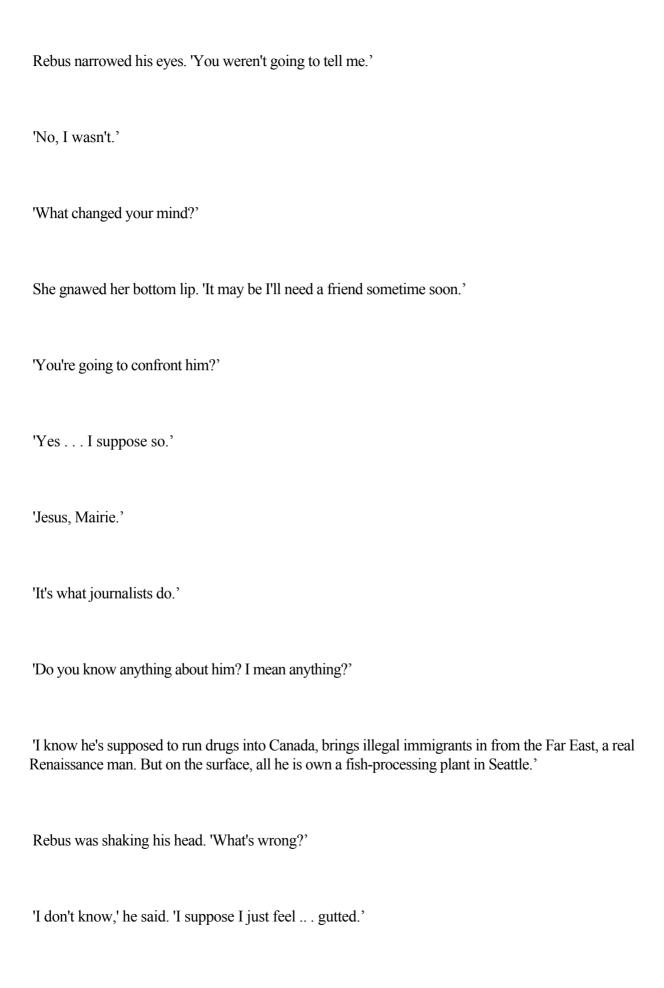
Maggie arrived with two cans of Irn-Bru. Mairie checked hers was cold enough before opening it. 'Are we working on the same story?'
'The police don't have stories, Mairie, we have cases. And it's hard to answer your question without seeing your story.'
She slipped a hand into her shoulder-bag and pulled out several sheets of neatly typed paper. The document had been stapled and folded in half. Rebus could see it was a photocopy.
'Not very long,' he said.
'You can read it while I eat.'
He did. But all it did was put a lot of speculative meat on the bones he already had. Mostly it concentrated on the North American angle, mentioning the IRA fundraising in passing, though the Orange Loyal Brigade was mentioned, as was Sword and Shield.
'No names,' Rebus, commented.
'I can give you a few, off the record.'
'Gavin and Jamesie MacMurray?' 'You're stealing my best lines. Do you have anything on them?'
'What do you think we'll find - a garden shed full of grenade launchers?'
'That could be pretty close.'





Rebus needed a drink, and there was a good pub only a short walk away. Mairie went with him, though she complained she didn't have room for a drink. Still, when they got there she found space for a white wine and soda. Rebus had a half-pint and a nip. They sat by the window, with a view out over the Forth. The water was battleship grey, reflecting the sky overhead. Rebus had never seen the Forth look other than forbidding.







Kilpatrick wrote the name on his pad. 'Who is he?'
'He's a Seattle businessman, runs his own fish-processing plant. Possibly also a gangster. He's coming to Edinburgh on holiday.'
'Well, we need the tourist dollars.'
'And he may be high up in The Shield.'
'Oh?'
Kilpatrick casually underlined the name. 'What's your source?'
'I'd rather not say.'
'I see.'
Kilpatrick underlined the name one last time. 'I don't like secrets, John.'
'Yes, sir.'
'Well, what do you want to do?'
'Put a tail on him.'



Then Rebus played his ace. 'You could always move me back to St Leonard's.'
Not that he wanted this. He liked the freedom he had, flitting between the two stations, neither Chief Inspector knowing where he was.
`Is that what you want?' Kilpatrick asked.
'It's not down to me, it's what you want that matters.'
'Quite right, and I want you in SCS, at least for the time being.'
'So you'll put someone else on the tail?'
'I take it you've got people in mind?'
`Two more from St Leonard's. DS Holmes and DC Clarke. They work well together, they've done this sort of thing before.'
'No, John, let's keep this to SCS.'
Which was Kilpatrick's way of reasserting his authority. 'I know two good men over in Glasgow, no possible grudge against you. I'll get them over here.'
'Right, sir.'
'Sound all right to you. Inspector?'

`Whatever you think, sir.'
When Rebus left the office, the two typists were discussing famine and Third World debt.
`Ever thought of going into politics, ladies?'
'Myra's a local councillor,' one of them said, nodding to her partner.
'Any chance of getting my drains cleared?'
Rebus asked Myra.
`Join the queue,' Myra said with a laugh.
Back at his desk Rebus phoned Brian Holmes to ask him a favour, then he went to the toilets down the hall. The toilet was one of those design miracles, like Dr Who's time machine. Somehow two urinals, a toilet cubicle, and wash hand basin had been squeezed into a space smaller than their total cubic volume.
So Rebus wasn't thrilled when Ken Smylie joined him. Smylie was supposed to be taking time off work, only he insisted on coming in.
'How are you doing, Ken?'
`I'm all right.'
'Good.'

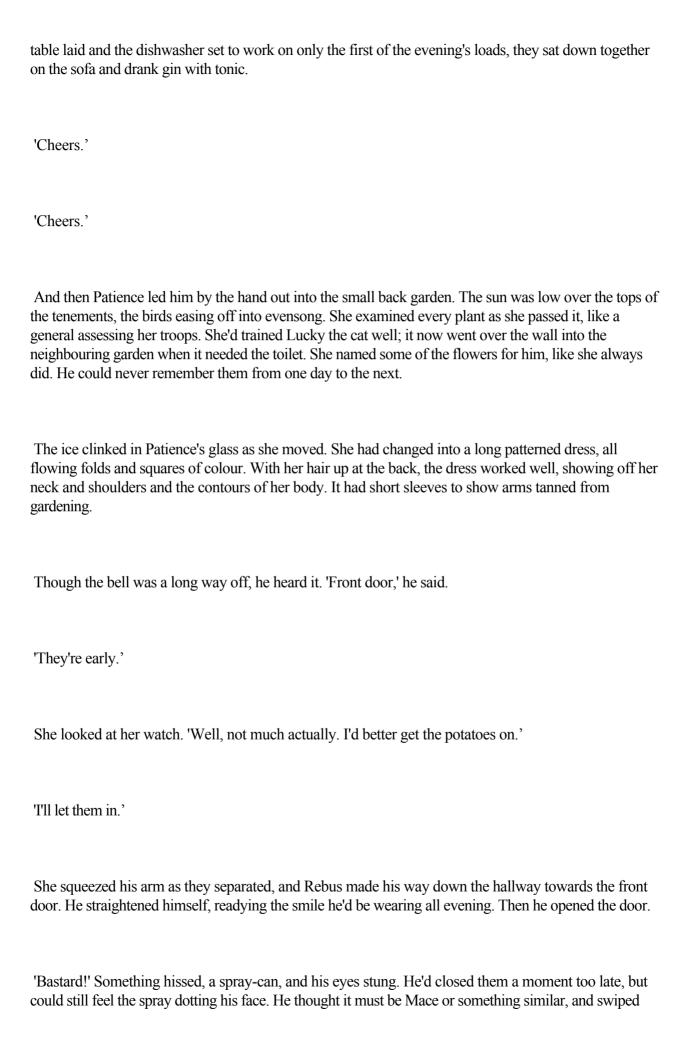
Rebus turned from his urinal and headed for the sink.
'You seem to be working hard,' Smylie said.
'Do I?'
'You're never here, I assume you're working.'
'Oh, I'm working.' Rebus shook water from his hands.
'Only I never see any notes.'
'Notes?'
'You never write down your case notes.'
'Is that right?'
Rebus dried his hands on the cotton roller towel. This was his lucky day: a fresh roll had just been fitted. He still had his back to Smylie. 'Well, I like to keep my notes in my head.'
'That's not procedure.'
'Tough.'



Rebus looked in the mirror. His face was that sunburnt cherry colour some fair-skinned people go, but at least his eyes had retreated back into their sockets.
'Wonder what my blood pressure got up to,' he said to himself. Then he thanked Ormiston.
'I was thinking of me, not you,' Ormiston retorted. 'With you two wrestling,' he stooped to pick up his cigarette, 'there wasn't room for me to have a quiet puff.'
The cigarette itself survived the melee, but after inspecting it Ormiston decided to flush it anyway and light up a fresh one.
Rebus joined him. 'That may be the first time smoking's saved someone's life.'
'My grandad smoked for sixty years, died in his sleep at eighty. Mind you, he was bedridden for thirty of them. So what was all that about?'
'Filing. Smylie doesn't like my system.'
'Smylie likes to know everything that's going on.'
'He shouldn't even be here. He should be at home, bereaving.'
'But that's what he is doing,' argued Ormiston. 'Just because he looks like a big cuddly bear, a gentle giant, don't be fooled.'
He took a drag on his cigarette. 'Let me tell you about Smylie.'
And he did.

Rebus was home at six o'clock, much to Patience Aitken's surprise. He had a shower rather than a bath and came into the living room dressed in his best suit and wearing a shirt Patience had given him for Christmas. It wasn't till he'd tried it on that they both discovered it required cuff links, so then he'd had to buy some.
'I can never do these up by myself,' he said now, flapping his cuffs and brandishing the links. Patience smiled and came to help him. Close up, she smelt of perfume.
'Smells wonderful,' he said.
'Do you mean me or the kitchen?'
'Both,' said Rebus. 'Equally.'
'Something to drink?'
'What are you having?'
'Fizzy water till the cooking's done.'
'Same for me.'
Though really he was dying for a whisky. He'd lost the shakes, but his ribs still hurt when he inflated his lungs. Ormiston said he'd once seen Smylie bear-hug a recalcitrant prisoner into unconsciousness. He also told Rebus that before Kilpatrick had come on the scene, the Smylie brothers had more or less run the Edinburgh Crime Squad.

He drank the water with ice and lime and it tasted fine. When the preparations were complete and the





He got out of the shower and rubbed himself down with a towel. When he looked at himself again, he'd managed to get a lot of the colour off, but by no means all of it. Then he looked at his clothes. His jacket was dark, and didn't show the paint too conspicuously; conspicuously enough though. As for his good shirt, it was ruined, no question about that. He unlocked the bathroom door and listened. Patience had taken the Bremners into the living room. He padded down the hall into the bedroom, noticing on the way that his hands had left red smears on the wallpaper. In the bedroom he changed quickly into chinos, yellow t-shirt and a linen jacket Patience had bought him for summer walks by the river which they never took

took.
He looked like a has-been trying to look trendy. It would do. The palms of his hands were still red, but he could say he'd been painting. He popped his head round the living room door.
'Chris, Jenny,' he said. The couple were seated on the sofa. Patience must be in the kitchen. 'Sorry, I'm running a bit late. I'll just dry my hair and I'll be with you.'
'No rush,' said Jenny as he retreated into the hall. He took the telephone into the bedroom and called De Curt at home.
'Hello?'
'It's John Rebus here, tell me about Caroline Rattray.'
'Pardon?'
'Tell me what you know about her.'
'You sound smitten,' Curt said, amusement in his voice. 'I'm smitten all right. She's just sprayed me with a can of paint.'

'I'm not sure I caught that.'

'Never mind, just tell me about her. Like for instance, is she the jealous type?'
'John, you've met her. Would you say she's attractive?'
'Yes.'
'And she has a very good career, plenty of money, a lifestyle many would envy?'
'Yes.'
'But does she have any beaux?'
'You mean boyfriends, and the answer is I don't know.'
'Then take it from me, she does not. That's why she can be at a loose end when I have ballet tickets to spare. Ask yourself, why should this be? Answer, because she scares men off. I don't know what's wrong with her, but I know that she's not very good at relationships with the opposite sex. I mean, she has relationships, but they never last very long.'
'You might have told me.'
'I didn't realise you two were an item.'
'We're not.'
'Oh?'



He took her hands. 'We,' he said, 'are going to join our guests.' Then he kissed her on the forehead and pulled her with him to her feet. 22 At nine-thirty next morning, Rebus was sitting in his car outside Lachlan Murdock's flat. When he'd washed his eyes last night, it had been like washing behind them as well. Always it came to this, he tried to do things by the books and ended up cooking them instead. It was easier, that was all. Where would the crime detection rates be without a few shortcuts? He had tried Murdock's number from a callbox at the end of the road. There was no one there, just an answering machine. Murdock was at work. Rebus got out of the car and tried Murdock's intercom. Again, no answer. So he picked the lock, the way he'd been taught by an old lag when he'd gone to the man for lessons. Once inside, he climbed the stairwell briskly, a regular visitor rather than an intruder. But no one was about. Murdock's flat was on the Yale rather than a deadlock, so it was easy to open too. Rebus slipped inside and closed the door after him. He went straight to Murdock's bedroom. He didn't suppose Millie would have left the computer disk behind, but you never knew. People with no access to safe deposit boxes sometimes mistook their homes for one. The postman had been, and Murdock had left the mail strewn on the unmade bed. Rebus glanced at it. There was a letter from Millie. The envelope was postmarked the previous day, the letter itself written on a single sheet of lined writing paper. 'Sorry I didn't say anything. Don't know how long I'll be away. If the police ask, say nothing. Can't say more just now. Love you. Millie.'

Rebus left the letter lying where it was and pulled on a pair of surgical gloves stolen from Patience. He walked over to Murdock's workdesk and switched on the computer, then started going through the computer disks. There were dozens of them, kept in plastic boxes, most of them newly labelled. The majority had labels with spidery black had writing, which Rebus guessed was Murdock's. The few that

remained he took to be Millie's.

He went through these first, but found nothing to interest him. The unlabelled disks proved to be either blank or corrupted. He started searching through drawers for other disks. Parked on the floor one side of the bed were the plastic binliners containing Billy's things. He looked through these, too. Murdock's side of the bed was a chaos of books, ashtray, empty, cigarette packets, but Millie's side was a lot neater. She had a bedside cupboard on which sat a lamp, alarm clock, and a packet of throat lozenges. Rebus crouched down and opened the cupboard door. Now he knew why Millie's side of the bed was so neat: the cupboard was like a wastepaper bin. He sifted through the rubbish. There were some crumpled yellow Post-It notes in amongst it. He picked them out and unpeeled them. They were messages from Murdock. The first one contained a seven-digit phone number and beneath it the words 'Why don't you call this bitch?'

As Rebus unpeeled the others, he began to understand. There were half a dozen telephone messages, all from the same person. Rebus had thought he recognised the phone number, but on the rest of the messages the caller's name was printed alongside.

Mairie Henderson.

Back at St Leonard's he was pleased to find that both Holmes and Clarke were elsewhere. He went to the toilets and splashed water on his face. His eyes were still irritated, red at their rims and bloodshot. Patience had taken a close look at them last night and pronounced he'd live. After the Bremners had gone home happy, she'd also helped him scrub the rest of the red out of his hair and off his hands. Actually, there was still some on his right palm.

'Cuchullain of the Red Hand,' Patience had said. She'd been great really, considering. Trust a doctor to be calm in a crisis. She'd even managed to calm him down when, late in the evening, he'd considered going round to Caroline Rattray's flat and torching it.

'Here,' she'd said, handing him a whisky, 'set fire to yourself instead.'

He smiled at himself in the toilet mirror. There was no Smylie here, about to grope him to death, no jeering Ormiston or preening Blackwood. This was where he belonged. He wondered again just what he was doing at Fettes. Why had Kilpatrick scooped him up? He thought now that he had a bloody good idea.

Edinburgh's Central Lending Library is situated on George IV Bridge, across the street from the National Library of Scotland. This was student territory, and just off the Royal Mile, and hence at the moment also Festival Fringe territory. Pamphleteers were out in force, still enthusing, sensing audiences to be had now that the least successful shows had packed up and headed home. For the sake of politeness, Rebus took a lurid green flyer from a teenage girl with long blonde hair, and read it as far as the first litter bin, where it joined many more identical flyers.

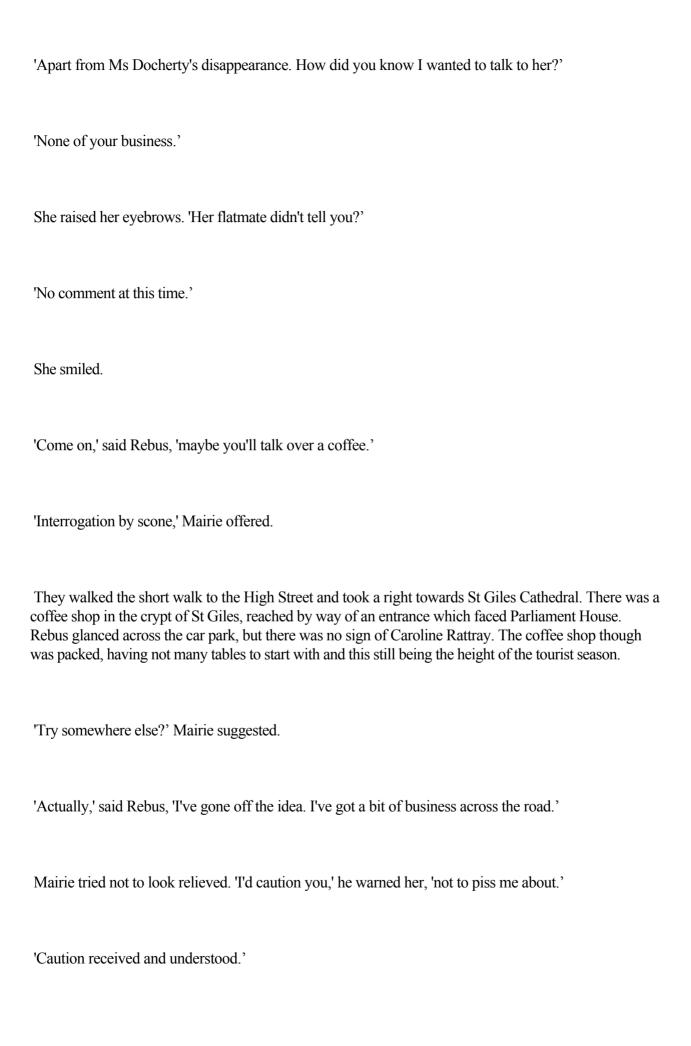
The Edinburgh Room was not so much a room as a gallery surrounding an open space. Far below, readers in another section of the library were at their desks or browsing among the bookshelves. Not that Mairie Henderson was reading books. She was poring over local newspapers, seated at one of the few readers' tables. Rebus stood beside Mairie, reading over her shoulder. She had a neat portable computer with her, flipped open and plugged into a socket in the library floor. Its screen was milky grey and filled with notes. It took her a minute to sense that there was someone standing over her. She looked round slowly, expecting a librarian.

sio my, expecting a notarian.
'Let's talk,' said Rebus.
She saved what she'd been writing and followed him out onto the library's large main staircase. A sign told them not to sit on the window ledges, which were in a dangerous condition. Mairie sat on the top step, and Rebus sat a couple of steps down from her, leaving plenty of room for people to get past.
'I'm in a dangerous condition, too,' he said angrily.
'Why? What's happened?' She looked as innocent as stained glass.
'Millie Docherty.'
'Yes?'

'You didn't tell me about her.'

'What exactly should I have told you?'





She waved as she walked off back towards the library. Rebus watched her good legs recede from view. They stayed good-looking all the way out of his vision. Then he threaded his way between the lawyers' cars and entered the court building. He had an idea he was going to leave a note for Caroline Rattray in her box, always supposing she had one. But as he walked into Parliament Hall he saw her talking with another lawyer. There was no chance to retreat; she spotted him immediately. She kept up the conversation for a few more moments, then put her hand on her colleague's shoulder, said a brief farewell, and headed towards Rebus.

It was hard to reconcile her, in her professional garb, with the woman who had spray-painted him the previous night. She left her colleague with a faint smile on her lips, and met Rebus with that same smile. Under her arm were the regulation files and documents. 'Inspector, what brings you here?' 'Can't vou guess?' 'Ah yes, of course, I'll send a cheque.' He had kept telling himself all the way across the car park that he wasn't going to let her get under his skin. Now he found she was already there, like a half inch of syringe. 'Cheque?' 'For the dry cleaning or whatever.' A passing lawyer nodded to her. 'Hullo, Mansie. Oh, Mansie?' She spoke with the lawyer for a few moments, her hand on his elbow.

She was offering a cheque for the dry cleaning. Rebus was glad of a few moments in which to cool off:



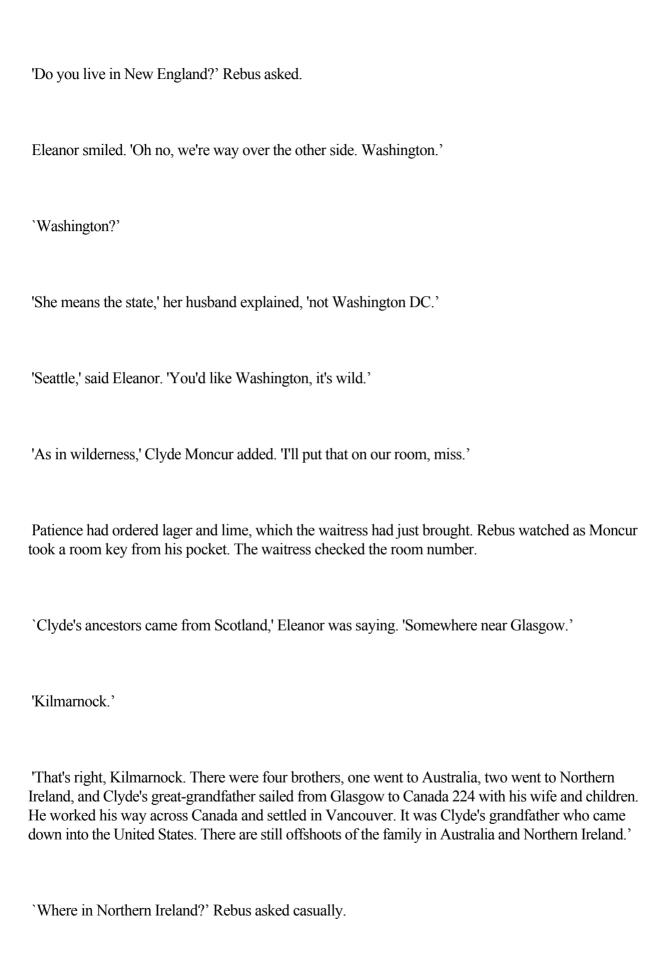


'Wh	at's the occasion?' she asked.
'No	occasion,' he said.
eithe entra itself	was restless the rest of the day. Glasgow came back to him, but only to say that they'd nothing on or Jim Hay or Active Resistance Theatre. He turned up early at the Playfair, making across its ance hall (all faded glory, but studied faded glory, almost too perfect) to the bar beyond. It called fa 'wet bar', which was okay with Rebus. He ordered a Talisker, hoisted himself onto a wellpadded tool and dipped a hand into the bowl of peanuts which had appeared at his approach.
other clien far fi was	bar was empty, but would be filled soon enough with prosperous businessmen on their way home, r businessmen who wanted to look prosperous and didn't mind spending money on it, and the hotel stele, enjoying a snifter before a pre-dinner stroll. A waitress stood idly against the end of the bar, not rom the baby grand. The piano was kept covered with a dustsheet until evening, so for now there wallpaper music, except that whoever was playing trumpet wasn't half bad. He wondered if it was a Baker.
After Ever put of Dran	sus paid for his drink and tried not to think about the amount of money he'd just been asked for. It a bit, he changed his mind and asked if he could have some ice. He wanted the drink to last. Institually a middle-aged couple came into the bar and sat a couple of seats away from him. The woman on elaborate glasses to study the cocktail list, while her husband ordered Drambuie, pronouncing it inboo-i. The husband was short but bulky, given to scowling. He was wearing a white golfing cap, kept glancing at his watch. Rebus managed to catch his eye, and toasted him.
'Slai	inte.'
	man nodded, saying nothing, but the wife smiled. 'Tell me,' she said, 'are there many Gaelic kers left in Scotland?'
Her	husband hissed at her, but Rebus was happy to answer. 'Not many,' he conceded.
'Are	you from Edinburgh?'





Rebus smiled. 'Dr Patience Aitken, and I'm John.'
Patience looked at him. He seldom used 'Dr' when introducing her, and why had he left out his own surname? 'Listen,' Rebus was saying, staring right past her, `wouldn't we be more comfortable at a table?'
They took a table for four, the waitress appearing with a little tray of nibbles, not just nuts but green and black olives and chipsticks too. Rebus tucked in. The drinks might be expensive, but you had to say the food was cheap.
'You're on holiday?' Rebus said, opening the conversation.
'That's right,' said Eleanor Moncur. 'We just love Scotland.'
She then went on to list everything they loved about it, from the skirl of the bagpipes to the windswept west coast. Clyde let her run on, taking sips from his drink, occasionally swirling the ice around. He sometimes looked up from the drink to John Rebus.
'Have you ever been to the United States?' Eleanor asked.
'No, never,' said Rebus.
'I've been a couple of times,' Patience said, surprising him. 'Once to California, and once to New England.'
'In the fall?'
Patience nodded. 'Isn't that just heaven?'







He checked over his shoulder, but the Moncurs were out of sight. 'Nowhere,' he said, stopping.
'John,' said Patience, 'next time you need me as a cover, have the courtesy to ask first.'
'Can you lend me a few quid, save me finding a cashpoint?'
She sighed and dug into her bag. 'Twenty enough?'
'Hope so.
'Unless you're thinking of returning to the Playfair bar.'
'I've been up braes that weren't as steep as that place.'
He told her he'd be back late, perhaps very late, and pecked her on the cheek. But she pulled him to her and took her fair share of mouth to mouth.
'By the way,' she said, 'did you talk to the action painter?'
'I told her to get lost. That doesn't mean she will.'
'She better,' said Patience, pecking him a last time on the cheek before walking away. He was unlocking his car when a heavy hand landed on his own. Clyde Moncur was standing next to him.
'Who the fuck are you?' the American spat, looking around him.



'We'd go to the bottom of the sea.'

He could still see the dreadful look on her face. She'd be twenty this year. Twenty. He reached under his seat and let his hand wander till it touched his emergency pack of cigarettes. One wouldn't do any harm. Inside the pack, nestling amongst the cigarettes, was a slim disposable lighter.

The light was still on in Mairie's first-floor window. Her car was parked right outside the tenement's front door. He knew the back door led to a small enclosed drying-green. She'd have to come out the front. He hoped she'd bring Millie Docherty with her.

He didn't quite know why he thought Mairie was hiding Millie; it was enough that he thought it. He'd had wrong hunches before, enough for a convention of the Quasimodo fan club, but you always had to follow them up. If you stopped being true to instinct, you were lost. His stomach rumbled, reminding him that olives and chipsticks did not a meal make. He thought of the Portobello chip shops, but sucked on his cigarette instead. He was across the road from the tenement and about six cars down. It was eleven o'clock and dark; no chance of Mairie spotting him.

He thought he knew why Clyde Moncur was in town. Same reason the ex-UVF man was here. He just didn't want to go public with his thoughts, not when he didn't know who his friends were.

At quarter past eleven, the tenement door opened and Mairie came out. She was alone, wearing a Burberry-style raincoat and carrying a bulging shopping bag. She looked up and down the street before unlocking her car and getting in.

'What are you nervous about, kid?'

Rebus asked, watching her headlights come on. He lit another cigarette; just to wash down the first, and started his engine.

She took the Portobello Road back into the city. He hoped she wasn't going far. Tailing a car, even in the dark, wasn't as easy as the movies made it look, especially when the person you were tailing knew your car. The roads were quiet, making things trickier still, but at least she stuck to the main routes. If

she'd used side streets and rat runs, she'd have spotted him for sure.

On Princes Street, the bikers were out in summer-night force, hitting the late-opening burger bars and revving up and down the -straight. He wondered if Clyde Moncur was out for a post-prandial stroll. With the burgers and bikes, he'd probably feel right at home. Moncur was tough the way old people could get: seeming to shrink as they got older but that was only because they were losing juice, becoming rock-hard as a result. There was nothing soft left of Clyde Moncur. He had a handshake like a saloon-bar challenge. Even Patience had complained of it.

The night was delicious, perfect for a walk, and that's what most people were enjoying. Too bad for the Fringe shows: who wanted to sit in an airless, dark theatre for two hours while the real show was outside, continuous and absolutely free? Mairie turned left at the west end, heading up Lothian Road. The street was already reeling with drunks. They'd probably be heading for a curry house or pizza emporium. Later, they'd regret this move. You saw the evidence each morning on the pavements. Just past the Tollcross lights, Mairie signalled to cross the oncoming traffic. Rebus wondered where the hell she was headed. His question was soon answered. She parked by the side of the road and turned off her lights. Rebus hurried past while she was locking her door, then stopped at the junction ahead. There was no traffic coming, but he sat there anyway, watching in his rearview.

'Well, well,' he said as Mairie crossed the road and went into the Crazy Hose Saloon. He put the car into reverse, brought it back, and squeezed in a few cars ahead of Mairle. He looked across at the Crazy Hose. The sign above was yellow and red flashing neon, which must be fun for the people in the tenement outside which Rebus was parked. A short flight of steps led to the main doors, and on these steps stood two bouncers. The Hose's wild west theme had passed the bouncers by, and they were dressed in regulation black evening suits, white shirts and black bow ties. Both had cropped hair to match their IQs, and held their hands behind their backs, swelling already prodigious chests. Rebus watched them open the doors for a couple of Stetson tipping cowpokes and their mini-dressed partners.

'In for a dime, I suppose.'

He locked his car and walked purposefully across the road, trying to look like a man looking for a good time. The bouncers eyed him suspiciously, and did not open the door. Rebus decided he'd played enough games today, so he opened his ID and stuck it in the tallest bouncer's face. He wondered if the man could read.

'Police,' he said helpfully. 'Don't I get the door opened for me?'

'Only on your way out,' the smaller bouncer said. So Rebus pulled open the door and went in. The admission desk had been done up like an old bank, with vertical wooden bars in front of the smiling female face.

'Platinum Cowpoke Card,' Rebus said, again showing his ID. Past the desk was a fair-sized hallway where people were playing one-armed bandits. There was a large crowd around an interactive video game, where some bearded actor on film invited you to shoot him dead if you were quick enough on the draw. Most of the kids in front of the machine were dressed in civvies, though a few sported cowboy boots and bootlace ties. Big belt-buckles seemed mandatory, and both males and females wore Levi and Wrangler denims with good-sized turn-ups. The toilets were out here too, always supposing you could work out which you were, a Honcho or Honchette.

A second set of doors led to the dance hall and four bars, one in each corner of the vast arena. Plenty of money had been spent on the decor, with the choicest pieces being spotlit behind Perspex high up out of reach on the walls. There was a life-size cigar-store Indian, a lot of native headdresses and jackets and the like, and what Rebus hoped bras a replica of a Gatling-gun. Old western films played silently'on a bank of TV screens set into one wall, and there was a bucking bronco machine against another wall. This was disused now, ever since a teenager had fallen from it and been put in a coma. They'd nearly shut the place down for that. Rebus didn't like to think about why they hadn't. He kept coming up with friends in the right places and money changing hands. There was somethingthat looked like a font near one of the bars, but Rebus knew it was a spittoon. He noticed that the bar closest to it wasn't doing great business.

Rebus wasn't hard to pick out in a crowd. Although there were people there his own age, they were all wearing western dress to some degree, and they were nearly all dancing. There was a stage which was spotlit and full of instruments but empty of bodies. Instead the music came through the PA. A DJ in an enclosed box next to the stage babbled between songs; you could have heard him halfway to Texas.

'Can I help you?'

Not hard to pick out in the crowd, and of course the bouncers had sent-word to the floor manager. He was in his late twenties with slick black hair and a rhinestone waistcoat. The accent was strictly Lothian.

'Is Frankie in tonight?'

If Bothwell were in the dancehall, he'd have spotted him. Bothwell's clothes would have drowned out the PA.



'The place is only just picking up now. We're open another two hours. What'll you have?'
The place to only just proming up no me the open uncurer one neuron manufacture in an analysis and in an area.
They were at the bar. The bar staff wore white aprons covering chest and legs and gold-coloured bands around their sleeves to keep their cuffs out of the way.
'Is that so they can't palm any notes?' asked Rebus.
'Nobody cheats the bar here.'
One of the staff broke off serving someone to attend to Kevin Strang.
'Just a beer, please.' Rebus said.
`Draught? We only serve half pints.'
'Why's that?'
'There's more profit in it.'
'An honest answer. I'll have a bottle of Beck's.' He leaked back to the dames floor. 'The last time I say this many combars was at a builders'
He looked back to the dance floor. 'The last time I saw this many cowboys was at a builders' convention.'
The record was fading out. Strang patted Rebus's back. 'That's my cue,' he said. 'Enjoy yourself' Rebus watched him move through the dancers. He climbed onto the stage and tapped the microphone, sending

a whump through the on-stage PA. Rebus didn't know what he was expecting. Maybe Strang would call out the steps of the next barn dance. But instead all he did was speak in a quiet voice, so people had to be quiet to hear him. Rebus didn't think Kevin Strang had much future as floor manager at the Crazy Hose.

'Dudes and womenfolk, it's a pleasure to see you all here at the Crazy Hose Saloon. And now, please welcome onto the Deadwood Stage our band for this evening's hoedown ... Chaparral!' There was generous applause as the band emerged through a door at the back of the stage. A few of the arcade junkies had come in from the foyer. The band was a sixpiece, barely squeezing onto the stage. Guitar/vocals, bass, drums, another guitar and two backing singers. They started into their first number a little shakily, but had warmed up by the end, by which time Rebus was finishing his drink and thinking about heading back to the car.

Then he saw Mairie.

No wonder she'd had a raincoat around her. Underneath she must have been wearing a tasselled black skirt, brown leather waistcoat, white blouse cut just above the chest and up around the shoulders, leaving a lot of bare flesh. She wasn't wearing a stetson, but there was a red kerchief around her throat and she was singing her heart out.

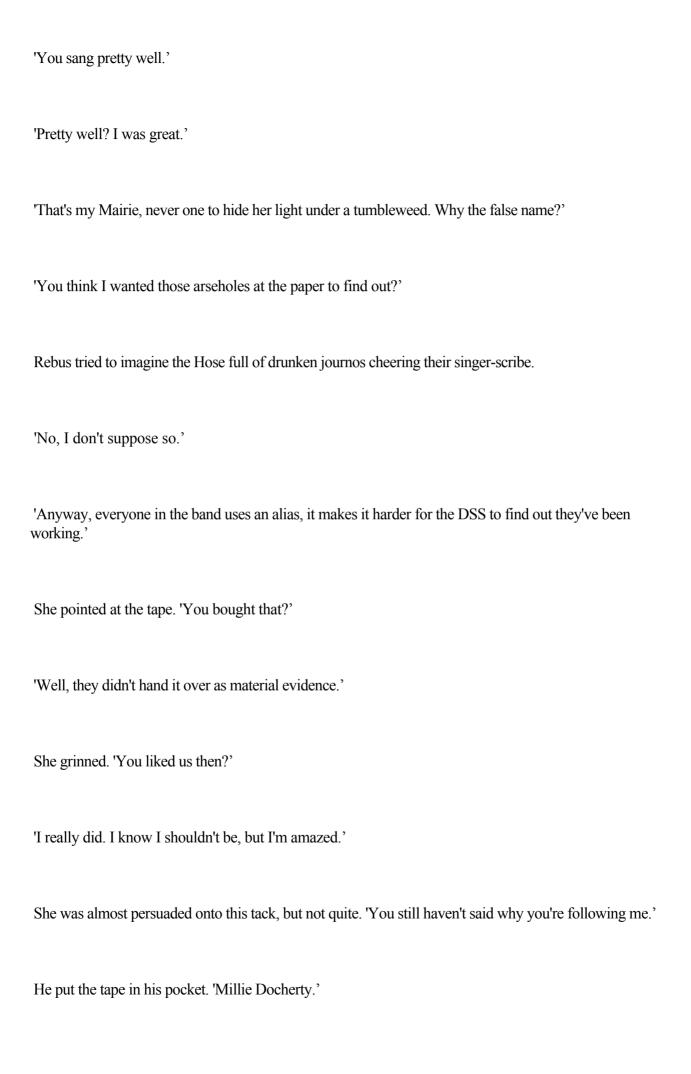
She was one of the backing singers.

Rebus ordered another drink and gawped at the stage. After a few songs, he could differentiate between Mairie's voice and that of the other backing singer. He noticed that most of the men were watching this singer. She was much taller than Mairie and had long straight black hair, plus she was wearing a much shorter skirt. But Mairie was the better singer. She sang with her eyes closed, swaying from the hips, knees slightly bent. Her partner used her hands a lot, but didn't gain much from it.

At the end of their fourth song, the male singer/guitarist gave a short spiel while the others in the band caught their breath, retuned, swigged drinks or wiped their faces. Rebus didn't know about C&W, but Chaparral seemed pretty good. They didn't just play mush about pet dogs, dying spouses or standing by your lover. Their songs had a harder, much urban feel, with lyrics to match.

'And if you don't know Hal Ketchum,' the singer was saying, 'you better get to know him. This is one of his, it's called Small Town Saturday Night.'





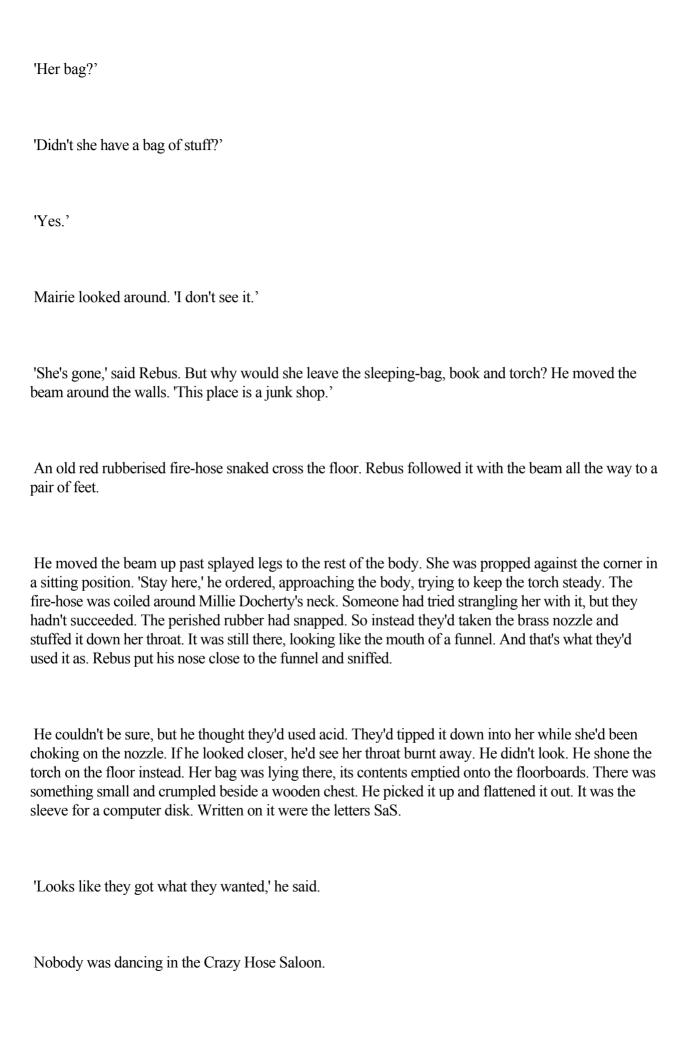
'What about her?'
'I think you know where she is.'
'What?'
'She's scared, she needs help. She might just run to the reporter who's being wanting to see her. Reporters have been known to hide their sources away, protect them.'
'You think I'm hiding her?'
He paused. 'Has she told you about the pennant?'
'What pennant?' Mairie had lost her cowgirl singer look. She was back in business.
'The one on Billy Cunningham's wall. Has she told you what he had hidden behind it?'
'What?'
Rebus shook his head. 'I'll make a deal,' he said. 'We'll talk to her together, that way 'neither of us is hiding anything. What do you say?'
The bassist handed Maine an orange juice.
'Thanks, Duane.'



As the band played a short upbeat encore, one fan climbed onstage and presented the backing singers with sheriff's badges, producing the loudest cheer of the night as both women pinned them on their chests. It was a good natured crowd, and Rebus had spent worse evenings. He couldn't see Patience

enjoying it though.
When the band fnished, they went back through the door they'd first appeared through. A few minutes later, Mairie reappeared, still dressed in all her gear and with the raincoat folded up in her shopping bag along with her flatsoled driving shoes.
'So?' Rebus said.
'So let's go.'
He started for the exit, but she was making towards the stage, gesturing for him to follow.
'I don't really want her to see me like this,' she said. 'I'm not sure the outfit conveys journalistic clout and professionalism. But I can't be bothered changing.'
They climbed onto the stage, then through the door. It led into a low-ceilinged passage of broom closets, crates of empty bottles, and a small room where in the evening the band got ready and during the day the cleaner could stop for a cup of tea. Beyond this was a dark stairwell. Mairie found the light switch and started to climb.
'Where exactly are we going?'
'The Sheraton.'
Rebus didn't ask again. The stairs were steep and twisting. They reached a landing where a padlocked door faced them, but Mairie kept climbing. At the second landing she stopped. There was another door, this time with no lock. Inside was a vast dark space, which Rebus judged to be the building's attic. Light infiltrated from the street through a skylight and some gaps in the roof, showing the solid forms of rafters.
'Watch you don't bump your head.'

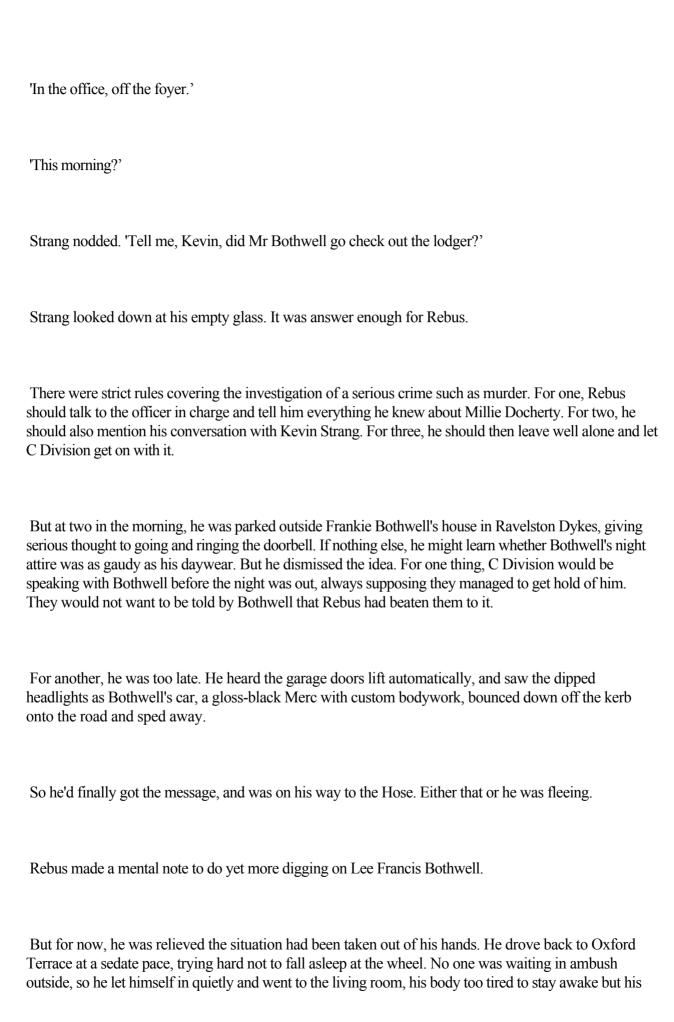




Everyone had been sent home. Because the Hose was in Tollcross, it was C Division's business. They'd sent officers out from Torphichen Place.
'John Rebus,' one of the CID men said. 'You get around more than a Jehovah's Witness.'
'But I never try to sell you religion, Shug.'
Rebus watched DI Shug Davidson climb onto the stage and disappear through the door. They were all upstairs; the action was upstairs. They were setting up halogen lamps on tripods to assist the photographers. No key could be found for the first floor padlock, so they'd taken a sledgehammer to it. Rebus didn't like to ask who or what they thought they'd find hidden behind a door padlocked from the outside. He doubted it would be germane to the case. Only one thing was germane, and it was standing at the bar near the spittoon, drinking a long cold drink. Rebus walked over.
'Have you talked to your boss yet, Kevin?'
'I keep getting his answering machine.'
'Bad one.'
Kevin Strang nearly bit through the glass. 'How do you mean?'
'Bad for business.'
'Aye, right enough.'
'Mairie tells me you and her are friends?'

'Went to school together. She was a couple of years above me, but we were both in the school orchestra.'
'That's good, you'll have something to fall back on.'
'Eh?'
'If Bothwell sacks you, you can always busk for a living. Did you ever see her? Talk to her?'
Kevin knew who he meant. He was shaking his head before Rebus had finished asking.
'No?'
Rebus persisted. 'You weren't even a wee bit curious? Didn't want to see what she looked like?'
'Never thought about it.'
Rebus looked across to the distant table where Mairie was being questioned by one of the Torphichen squad, with a WPC in close attendance. 'Bad one,' he said again. He leaned closer to Kevin Strang. 'Just between us, Kevin, who did you tell?'
'I didn't tell anyone.'
'Then you're going down, son.'
'How do you mean?'



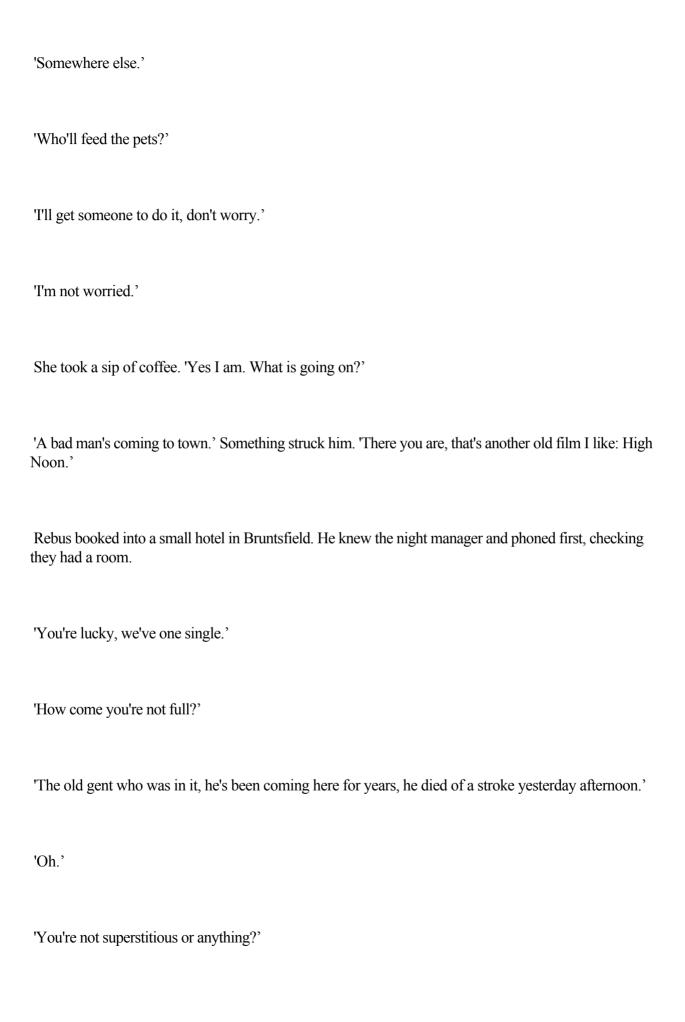


there was a note on the sofa in Patience's handwriting. Her writing was better than most doctors', but not by much. Eventually Rebus deciphered it, picked up the phone, and called Brian Holmes.
'Sorry, Brian, but the note said to call whatever the time.'
'Hold on a sec.'
He could hear Holmes getting out of bed, taking the cordless phone with him. Rebus imagined Nell Stapleton awake in the bed, rolling back over to sleep and cursing his name. The bedroom door closed. 'Okay,' said Holmes, 'I can talk now.'
'What's so urgent? Is it about our friend?'
'No, all's quiet on that front. I'll tell you about it in the morning. But I was wondering if you'd heard the news?'
'I was the one who found her.'
Rebus heard a fridge opening, a bottle being taken out, something poured into a glass.
'Found who?'
Brian asked.
'Millie Docherty. Isn't that what we're talking about?'
But of course it wasn't; Brian couldn't possibly know so soon. 'She's dead, murdered.'

mind too busy for sleep. Well, he had a cure for that: a mug of milky tea with a dollop of whisky in it. But

'They're piling up, aren't they? What happened to her?'
'It's not a bedtime story. So what's your news?'
"A breakout from Barlinnie. Well, from a van actually, stopped between Barlinnie and a hospital. The whole thing was planned.'
Rebus sat down on the sofa. 'Cafferty?'
'He does a good impersonation of a perforated ulcer. It happened this evening. The prison van was sandwiched between two lorries. Masks, sawn-offs and a miracle recovery.'
'Oh Christ.'
'Don't worry, there are patrols all up and down the M8.'
'If he's coming back to Edinburgh, that's the last road he'll use.'
'You think he'll come back?'
'Get a grip, Brian, of course he's coming back. He's going to have to kill whoever butchered his son.'
24
He didn't get much sleep that night, in spite of the tea and whisky. He sat by the recessed bedroom window wondering when Cafferty would come. He kept his eyes on the stairwell outside until dawn came. His mind made up, he started packing. Patience sat up in bed.





He climbed the steps to street level and looked around. When he was happy, he gestured for Patience to join him. She carried a couple of bags. Rebus was already holding her small suitcase. They put the stuff in the back of her car and embraced hurriedly.
'I'll call you,' he said. 'Don't try phoning me.'
'John'
'Trust me on this if on nothing else, Patience, please.'

'Not if it's your only room.'

He watched her drive off, then hung around to make sure no one was following her. Not that he could be absolutely sure. They could pick her up on Queensferry Road. Cafferty wouldn't hesitate to use her, or anyone, to get to him. Rebus got his own bag from the flat, locked the flat tight, and headed for his car. On the way he stopped at the next door neighbour's door, dropping an envelope through the letterbox. Inside were keys to the flat and feeding instructions for Lucky the cat, the budgie with no name, and Patience's goldfish.

It was still early morning, the quiet streets unsuitable for a tail. Even so, he took every back route he could think of. The hotel was just a big family house really, converted into a small family hotel. Out front, where a garden once separated it from the pavement, tarmac had been laid, making a car park for half a dozen cars. But Rebus drove round the back and parked where the staff parked. Monty, the night manager, brought him in the back way, then led him straight up to his room. It was at the top of the house,, all the way up one of the creakiest staircases Rebus had ever climbed. No one would be able to tiptoe up there without him and the woodworm knowing about it.

He lay on the solid bed wondering if lying on a dead man's bed was like stepping into his shoes. Then he started to think about Caferty. He knew he was taking half measures only. How hard would it be for Cafferty to track him down? A few men staked outside Fettes and St Leonard's and in a few well-chosen pubs, and Rebus would be in the gangster's hands by the end of the day. Fine, he just didn't want Patience involved, or Patience's home, or those of his friends.

Didn't most suicides do the same thing, come to hotels so as not to involve family and friends? He could

have gone home of course, back to his flat in Marchmont, but it was still full of students working in Edinburgh over the summer. He liked his tenants, and didn't want them meeting Cafferty. Come to that, he didn't want Monty the night manager meeting Cafferty either.

'He's not after me,' he kept reminding himself, hands behind his head as he stared at the ceiling. There was a clock radio by the bed, and he switched it on, catching the news. Police were still searching for Morris Gerald Cafferty. 'He's not after me,' he repeated. But in a sense, Cafferty was. He'd know Rebus was his best bet to finding the killers. There was a short item about the body at the Crazy Hose, though no gruesome details. Not yet, anyway.

When the news finished, he washed and went downstairs. He got a black cab to take him to St Leonard's. Once told the destination, the driver switched off his meter.

'On the house,' he said.

Rebus nodded and sat back. He'd commandeer someone's car during the course of the day, either that or find a spare car from the pool. No one would complain. They all knew who'd put Cafferty in Barlinnie. At St Leonard's, he walked smartly into the station and went straight to the computer, tapping into Brains. Brains had a direct link to PNC2, the UK mainland police database at Hendon. As he'd expected, there wasn't much on Lee Francis Bothwell, but there was a note referring him to files kept by Strathclyde Police in Partick.

The officer he talked to in Partick was not thrilled.

'All that old stuff's in the attic,' he told Rebus. I'll tell you, one of these days the ceiling'll come down.'

'Just go take a look, eh? Fax it to me, save yourself a phone call.'

An hour later, Rebus was handed several fax sheets relating to activities of the Tartan Army and. the Workers' Party in the early 1970s. Both groups had enjoyed short anarchic lives, robbing banks to finance their arms purchases. The Tartan Army had wanted independence for Scotland, at any price. What the Workers' Party had wanted Rebus couldn't recall, and there was no mention of their objectives in the fax. The Tartan Army had been the bigger terror of the two, breaking into explosives stores and Army bases, building up an arms cache for an insurrection which never came.

acts. Rebus reckoned this would be just before his move to the Orkneys and rebirth as Cuchullain. Cuchullain of the Red Hand.
Arch Gowrie was probably at breakfast when Rebus caught him. He could hear the clink of cutlery on plate.
'Sorry to disturb you so early, sir.'
'More questions, Inspector? Maybe I should start charging a consultancy fee.'
'I was hoping you could help me with a name.'
Gowrie made a noncommittal noise, or maybe he was just chewing. 'Lee Francis Bothwell.'
'Frankie Bothwell?'
'You know him?'
'I used to.'
'He was a member of the Orange Lodge?'
'Yes, he was.'

Frankie Bothwell was mentioned as a Tartan Army supporter, but with no evidence against him of illegal





There were no messages, nothing handwritten, nothing to identify the sender. Rebus checked the envelope. It hadn't been posted. It had been delivered by hand. He asked around again, but nobody owned up to having ever seen the thing before. Mairie was the only source he could think of, but she wouldn't have sent the stuff like this.

He read through the file anyway. It reinforced his impression of Clyde Moncur. The man was a snake. He ran drugs up into Vancouver and across to Ontario. His boats brought in immigrants from the Far East, or often didn't, though they were known to have picked up travellers along the way. What happened to them, these people who paid to be transported to a better life? The bottom of the deep blue sea, seemed to be the inference.

There were other murky areas to Moncur's life, like his undeclared interest in a fish processing plant outside Toronto ... Toronto, home of The Shield. The US Internal Revenue had been trying for years to get to the bottom of it all, and failing.

Buried in all the clippings was the briefest mention of a Scottish salmon farm.

Moncur had imported Scottish smoked salmon into the USA, though the Canadian stuff was just a mite closer to hand. The salmon farm he used was just north of Kyle of Lochalsh. Its name struck home. Rebus had come across the name very recently. He went back to the files on Cafferty, and there it was. Cafferty had been legitimate partowner of the farm in the 1970s and early 80s ... around the time him and Jinky Johnson were washing and drying dirty money for the UVF.

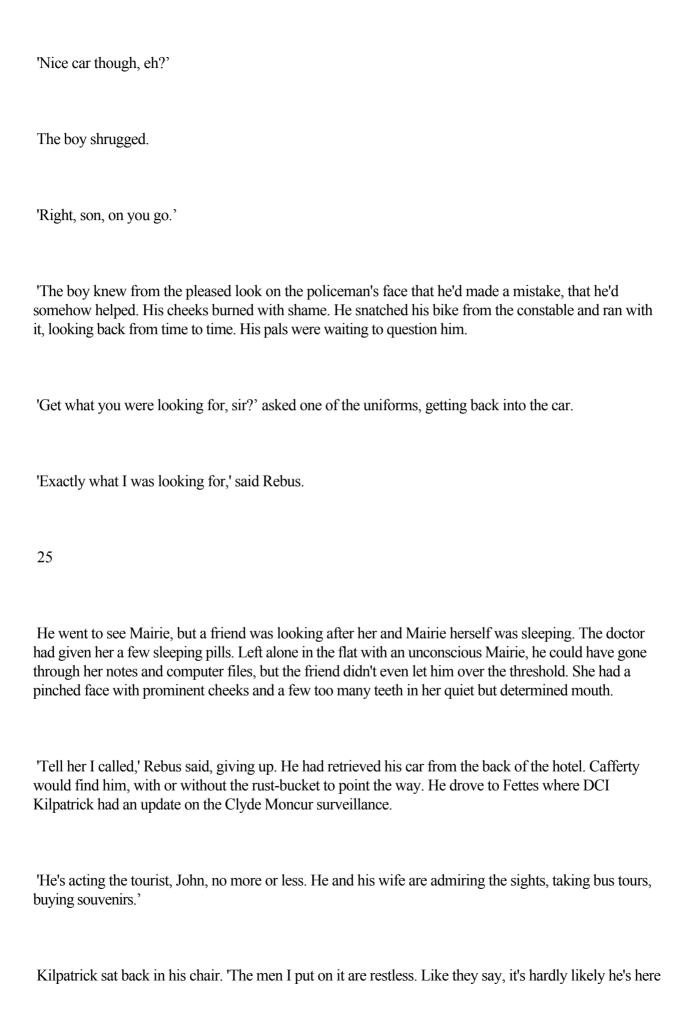
'This is beautiful,' Rebus said to himself. He hadn't just squared the circle, he'd created an unholy triangle out of it.

He got a patrol car to take him to the Gar-B.

From the back seat, he had a more relaxed view of the whole of Pilmuir. Clyde Moncur had talked about the early Scottish settlers. The new settlers, of course, took on just as tough a life, moving into the private estates which were being built around and even in Pilmuir. This was a frontier life, complete with marauding natives who wanted the intruders gone, border skirmishes, and wilderness experiences aplenty. These estates provided starter homes for those making the move from the rented sector. They also provided starter courses in basic survival.

Rebus wished the settlers well.
When they got to the Gar-B, Rebus gave the uniforms their instructions and sat in the back seat enjoying the stares of passers-by. They were away a while, but when they came back one of them was pulling a boy by his forearm and pushing the boy's bike. The other one had two kids, no bikes. Rebus looked at them. He recognised the one with the bike.
'You can let the others go,' he said. 'But him, I want in here with me.'
The boy got into the car reluctantly. His pals ran as soon as the officers released them. When they were far enough away, they turned to watch. They wanted to know what would happen.
'What's your name, son?' Rebus asked.
'Jock.'
Maybe it was true and maybe it wasn't. Rebus wasn't bothered. 'Shouldn't you be at school, Jock?'
'We've no' started back yet."
This too could be true; Rebus didn't know. 'Do you remember me, son?'
'It wasnae me did your tyres.'
Rebus shook his head. 'That's all right. I'm not here about that. But you remember when I came here?'
The boy nodded.

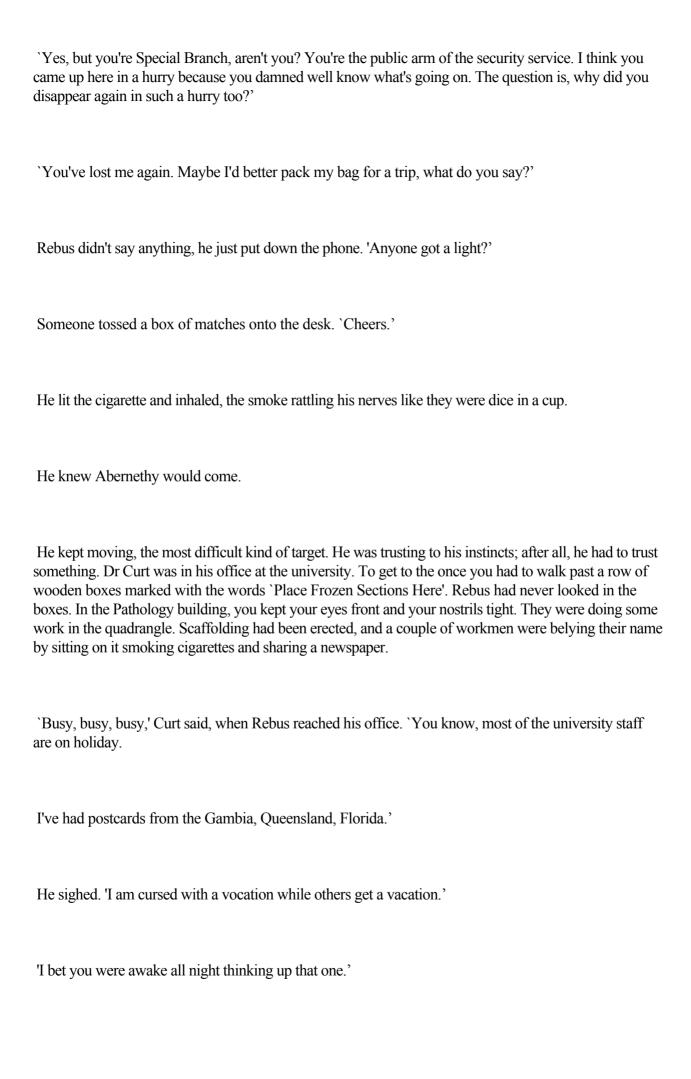
'Remember you were with a pal, and he thought I was someone else. Remember? He asked me where my flash car was.'
The boy shook his head. 'And you told him that I wasn't who he thought I was. Who did he think I was, son?'
'I don't know.'
'Yes you do.'
'I don't.'
'But someone a bit like me, eh? Similar build, age, height? Fancier clothes though, I'll bet.'
'Maybe.'
'What about his car, the swanky car?'
'A custom Merc.'
Rebus smiled. There were some things boys just had eyes and a memory for. 'What colour Merc?'
'Black, all of it. The windows too.'
'Seen him here a lot 'Don't know.'





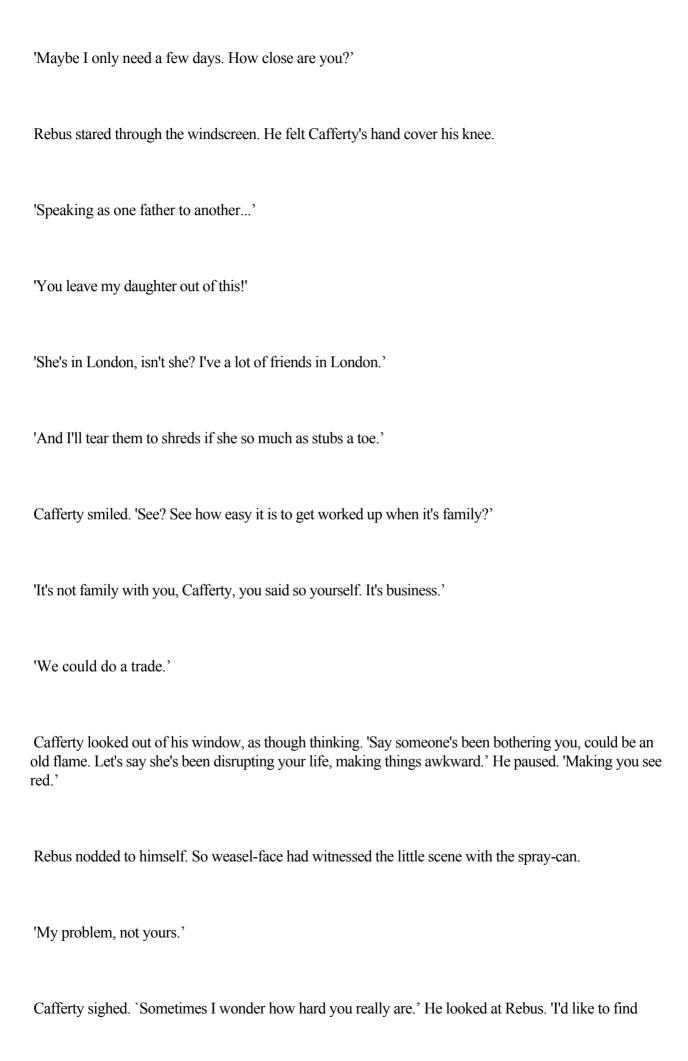
But he knew now that Smylie was the least of his problems.
At St Leonard's, Del Lauderdale was fighting his corner, arguing that his team should take on the Millie Docherty investigation from C Division. So he was too busy to come bothering Rebus, and that was fine by Rebus.
Officers were out at Lachlan Murdock's fiat, talking to him. He was being treated as a serious suspect now; you didn't lose two flatmates to hideous deaths and not come under the microscope. Murdock would be on the petri dish from now till the case reached some kind of conclusion. Rebus returned to his desk. Since he'd last been there, earlier in the day, people had started using it as a rubbish bin again.
He phoned London, and waited to be passed along the line. It was not a call he could have made from Fettes.
'Abernethy speaking.'
'About bloody time. It's DI Rebus here.'
'Well well. I wondered if I'd hear from you.'
Rebus could imagine Abernethy leaning back in his chair. Maybe his feet were up on the desk in front of him. 'I must have left a dozen messages, Abernethy.'
'I've been busy, what about you?'
Rebus stayed silent.
'So, Inspector Rebus, how can I help?'

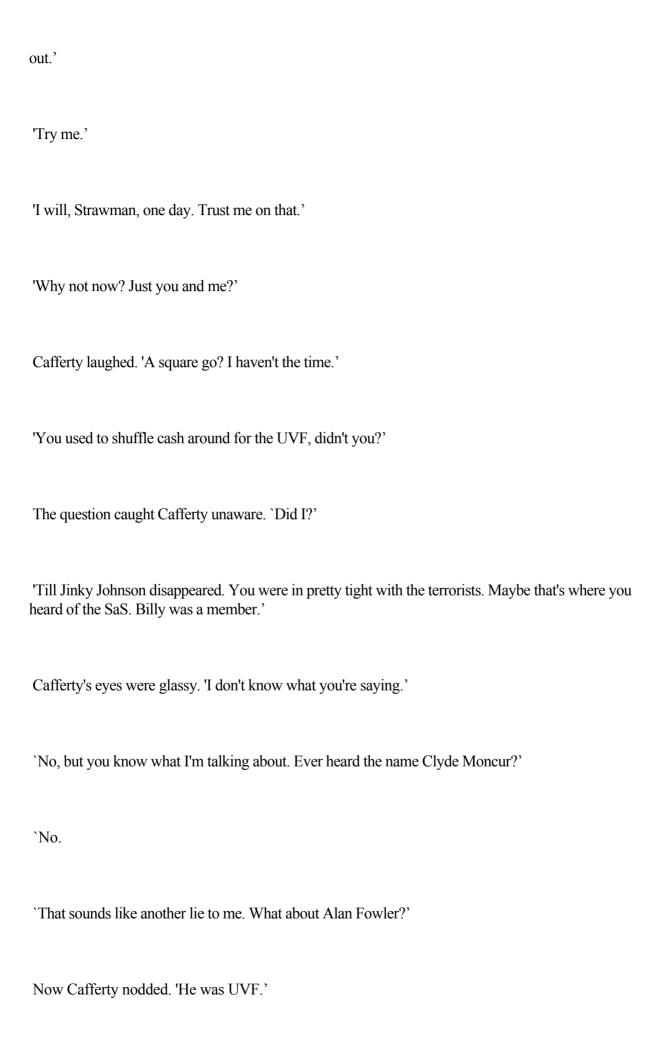
Tve got a few questions. How much stuff is the Army losing?'
'You've lost me.'
'I don't think so.'
Someone walking past offered Rebus a cigarette. Without thinking he accepted it. But then the donor walked away, leaving Rebus without a light. He sucked on the filter anyway. `I think you know what I'm talking about.'
He opened the desk drawers, looking for matches or a lighter.
`Well, I don't.'
'I think material has been going missing.'
`Really?'
'Yes, really.'
Rebus waited. He didn't want to speculate too wildly, and he certainly didn't want Abernethy to know any more than was necessary. But there was silence on the other end of the line. 'Or you suspect it's going missing.'
'That would be a matter for Army Intelligence or the security service.'

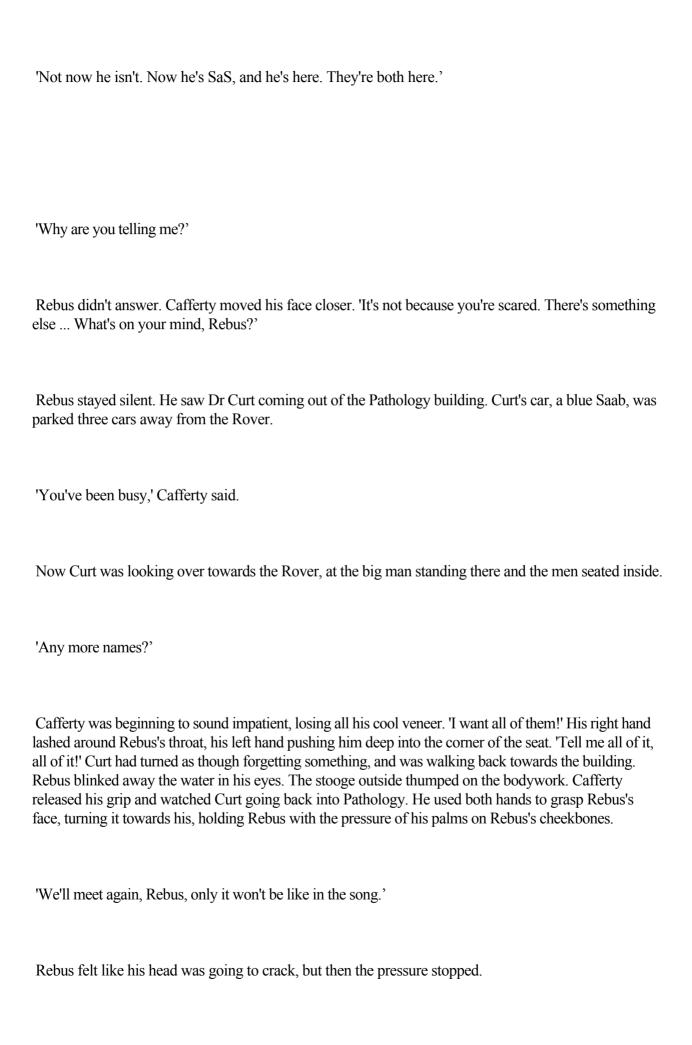


'I was awake half the night thanks to your discovery at the Crazy Hose Saloon.'
'Post-mortem?'
'Not yet complete. It was a corrosive of some kind, the lab will tell us exactly which. I am constantly surprised by the methods murderers will resort to. The fire hose was new to me.'
'Well, it stops the job becoming routine, I suppose.'
'How's Caroline?'
'I'd forgotten all about her.'
'You must pray that she'll let you.'
'I stopped praying a long time ago.'
He walked back down the stairs and out into the quadrangle, wondering if it was too soon in the day for a drink at Sandy Bell's. The pub was just round the corner, and he hadn't been there in months. He noticed someone standing in front of the Frozen Sections boxes. They had the flap open, like they'd just made a deposit. Then they turned around towards Rebus and smiled.
It was Cafferty.
'Dear God.'
Cafferty closed the flap. He was dressed in a baggy black suit and open-necked white shirt, like an undertaker on his break. 'Hello, Strawman.'

The old nickname. It was like an ice-pack on Rebus's spine. 'Let's talk.'
There were two men behind Rebus, the two from the churchyard, the two who'd watched him taking a beating. They escorted him back to a newish Rover parked in the quadrangle. He caught the licence number, but felt Cafferty's hand land on his shoulder.
'We'll change plates this afternoon, Strawman.'
Someone was getting out of the car. It was weasel-face. Rebus and Cafferty got into the back of the car, weasel-face and one of the heavies into the front. The other heavy stood outside, blocking Rebus's door. He looked towards where the scaffolding stood. The workmen had vanished. There was a sign on the scaffolding, just the name of a firm and their telephone number. A light came on in practically the last dark room in Rebus's head.
Big Ger Cafferty had made no effort at disguise. His clothes didn't look quite right - a bit large and not his style but his face and hair were unchanged. A couple of students, one Asian and one Oriental, walked across the quadrangle towards the Pathology building. They didn't so much as glance at the car.
'I see your stomach cleared up.'
Cafferty smiled. 'Fresh air and exercise, Strawman. You look like you could do with both.'
'You're crazy coming back here.'
'We both know I had to.'
'We'll have you inside again in a matter of days.'







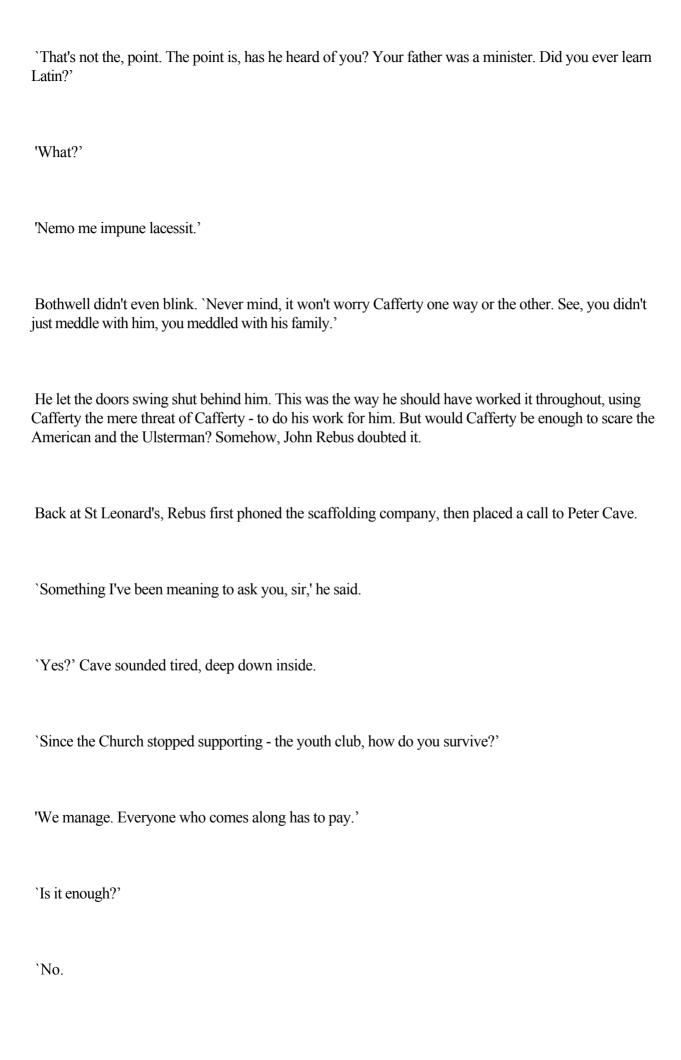
The heavy outside opened the door and he got out fast. As the heavy got in, the driver gunned the engine. The back window went down, Cafferty looking at him, saying nothing.
The car sped off, tyres screeching, as it turned into the one-way traffic on Teviot Place. Dr Curt appeared in the Pathology doorway, then came briskly across the quadrangle.
'Are you all right? I've just phoned the police.'
'Do me a favour, when they get here tell them you were mistaken.'
`What?'
'Tell them anything, but don't tell them it was me.'
Rebus started to move off. Maybe he'd have that drink at Sandy Bell's. Maybe he'd have three.
'I'm not a very good liar,' Dr Curt called after him.
`Then the practice will be good for you,' Rebus called back.
Frankie Bothwell shook his head again.
'I've already spoken with the gentlemen from Torphichen Place. You want to ask anyone, ask them.'

they'd found on the first floor. He didn't need this.
'But you knew Miss Docherty was upstairs,' Rebus persisted.
'Is that right?' Bothwell wriggled on his barstool and tipped ash onto the floor.
'You were told she was upstairs.'
'Was I?'
'Your manager told you.'
'You've only got his word for that.'
'You deny he said it? Maybe if we could get the two of you together?'
'You can do what you like, he's out on his ear anyway. I sacked him first thing. Can't have people dossing upstairs like that, bad for the club's image. Let them sleep on the streets like everyone else.'
Rebus tried to imagine what resemblance the kid at the Gar-B had seen between himself and Frankie Bothwell. He was here because he was feeling reckless. Plus he'd put a few whiskies away in Sandy Bell's. He was here because he quite fancied beating Lee Francis Bothwell to a bloody mush on the dance floor.
Stripped of music and flashing lights and drink and dancers, the Crazy Hose had as much life as a

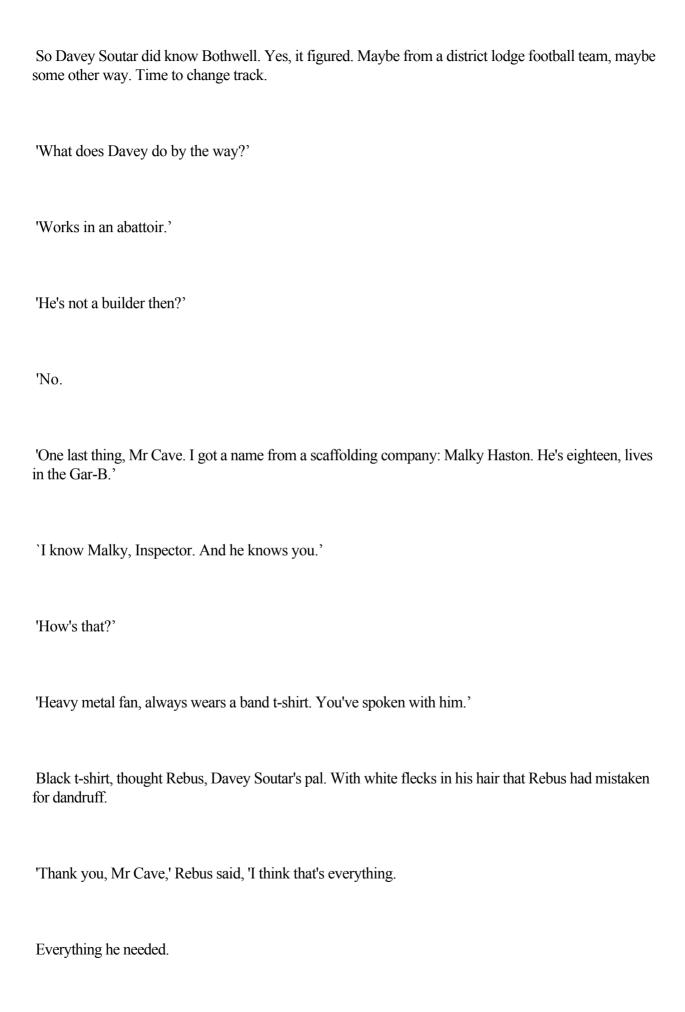
warehouse full of last year's fashions. Bothwell, appearing to dismiss Rebus from his mind, lifted one foot and began to rub some dust from a cowboy boot. Rebus feared the white trousers would either split or else eviscerate their wearer. The boot was black and soft with small puckers covering it like miniature

He was being difficult. He'd had a difficult night, what with being dragged from his bed and then staying up till all hours dealing with the police, answering their questions, explaining the stash of cased spirits





'You're not subsidising the place out of your own pocket?'
Cave laughed at this. 'What then? Sponsorship?'
'In a way, yes.'
'What sort of way?'
'Just someone who saw the good the club was doing.'
'Someone you know?'
'Never met him, as a matter of fact.'
Rebus took a stab. 'Francis Bothwell?'
'How did you know that?'
'Someone told me,' Rebus lied.
'Davey?'



A uniform approached as he put down the phone, and handed Rebus the information he'd requested on recent and not so-recent break-ins. Rebus knew what he was looking for, and it didn't take long. Acid wasn't that easy to come by, not unless you had a plausible reason for wanting it. Easier to steal the stuff if you could. And where could you find acid? Break-ins at Craigie Comprehensive School were fairly standard. It was like pre-employment training for the unrulier pupils. They learned to slip a window-catch and jemmy open a door, some graduated to lock-picking, and others became fences for the stolen goods. It was always a buyers' market, but then economics was not a strong point with these junior careerists. Three months back, Craigie had been entered at the dead of night and the tuck shop emptied.

They'd also broken into the science rooms, physics and chemistry. The chemistry stock room had a different lock, but they took that out too, and made off with a large jar of methylated spirits, a few other choice cocktail ingredients, and three thick glass jars of various acids.

The caretaker, who lived in a small pre-fabricated house on the school grounds, saw and heard nothing. He'd been watching a special comedy night on the television. Probably he wouldn't have ventured out of doors anyway. Craigie Comprehensive wasn't exactly full of pupils with a sense of humour or love for their elders.

What could you expect from a school whose catchment area included the infamous Garibaldi Estate? He was putting the pieces together when Chief Inspector Lauderdale came over.

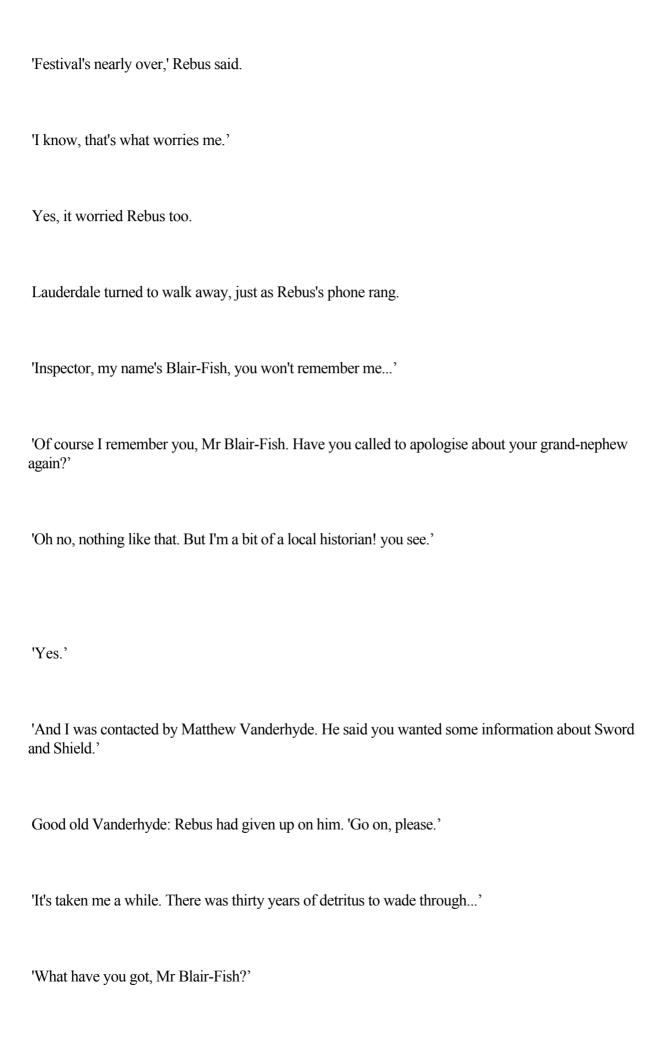
'As if we're not stretched thin enough,' Lauderdale complained.

'What's that?'

'Another anonymous threat, that's twice today. He says our time's up.'

'Shame, I was just beginning to enjoy myself. Any specifics?'

Lauderdale nodded distractedly. 'A bomb. He didn't say where. He says it's so big there'll be no hiding place.'



'Well, I've got notes of some meetings, a treasurer's report, minutes and things like that. Plus the membership lists. I'm afraid they're not complete.'

Rebus sat forward in his chair. 'Mr Blair-Fish, I'd like to send someone over to collect everything from you. Would that be all right?'

Rebus was reaching for pen and paper.

'Well, I suppose ... I don't see why not.'

'Let's look on it as final atonement for your grandnephew. Now if you'll just give me your address...'

Locals called it the Meat Market, because it was sited close to the slaughterhouse. Workers from the slaughterhouses wandered in at lunchtime for pints, pies and cigarettes. Sometimes they wore flecks of blood; the owner didn't mind. He'd been one of them once, working the jet-air gun at a chicken factory. The pistol, hooked up to a compressor, had taken the heads off several hundred stunned chickens per hour. He ran the Meat Market with the same unruffled facility.

It wasn't lunchtime, so the Market was quiet - two old men drinking slow half pints at opposite ends of the bar, ignoring one another so studiously that there had to be a grudge between them, and two unemployed youths shooting pool and trying to make each game last, their pauses between shots the stuff of chess games. Finally, there was a man with sparks in his eyes: The proprietor was keeping a watch on him. He knew trouble when he saw it. The man was drinking whisky and water. He looked the sort of drinker, when he was mortal you wouldn't want to get in his way. He wasn't getting mortal just now; he was making the one drink last. But he didn't look like he was enjoying anything about it. Finally he finished the quarter gill.

'Take care,' the proprietor said.

'Thanks,' said John Rebus, heading for the door.

Slaughterhouse workers are a different breed. They worked amid brain and offal, thick blood and shit, in a sanitised environment of whitewash and piped radio music. A huge electrical unit reached down from the ceiling to suck the smell away and pump in fresh air. The young man hosing blood into a drain did so expertly, spraying none of the liquid anywhere other than where he wanted it. And afterwards he turned down the pressure at the nozzle and hosed off his black rubber boots. He wore a white rubberised apron round his neck and stretching down to his knees, as did most of those around him. Aprons to Rebus meant barmen, masons and butchers. He was reminded only of this last as he walked across the floor.

They were working with cattle. The cows looked young and fearful, eyes bulging. They'd probably already been injected with muscle relaxants, so moved drunkenly along the line. A jolt of electricity behind either ear numbed them, and quickly the wielder of the bolt-gun took aim with the cold muzzle hard against each skull. Their back legs seemed to crumple first. Already the light was vanishing from behind their eyes.

He'd been told Davey Soutar was working near the back of the operation; so he had to pick his way around the routine. Men and women speckled with blood smiled and nodded as he passed. They all wore hats to keep their hair off the meat.

Or perhaps to keep the meat off their hair.

Soutar was by the back wall, resting easily against it, hands tucked into the front of his apron. He was talking to a girl, chatting her up perhaps.

So romance isn't dead, thought Rebus.

Then Soutar saw him, just as Rebus slipped on a wet patch of floor. Soutar placed him immediately, and seemed to raise his head and roll his eyes in defeat. Then he ran forward and picked something up from a shiny metal table. He was fumbling with it as Rebus advanced. It was only when Soutar took aim and the girl screamed that Rebus realised it was a bolt-gun. There was the sound of a two pound hammer hitting a girder. The bolt flew, but Rebus dodged it. Soutar threw the gun at him and dived for the rear wall, hitting the bar of the emergency exit. The door swung open then closed again behind him. The girl was still screaming as Rebus ran towards her, pushed the horizontal bar to unlock the door, and stumbled into the abattoir's back yard.

There were a couple of large transporters in the middle of disgorging their doomed cargo. The animals were sending out distress calls as they were fed into holding pens. The entire rear area was walled in, so nobody from the outside world could glimpse the spectacle. But if you went around the transporters, a lane led back to the front of the building. Rebus was about to head that way when the blow felled him. It had come from behind. On his hands and knees, he half-turned his head to see his attacker. Soutar had been hiding behind the door. He was holding a long metal stick, a cattle prod. It was this which he had swung at Rebus's head, catching him on the left ear. Blood dropped onto the ground. Soutar lunged with the pole, but Rebus caught it and managed to pull himself up. Soutar kept moving forwards, but though wiry and young he did not possess the older man's bulk and strength. Rebus twisted the pole from his hands, then dodged the kick which Soutar aimed at him. Kick-fighting wasn't so easy with rubber boots on.

Rebus wanted to get close enough to land a good punch or kick of his own, or even to wrestle Soutar to the ground. But Soutar reached into his apron and came out with a gold-coloured butterfly knife, flicking its two moulded wings to make a handle for the vicious looking blade.

'There's more than one way to skin a pig,' he said, grinning, breathing hard.

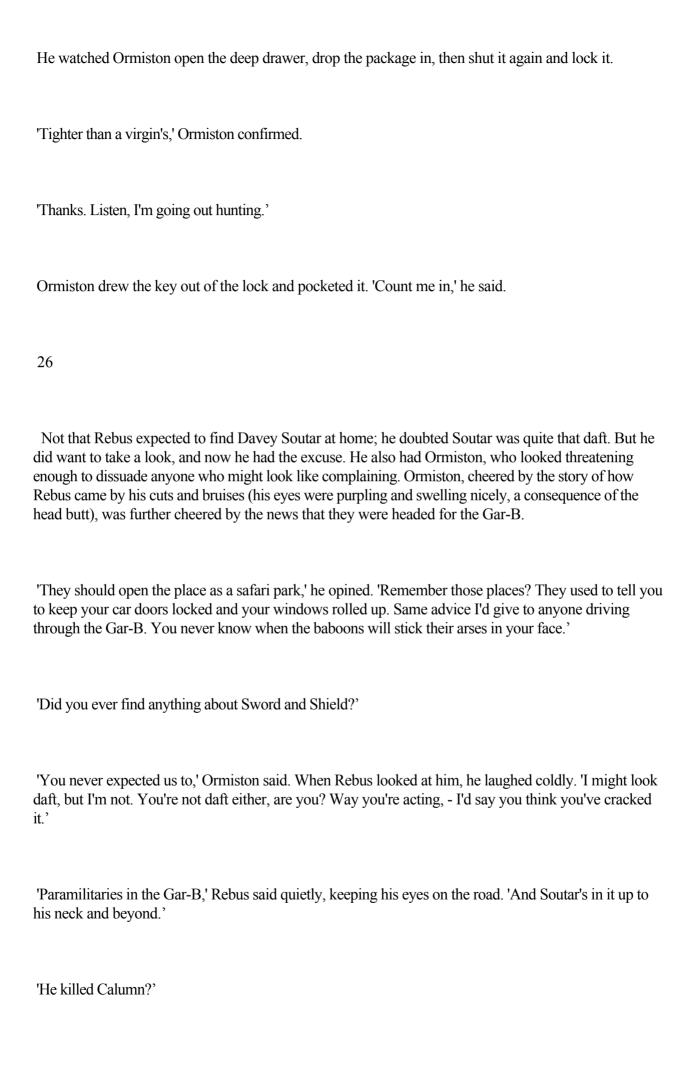
'I like it when there's an audience,' Rebus said. Soutar turned for a second to take in the sight of the cattle herders, all of whom had stopped work to watch the fight. By the time he looked back, Rebus had caught the knife hand with the toe of his shoe, sending the knife clattering to the ground. Soutar came straight for him then, butting him on the bridge of the nose. It was a good hit. Rebus's eyes filled with tears, he felt energy earth out of him into the ground, and blood ran down his lips and chin.

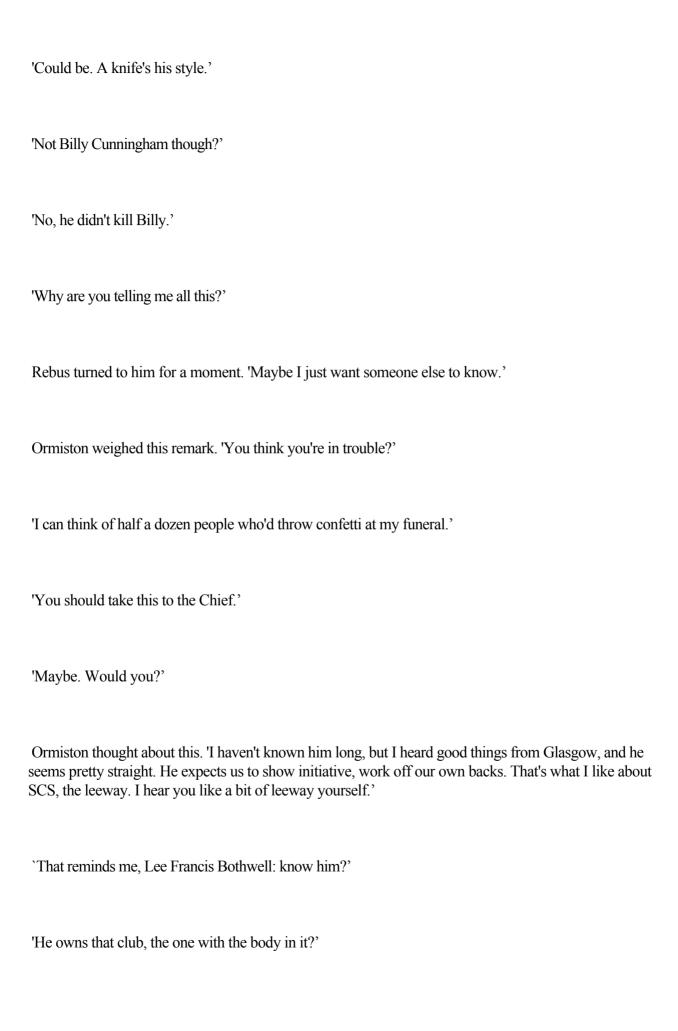
'You're dead!' Soutar screamed. 'You just don't know it yet!' He picked up his knife, but Rebus had the metal pole, and swung it in a wide arc. Soutar hesitated, then ran for it. He took a short cut, climbing the rail which funnelled the cattle into the pens, then leaping one of the cows and clearing the rail at the other side.

'Stop him!' Rebus called, spraying blood. 'I'm a police officer!' But by then Davey Soutar was out of sight. All you could hear were his rubber boots flapping as he ran.

The doctor at the Infirmary had seen Rebus several times before, and tutted as usual before getting to work. She confirmed what he knew: the nose was not broken. He'd been lucky. The cut to his ear required two stitches, which she did there and then. The thread she used was thick and black and ugly.

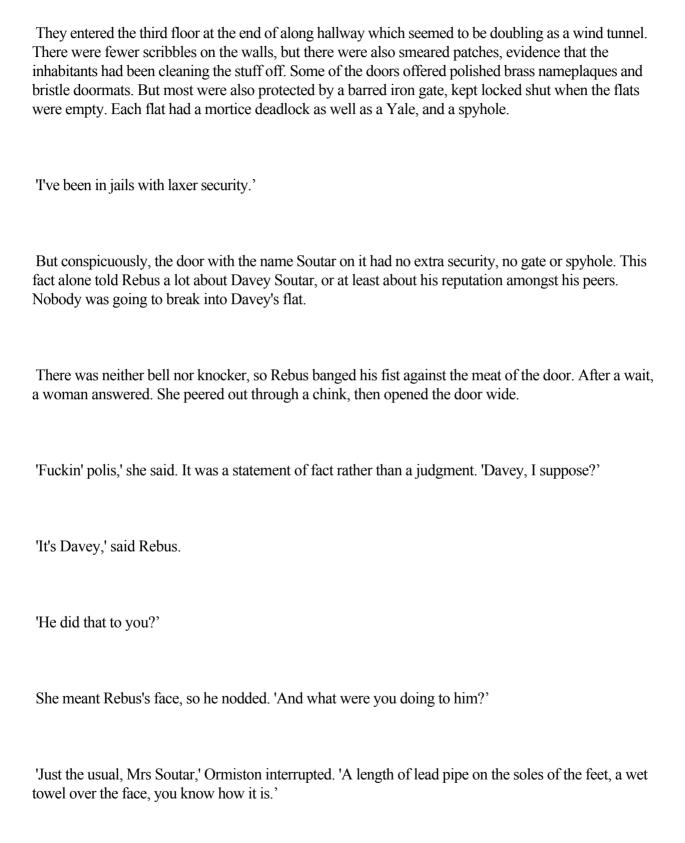
'Whatever happened to invisible mending?'	
'It wasn't a deterrent.'	
'Fair point.'	
'If it stings, you can always get your girlfriend to lick your wounds.'	
Rebus smiled. Was that a chat-up line? Well, he had enough problems without adding another to the inventory. So he didn't say anything. He acted the good patient, then went to Fettes and filed the assault.	
'You look like Ken Buchanan on a good night,' said Ormiston. 'Here's the stuff you wanted. Claverhouse has gone off in a huff; he didn't like being turned into a messenger boy.'	
Ormiston patted the heavy package on Rebus's desk. It was a large brown cardboard box, smelling of dust and old paper. Rebus opened it and took out the ledger book which served as a membership record for the original Sword and Shield. The blue fountain-ink had faded, but each surname was in capitals so it didn't take him long. He sat staring at the two names, managing a short-lived smile. Not that he'd anything to smile about, not really. There was nothing to be proud of. His desk drawer didn't lock, but Ormiston's did. He took the ledger with him.	it g
'Has the Chief seen this?'	
Ormiston shook his head.	
'He's been out of the office since before it arrived.'	
'I want it kept safe. Can you lock it in your drawer?'	







'I think Peter Cave blundered with good intention into something that was already happening. I think something very bad is happening in the Gar-B.'
They had to take a chance on parking the car and leaving it. If Rebus had thought about it, he'd have brought one other man, someone to guard the wheels. There were kids loitering by the parking bays, but not the same kids who'd done his tyres before, so he handed over a couple of quid and promised a couple more when he came back.
`It's dearer than the parking in town,' Ormiston complained as they headed for the high-rises. The Soutars' high-rise had been renovated, with a sturdy main door added to stop undesirables congregating in the entrance hall or on the stairwells. The entrance hall had been decorated with a green and red mural. Not that you would know any of this to look at the place. The lock had been smashed, and the door hung loosely on its hinges. The mural had been all but blocked out by penned graffiti and thick black coils of spray paint.
'Which floor are they on?' Ormiston asked.
'The third.'
`Then we'll take the stairs. I don't trust the lifts in these places.'
The stairs were at the end of the hall. Their walls had become a winding scribble-pad, but they didn't smell too bad. At each turn in the stairs lay empty cider cans and cigarette stubs. 'What do they need a youth club for when they've got the stairwell?' Ormiston asked.
`What've you got against the lift?'
'Sometimes the kids'll wait till you're between floors then shut off the power.'
He looked at Rebus. 'My sister lives in one of those H-blocks in Oxgangs.'



Rebus nearly said something, but Ormiston had judged her right. Mrs Soutar smiled tiredly and stepped back into her hall. 'You'd better come in. A bit of steak would stop those eyes swelling, but all I've got is half a pound of mince, and it's the economy stuff. You'd get more meat from a butcher's pencil. This is my man, Dod.'

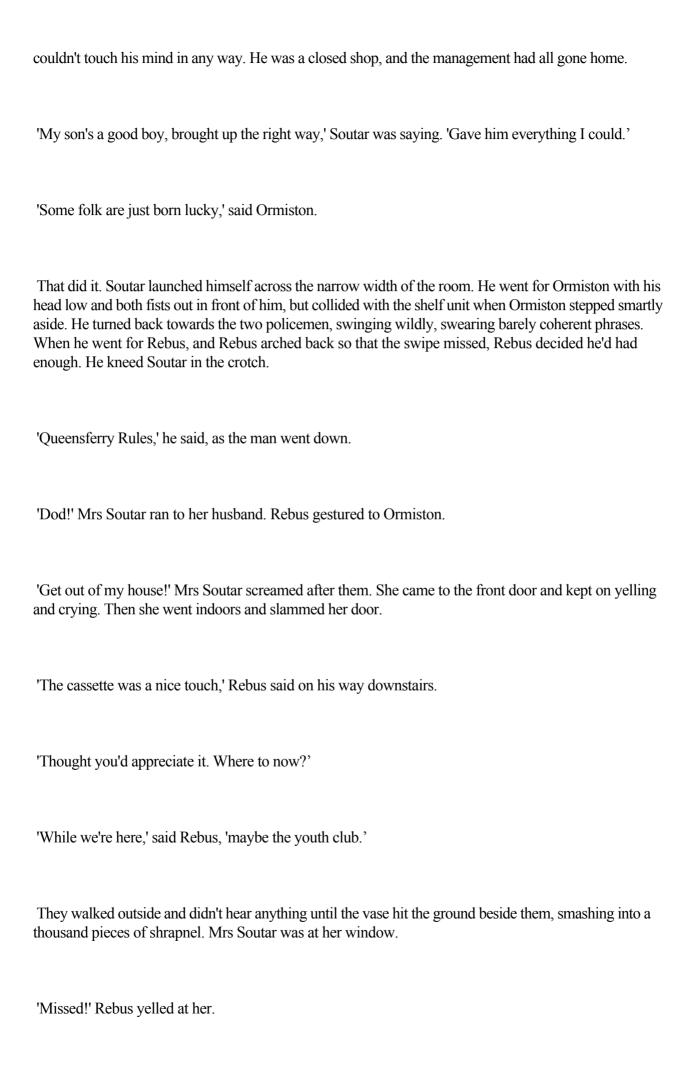




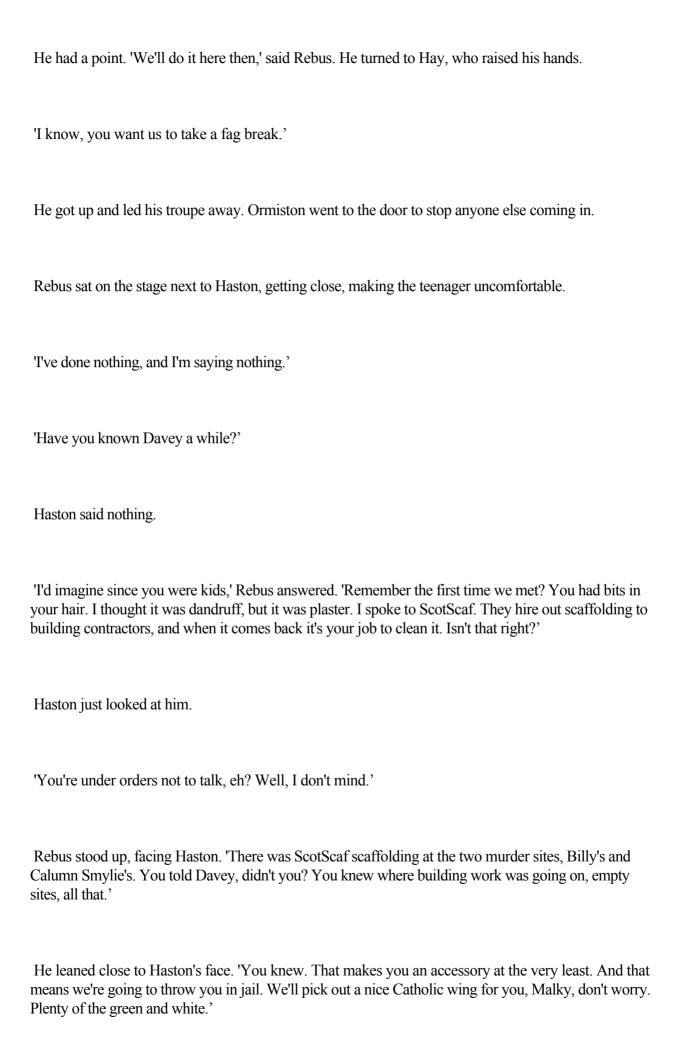
The song was 'The Sash'. Ormiston handed the cassette case to Rebus. The cover was a cheap Xeroxed drawing of the Red Hand of Ulster, the band's name scratched on it in black ink. They were called the Proud Red Hand Marching Band, though it was hard to conceive of anyone marching to an accordion.
Dod, who had returned from the sink, started whistling along and clapping his hands. 'It's a grand old tune, eh?'
'What do you want to put that on for?' Mrs Soutar asked Ormiston. He shrugged, saying nothing.
'Aye, a grand old tune.' Dod collapsed onto the sofa. The woman glared at him.
'It's bigotry's what it is. I've nothing against the Catholics.'
'Well neither have I,' Dod countered. He winked at Ormiston. 'But there's no shame in being proud of your roots.'
'What about Davey, Mr Soutar? Does he have anything against Catholics?'
'No.'
'No? He seems to run around with Protestant gangs.'
'It's the Gar-B,' Mr Soutar said. 'You have to belong.'
Rebus knew what he was saying. Dod Soutar sat forward on the sofa.

using vibrato in place of skill.





'Jesus Christ,' Ormiston said, as they walked away.
The usual lacklustre teenagers sat around outside the community hall, propping their backs against its door and walls. Rebus didn't bother to ask about Davey Soutar. He knew what the response would be; it had been drilled into them like catechism. His ear was tingling, not hurting exactly, but there was a dull throbbing pain in his nose. When they recognised Rebus, the gang got to their feet.
'Afternoon,' Ormiston said. 'You're right to stand up, by the way. Sitting on concrete gives you piles.'
In the hall, Jim Hay and his theatre group were sitting on the stage. Hay too recognised Rebus.
'Guess what?' he said. 'We have to mount a guard, otherwise they rip the stuff off.'
Rebus didn't know whether to believe him or not. He was more interested in the youth sitting next to Hay.
'Remember me, Malky?'
Malky Haston shook his head.
'I've got a few questions for you, Malky. Want to do it here or down the station?'
Haston laughed. 'You couldn't take me out of here, not if I didn't want to go.'



Rebus turned his back and lit a cigarette. When he turned back to Haston, he offered him one. Ormiston was having a bit of bother at the door. The gang wanted in. Haston took a cigarette. Rebus lit it for him.
'Doesn't matter what you do, Malky. You can run, you can lie, you can say nothing at all. You're going away, and we're the only friends you'll ever have.'
He turned away and walked towards Ormiston. 'Let them in,' he ordered. The gang came crashing through the doors, fanning out across the hall. They could see Malky Haston was all right, though he was sitting very still on the edge of the stage. Rebus called to him.
'Thanks for the chat, Malky. We'll talk again, any time you want.'
Then he turned to the gang. 'Malky's got his head screwed on,' he told them. 'He knows when to talk.'
'Lying bastard!' Haston roared, as Rebus and Ormiston walked into the daylight.
Rebus met Lachlan Murdock at the Crazy Hose, despite Bothwell's protests.
Murdock's uncombed hair was wilder than ever, his clothes sloppy. He was waiting in the foyer when Rebus arrived.
'They all think I had something to do with it,' Murdock protested as Rebus led him into the dancehall.
'Well, you did, in a way,' Rebus said.
'What?'

'Come on, I want to show you something.'
He led Murdock up to the attic. In the daytime, the attic was a lot lighter. Even so, Rebus had brought a torch. He didn't want Murdock to miss anything.
`This,' he said, 'is where I found her. She'd suffered, believe me.'
Already, Murdock was close to fresh tears, but sympathy could wait, the truth couldn't. 'I found this on the floor.'
He handed over the disk cover. 'This is what they killed her for. A computer disk, same size as would fit your machine at home.'
He walked up close to Murdock's slouched' figure. 'They killed her for this!' he hissed. He waited a moment, then moved away towards the windows.
'I thought maybe she'd have made a copy. She wasn't daft, was she? But I went to the shop, and there's nothing there. Maybe in your fiat?'
Murdock just sniffed. 'I can't believe she-'
'There was a copy,'
Murdock groaned. 'I wiped it.'
Rebus walked back towards him. 'Why?'
Murdock shook his head. 'I didn't think it'

He took a deep breath. 'It reminded me'
Rebus nodded. 'Ah yes, Billy Cunningham. It reminded you of the pair of them. When did you begin to suspect?'
Murdock shook his head again.
'See,' said Rebus, 'I know most of it. I know enough. But I don't know it all. Did you look at the files on the disk?'
'I looked.'
He wiped his red-rimmed eyes. 'It was Billy's disk, not hers. But a lot of the stuff on it was hers.'
I don't understand.'
Murdock managed a weak smile. 'You're right, I did know about the two of them. I didn't want to know, but I knew all the same. When I wiped the disk, I was angry, I was so angry.'
He turned to look at Rebus. 'I don't think he could have done it without Millie. You need quite a setup to hack into the kinds of systems they were dealing with.'
'Hacking?'
'They probably used the stuff in her shop. They hacked into Army and police computers, bypassed security, invaded datafiles, then marched out again without leaving any trace.'

'So what did they do?'

Murdock was talking now, enjoying the release. He wiped tears from below his glasses. 'They monitored a couple of police investigations and altered a few inventories. Believe me, once they were in, they could have done a lot more.'

The way Murdock went on to explain it, it was almost ludicrously simple. You could steal from the Army (with inside assistance, there had to be inside assistance), and then erase the theft by altering the computer records to show stocks as they stood, not as they had been. Then, if SCS or Scotland Yard or anyone else took an interest, you could monitor their progress or lack of it. Millie: Millie had been the key throughout. Whether or not she knew what she was doing, she got Billy Cunningham in. He placed her in the lock and turned. The disk had contained instructions on their hacking procedures, tips for bypassing security checks, the works.

Rebus didn't doubt that the further Billy Cunningham got in, the more he wanted out. He'd been killed because he wanted out. He'd probably mentioned his little insurance policy in the hope they would let him leave quietly. Instead, they'd tried to torture its whereabouts out of him, before delivering the final silencing bullet. Of course, The Shield knew Billy wasn't hacking alone. It wouldn't have taken them long to get to Millie Docherty. Billy had stayed silent to protect her. She must have known. That's why she'd run.

'There was stuff about this group, too, The Shield,' Murdock was saying. 'I thought they were just a bunch of hackers.'

Rebus tried him with a few names. Davey Soutar and Jamesie MacMurray hit home. Rebus reckoned that in an interview room he could crack Jamesie like a walnut under a hammer. But Davey Soutar . . . well, he might need a real hammer for that. The final file on the computer was all about Davey Soutar and the Gar-B.

'This Soutar,' Murdock said, 'Billy seemed to think he'd been skimming. That was the word he used. There's some stuff stashed in a lock-up out at Currie.'

Currie: the lock-up would belong to the MacMurrays.

Murdock looked at Rebus. 'He didn't say what was being skimmed. Is it money?'

'I underestimated you, Davey,' Rebus said aloud. 'All down the line. It might be too late now, but I swear I won't underestimate you again.'

He thought of how Davey and his kind hated the Festival. Hated it with a vengeance. He thought of the anonymous threats.

'Not money, Mr Murdock. Weapons and explosives. Come on, let's get out of here.'

Jamesie talked like a man coming out of silent retreat, especially when his father, hearing the story from Rebus, ordered him to. Gavin MacMurray was incensed, not that his son should be in trouble, but that the Orange Loval Brigade hadn't been enough for him. It was a betraval.

Jamesie led Rebus and the other officers to a row of wooden garages on a piece of land behind MacMurray's Garage. Two Army men were on hand. They checked for booby traps and trip wires and it took them nearly half an hour to get round to going in. Even then, they did not enter by the door. Instead, they climbed a ladder to the roof and cut through the asphalt covering, then dropped through and into the lock-up. A minute later, they gave the all clear, and a police constable broke open the door with a crowbar. Gavin MacMurray was with them.

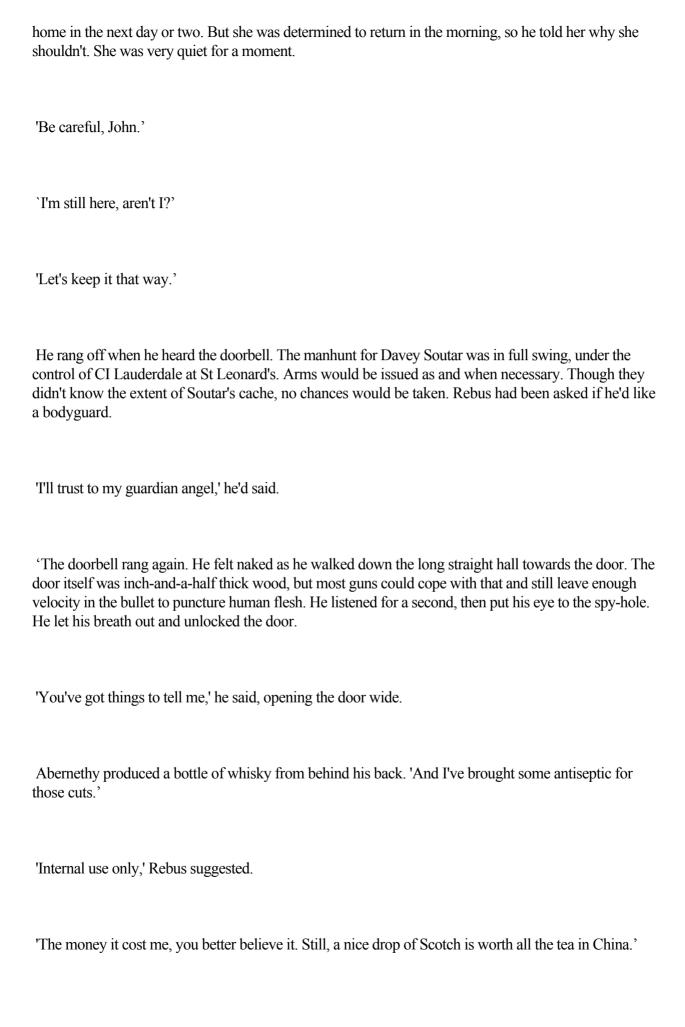
'I haven't been in here for years,' he said. He'd said it before, as if they didn't believe him. 'I never use these garages.'

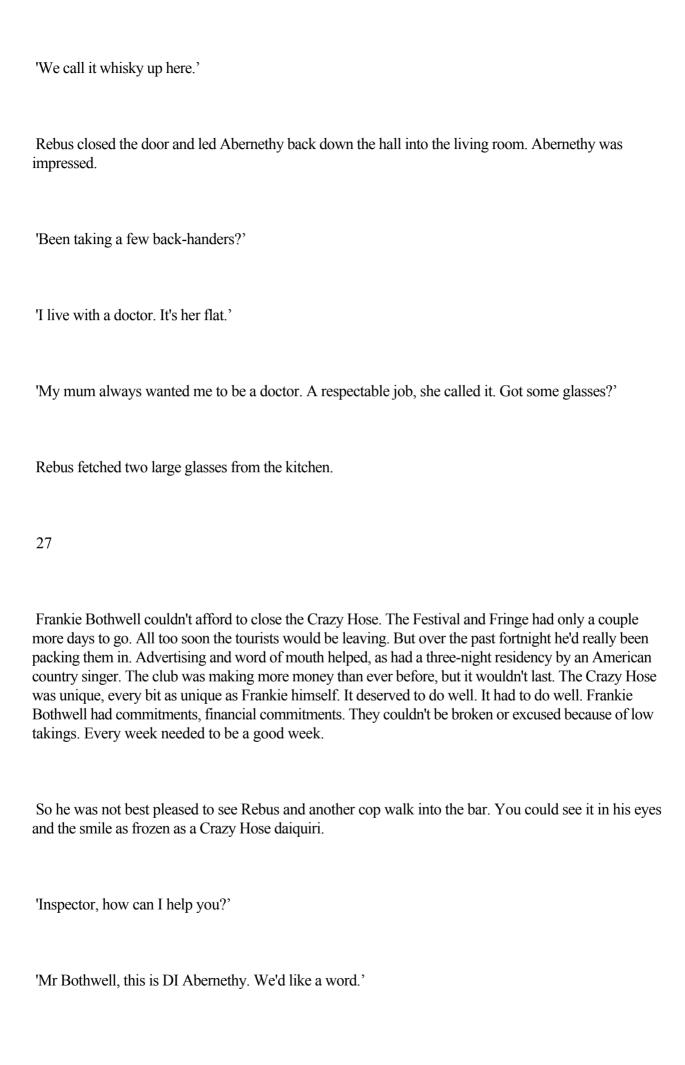
They had a good took round. Jamesie didn't know the precise location of the cache, only that Davey had said he needed a place to keep it. The garage had operated as a motorcycle workshop - that was how Billy Cunningham had got to know Jamesie, and through him Davey Soutar, in the first place. There were long rickety wooden shelves groaning with obscure metal parts, a lot of them rusted brown with age, tools covered with dust and cobwebs, and tins of paint and solvent. Each tin had to be opened, each tool examined. If you could hide Semtex in a transistor radio, you could certainly hide it in a tool shed. The Army had offered a specialised sniffer dog, but it would have to come from Aldershot. So instead they used their own eyes and noses and instinct.

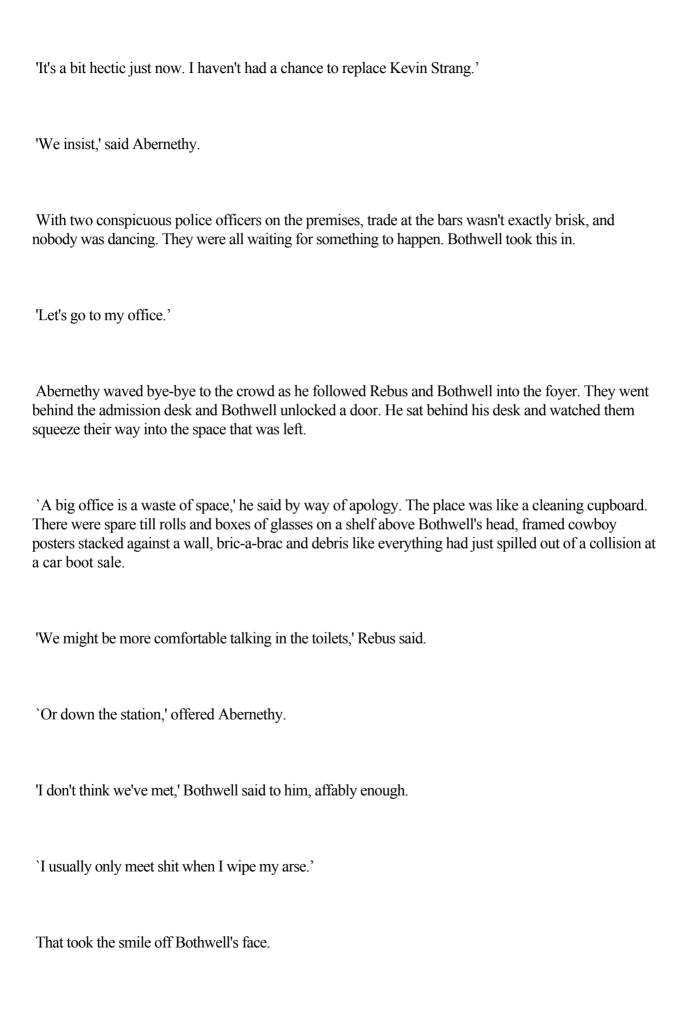
Hanging from nails on the walls were old tyres and wheels and chains. Forks and handlebars lay on the floor along with engine parts and mouldy boxes of nuts, bolts and screws. They scraped at the floor, but

found no buried boxes. There was a lot of oil on the ground.
'This place is clean,' said a smudged Army man. Rebus nodded agreement.
'He's been and cleared the place out. How much was there, Jamesie?'
But Jamesie MacMurray had been asked this before, and he didn't know. 'I swear I don't. I just said he could use the space. He got his own padlock fitted and everything.'
Rebus stared at him. These young hard men, Rebus had been dealing with them all his life and they were pathetic, like husks in suits of armour. Jamesie was about as hard as the Sun crossword. 'And he never showed you?'
Jamesie shook his head. 'Never.'
His father was staring at him furiously. 'You stupid wee bastard,' Gavin MacMurray said. 'You stupid, stupid wee fool.'
'We'll have to take Jamesie down the station, Mr MacMurray.'
'I know that.'
Then Gavin MacMurray slapped his son's face. With a hand callused by years of mechanical work, he loosened teeth and sent blood curdling from Jamesie's mouth. Jamesie spat on the dirt floor but said nothing. Rebus knew Jamesie was going to tell them everything he knew.
Outside, one of the Army men smiled in relief. 'I'm glad we didn't find anything.'
'Why?' 'Keeping the stuff in an environment like that, it's bound to be unstable.'











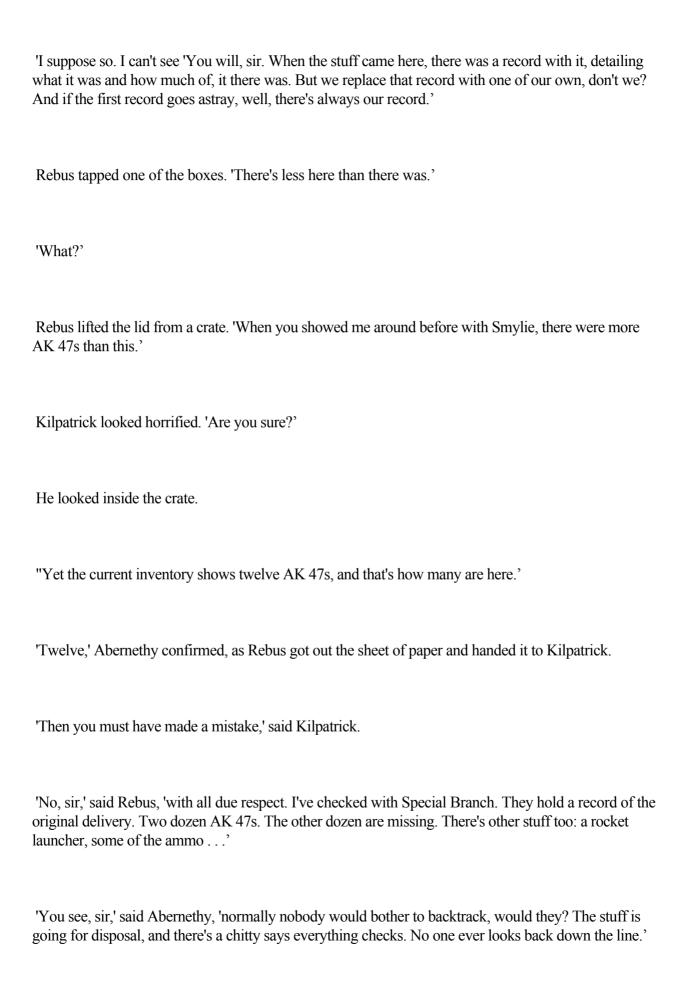


'We're the police,' Abernethy said lazily. 'We're paid to be crazy, what's your excuse?'
Bothwell considered the two of them and sat down slowly. 'I don't know anyone called Davey Soutar. I don't know anything about bombs or Sword and Shield or Mary King's Close.'
'I didn't say Sword and Shield,' said Rebus. 'I just said The Shield.'
Bothwell sat in silence.
'But now you mention it, I see your father the minister was in the original Sword and Shield. His name's on file. It was an offshoot of the Scottish National Party; I don't suppose you know anything about it?'
'Nothing.'
'No? Funny, you were in the youth league.'
'Was I?'
'Did your dad get you interested in Ulster?'
Bothwell shook his head slowly. 'You never stop, do you?'
'Never,' said Rebus.
The door opened. The two bouncers from the main door stood there, hands clasped in front of them, legs apart. They'd obviously been to the bouncers' school of etiquette. And, just as obviously, Bothwell had summoned them with some button beneath the lip of his desk.

'Escort these bastards off the premises,' he ordered.
'Nobody escorts me anywhere,' said Abernethy, 'not unless she's wearing a tight skirt and I've paid for her.'
He got up and faced the bouncers. One of them made to take his arm. Abernethy grabbed the bouncer at the wrist and twisted hard. The man fell to his knees. There wasn't much room for the other bouncer, and he looked undecided. He was still looking blank as Rebus pulled him into the room and threw him over the desk. Bothwell was smothered beneath him. Abernethy let the other bouncer go and followed Rebus outside with a real spring in his step, breathing deeply of Edinburgh's warm summer air. 'I enjoyed that.'
'Aye, me too, but do you think it worked?'
'Let's hope so. We're making liabilities of them. I get the feeling they're going to implode.'
Well, that was the plan. Every good plan, however, had a fall-back. Theirs was Big Ger Cafferty.
'Is it too late to grab a curry?'
Abernethy added.
'You're not in the sticks now. The night's young.'
But as Rebus led Abernethy towards a good curry house, he was thinking about liabilities and risks and dreading tomorrow's showdown.

The day dawned bright, with blue skies and a breeze which would soon warm. It was expected to stay good all day, with a clear night for the fireworks. Princes Street would be bursting at the seams, but it was quiet as DCI Kilpatrick drove along it. He was an early riser, but even he had been caught by Rebus's wake-up call.
The industrial estate was quiet too. After being cleared by the guard on the gate, he drove up to the warehouse and parked next to Rebus's car. The car was empty, but the warehouse door stood open. Kilpatrick went inside.
'Morning, sir.' Rebus was standing in front of the HGV.
'Morning, John. What's with all the cloak and dagger?'
'Sorry about that, sir. I hope I can explain.'
'I hope so too, going without breakfast never puts me in the best of moods.'
'It's just that there's something I had to tell you, and this seems as quiet a place as any.'
'Well, what is it?'
Rebus had started walking around the lorry, Kilpatrick following him. When they were at the back of the vehicle, Rebus pulled on the lever and swung the door wide open. On top of the boxes inside sat Abernethy.
'You didn't warn me it was a party,' Kilpatrick said.
'Here, let me help you up.'

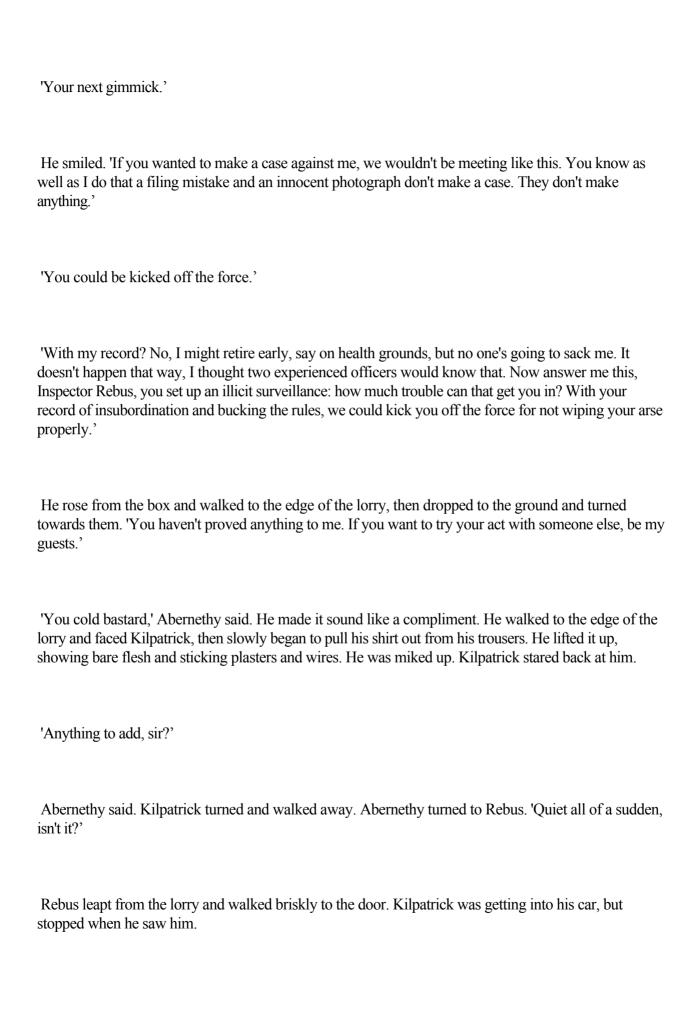


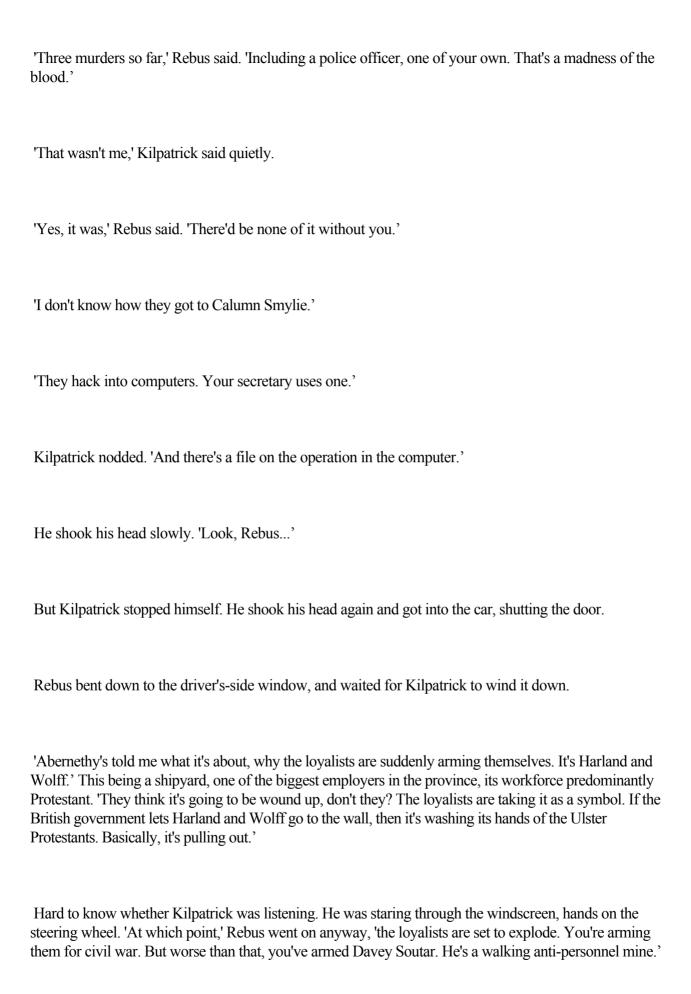


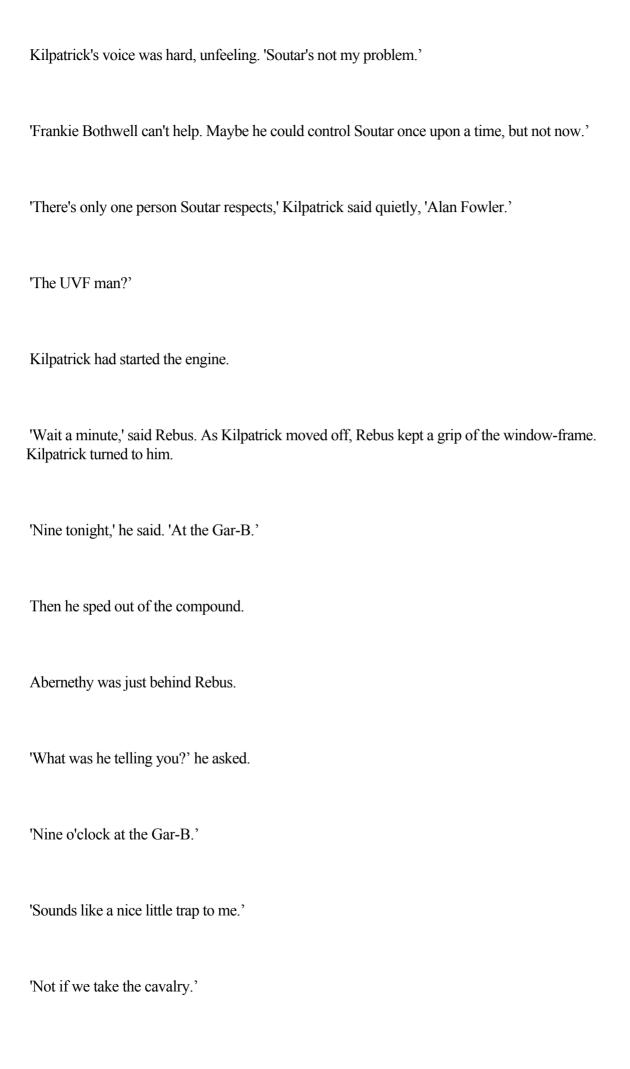


On cue, Abernethy rustled a white paper bag, one side of which was clear cellophane. The black and white photos could be seen inside.
'There's even one here,' Abernethy said, 'of you meeting Moncur in Gullane. Maybe you were talking about golf?'
'You must have promised The Shield some of these arms before I came along,' Rebus went on. 'You brought me into the investigation to keep an eye on me.'
'But why would I bring you here in the first place?'
'Because Ken Smylie asked you to. And you didn't want to raise his suspicions. There's not much gets past Ken.'
Rebus had expected Kilpatrick to deflate, but he didn't, if anything he grew bigger. He plunged his hands into his jacket pockets and slid his shoulders back. His face showed no emotion, and he wasn't about to talk.
'We've been looking at you for a while,' Abernethy continued. 'Those Prod terrorists you let slip through your fingers in Glasgow'
He shook his head slowly. 'That's one reason we moved you from Glasgow, to see if you could still operate. When news of the six-pack reached me, I knew you were still lending a hand to your friends in The Shield. They've always relied on inside help, and by Christ they've been getting it.'
'You thought it was a drugs hit,' Kilpatrick argued.









'John,' Abernethy said with a grin, 'I've got all the cavalry we'll need.'
Rebus turned to face him. 'You've been playing me like a pinball machine, haven't you? That first time we met, all that stuff you told me about computers being the future of crime. You knew back then.'
Abernethy shrugged. He pulled up his shirt again and started to pull off the wires. 'All I did was point you in the general direction. Look at the way I got on your tits that first time. That's how I knew I could trust you. I nettled you and you let it show. You'd nothing to hide.'
He nodded to himself. 'Yes, I knew, I've known for a long time. Proving it was the bugger.'
Abernethy looked at the compound gates. 'But Kilpatrick's got enemies, remember that, not just you and me any more.'
'What do you mean?'
But Abernethy just winked and tapped his nose. 'Enemies,' he said.
Rebus had pulled Siobhan Clarke off the Moncur surveillance and put her on to Frankie Bothwell. But Frankie Bothwell had disappeared. She apologised, but Rebus only shrugged. Holmes had kept with Clyde Moncur, but Moncur and his wife were off on some bus tour, a two-day trip to the Highlands. Moncur could always get off the bus and double back, but Rebus discontinued the tail anyway.
'You seem a bit glum, sir,' Siobhan Clarke told him. Maybe she was right. The world seemed upside down. He'd seen bad cops before, of course he had. But he had never before seen anything like Kilpatrick's lack of an explanation or a decent defence. It was as if he didn't feel he needed one, as if he'd just been doing the right thing; in the wrong way perhaps, but the right thing all the same.

Abernethy had told him how deep the suspicions went, how long they'd been accumulating. But it was hard to investigate a policeman who, on the surface, seemed to be doing nearly everything right. Investigation required cooperation, and the co-operation wasn't there. Until Rebus had come along.

At the Gar-B lock-ups, outside the blocks of flats, police and Army experts were opening doors, just in case the stolen cache was inside one of the garages. Door to door inquiries were going on, trying to pin down Davey's friends, trying to get someone to talk or to admit they were hiding him. Meantime, Jamesie MacMurray was already being charged. But they were minnows, their flesh not enough to merit the hook. Kilpatrick, too, had disappeared, Rebus had phoned Ormiston and found that the CI hadn't returned to his office, and no one answered at his home.

Holines and Clarke returned from the warrant search of Soutar's home,	, Holmes toting a p	olain cardboard
box, obviously not empty. Holmes put the box on Rebus's desk.		

'Let's start,' Holmes said, 'with a jar of acid, carefully concealed under Soutar's bed.'

'His mother says he never lets her in to clean his room,' Clarke explained. 'He's got a padlock on the door to prove it. We had to break the lock. His mum wasn't best pleased.'

'She's a lovely woman, isn't she?' said Rebus. 'Did you meet the dad?'

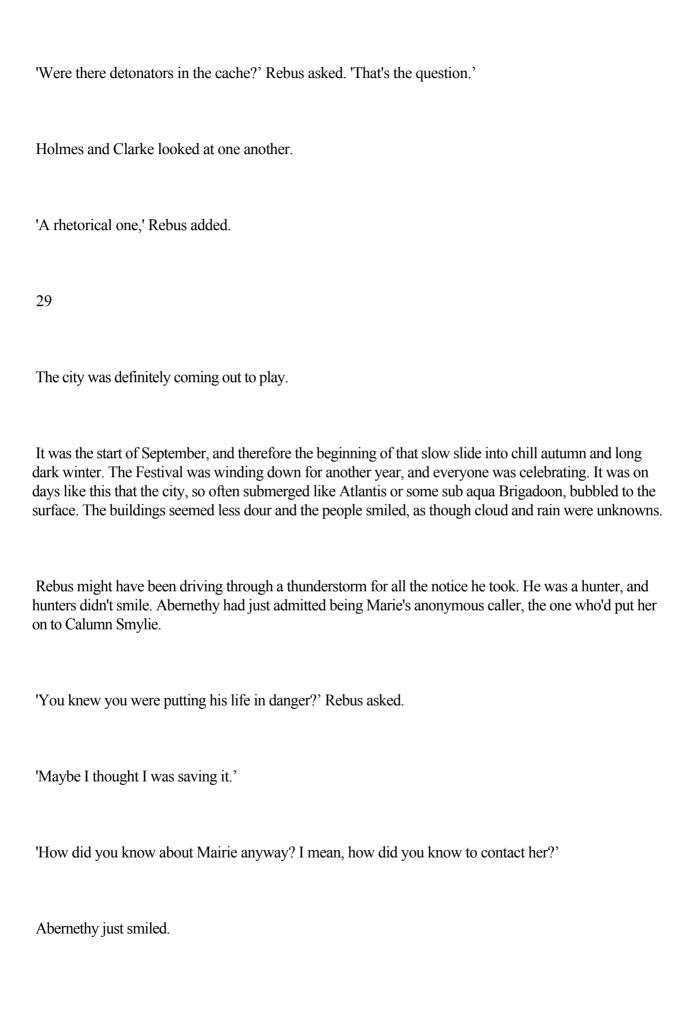
'He was at the bookie's.'

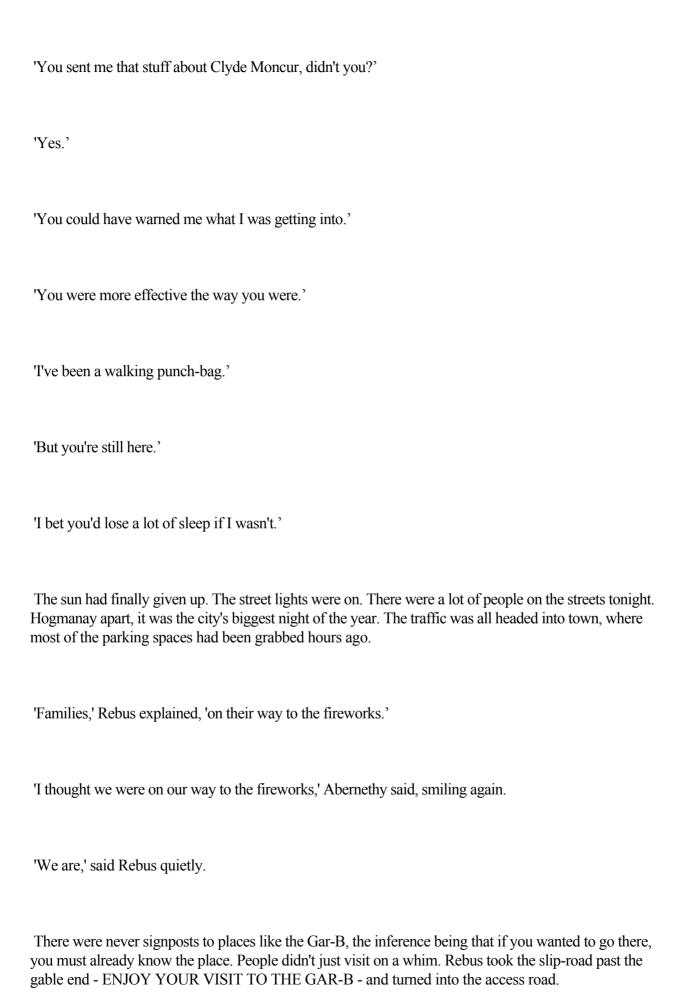
'Lucky for you. What else have you got?'

'Typhoid probably,' Holmes complained. 'The place was like a Calcutta rubbish tip.'

Clarke dipped in and pulled out a few small polythene bags; everything in the box had been wrapped first and labelled. 'We've got knives, most of them illegal, one still with what looks like dried blood on it.'







'Nine o'clock, he said.'
Abernethy checked his watch. 'Nine it is.'
But Rebus wasn't listening. He was watching a van roaring towards them. The road was barely wide enough for two vehicles, and the van driver didn't seem to be paying much attention. He was crouched down, eyes on his wing mirror. Rebus slammed on the brakes and the horn and whipped the steering wheel around. The rust bucket slew sideways like it was on ice. That was the problem with bald tyres.
Out!' Rebus called. Abernethy didn't need telling twice. The driver had finally seen them. The van was skidding to an uncertain stop. It hit the driver's side door, shuddered, and was still. Rebus pulled open the van door and hauled out Jim Hay. He'd heard of people looking white as a sheet, white as a ghost, but Jim Hay looked whiter than that. Rebus held him upright.
'He's gone off his fucking headl' Hay yelled.
'Who has?'
'Soutar.'
Hay was looking behind him, back down the road which curled snake-like into the Gar-B. 'I'm only the delivery man, not this not this.'
Dusting himself off, Abernethy joined them. He'd lost the knees out of his denims.
'You deliver the stuff,' Rebus was saying to Hay, 'the explosives, the arms?'
Hay nodded.

Yes, the perfect delivery man, in his little theatre van, all boxes and props, costumes and sets, guns and grenades. Delivered east coast to west, where another connection would be made, another switch.

'Hold him,' Rebus ordered. Abernethy looked like he didn't understand. 'Hold him!' Then Rebus let Jim Hay go, got into the van, and reversed it out of his car's bodywork and back into the Gar-B. When he reached the car park, he turned the van and bumped it at speed onto the grass, heading for the youth centre.

There was nobody about, not a soul. The door-to-door had been wound up for the day, having yielded nothing. The Gar-B simply didn't speak to the 'polls'. It was a rule of life, like remembering to breathe. Rebus was breathing hard. The garages he passed had been searched and declared safe, though one of them had contained a suspicious number of TV sets, videos, and camcorders, and another showed evidence of sniffed glue and smoked crack.

No neighbours were out discussing the day's events. There was even silence at the community centre. He doubted the Gar-B tribe were the kind to be attracted to a firework display . . . not normally.

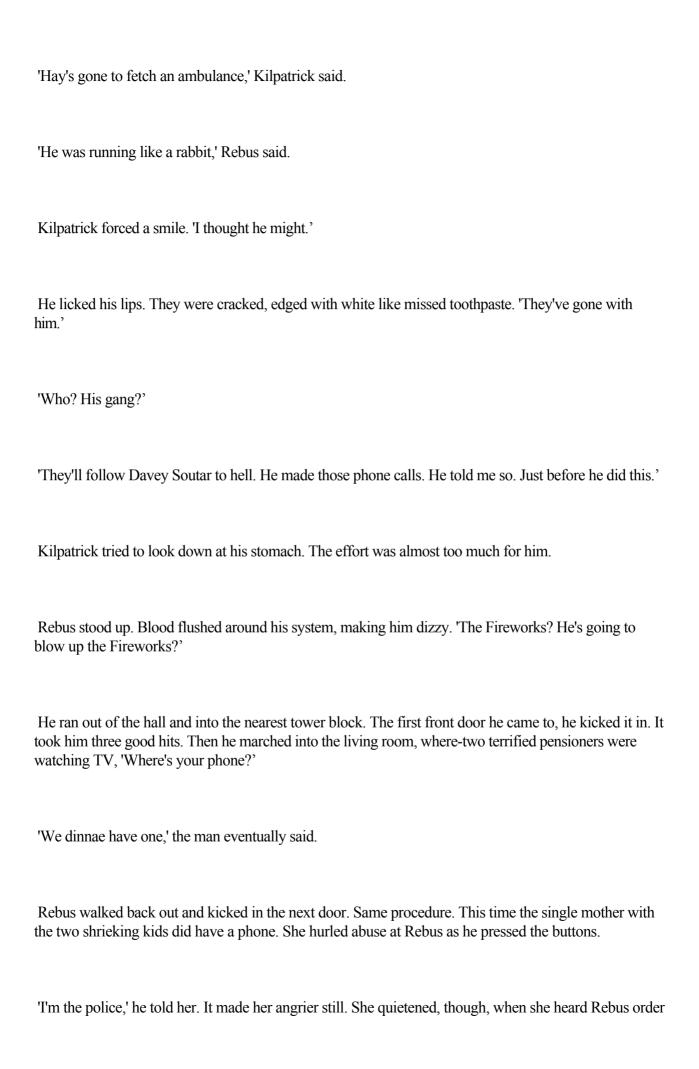
The doors were open, so Rebus walked in. A bright trail of blood led in an arc across the floor from the stage to the far wall. Kilpatrick was slumped against the wall, almost but not quite sitting up. He'd removed his necktie halfway across the room, maybe to help him breathe. He was still alive, but he'd lost maybe a pint of blood already. When Rebus crouched down beside him, Kilpatrick clutched at him with wet red fingers, leaving a bloody handprint on Rebus's shirt. His other hand was protecting his own stomach, source of the wound.

'I tried to stop him,' he whispered.

Rebus looked around him. 'Was the stuff hidden here?'

'Under the stage.'

Rebus looked at the small stage, a stage he'd sat on and stood on.



an ambulance. She was shushing the kids as he made his second call.

'It's DI Rebus here,' he said. 'Davey Soutar and his gang are on their way to Princes Street with a load of high explosives. We need that area sealed.'

He half-smiled an apology as he left the flat and half-ran back to the van. Still nobody had come to investigate, to see what all the noise and the fuss were. Like Edinburghers of old, they could become invisible to trouble. In olden times, they'd hidden in the catacombs below the Castle and the High Street. Now they just shut their windows and turned up the TV. They were Rebus's employers, whose taxes paid his salary. They were the people he was paid to protect. He felt like telling them all to go to hell.

When he got back to his car, Abernethy was standing there with Jim Hay, not a clue what to do with him. Rebus yanked the steering wheel and pulled the van onto the grass.

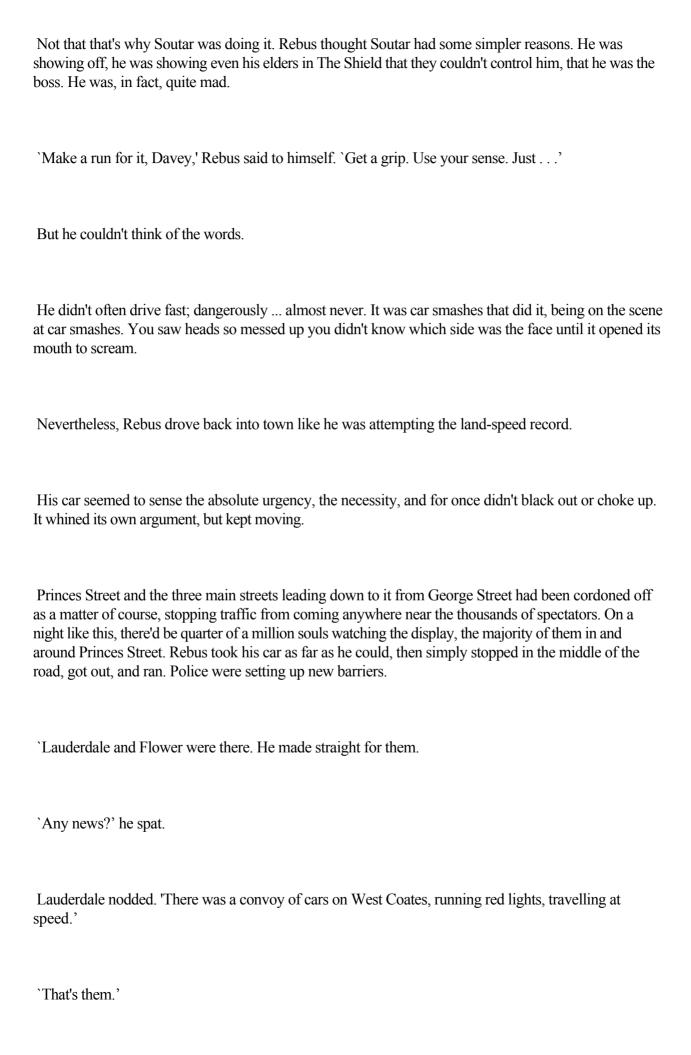
`An ambulance is on its way,' he said, trying to pull open his car door. It groaned like something in a scrapyard crusher, but eventually gave, and he squeezed through the gap into his seat, brushing aside the glass chippings.

'Where are you going?' Abernethy asked.

'Stay here with him,' Rebus said, starting the car and reversing back up the access road.

The Glenlivet Fireworks: every year there was a firework display from the Castle ramparts, accompanied by a chamber orchestra in Princes Street Gardens' bandstand and watched by crowds in the Gardens and packed into Princes Street itself. The concert usually started around ten-fifteen, ten-thirty. It was now ten o'clock on a balmy dry evening. The area would be full to bursting.

Wild Davey Soutar. He and his kind detested the Festival. It took away from them their Edinburgh and propped something else in its place, a facade of culture which they didn't need and couldn't understand. There was no underclass in Edinburgh, they'd all been pushed out into schemes on the city boundaries. Isolated, exiled, they had every right to resent the city centre with its tourist traps and temporary playtime.



'We've put up a diversion to bring them here.'
Rebus looked around, wiping sweat from his eyes. The street was lined with shops at street level, offices above. Uniformed officers were moving civilians out of the area. An Army vehicle sat roadside.
'Bomb disposal,' Lauderdale explained. 'Remember, we've been ready for this.'
More barriers were being erected, and Rebus saw van doors open and half a dozen police marksmen appear, their chests covered by black body armour.
'Is Kilpatrick okay?'
Lauderdale asked.
'Should be, depends on the ambulance.'
'How much stuff does Soutar have?'
Rebus tried to remember. 'It's not just explosives, he's probably toting AK 47s, pistols and ammo, maybe grenades'
'Christ almighty.'
Lauderdale spoke into his radio 'Where are they?'



Behind him, Davey Soutar's car was empty.

He'd shuffled into the passenger seat, opened the door, and made a dash to the pavement. Running low, it took him only seconds to disappear into the mass of pedestrians.

'Did anyone see? Did he have a gun?'

The Army personnel moved in warily on the lead car, while police started rounding up the Gar-B. More weapons were jettisoned. Lauderdale moved in to supervise his men.

And John Rebus was after Soutar.

The one place there wasn't much of a crowd was George Street: you couldn't see the fireworks from there. So Rebus had little trouble following Soutar. The sky turned from red to green to blue, with small pops and the occasional huge explosion: Each explosion had Rebus squirming, thinking of the bomb disposal unit busy back at Soutar's car. When the wind changed, it carried with it wafts of musical accompaniment from the orchestra in the Gardens. Chase music it wasn't.

Soutar ran with loose energy, almost bouncing. He covered a lot of ground, but it wasn't a straight line. He did a lot of weaving from side to side, covering most of the width of the pavement. Rebus concentrated on closing the gap, moving forwards like he was on rails. His eyes were on Soutar's hands. As long as he could see those hands, see they weren't carrying anything, he was content.

For all Soutar's crazy progress, Rebus was losing ground on the younger man, except when Soutar turned to look back at his pursuer. That's what he was doing when he ran out into the road and bounced off a taxi cab. The cab was on St Andrew's Square. The driver stuck his head out the window, then pulled it in again fast when Soutar drew his gun.

It looked like a service revolver to Rebus. Soutar fired a shot through the cab window, then started running again. He was slower now, with a slouch announcing a damaged right leg.

Rebus glanced in at the cab driver. He'd thrown up all over his knees, but was unhurt.
Give it up, Rebus thought, his lungs on fire. Give it up.
But Soutar kept moving. He ran through the bus station, dodging the single-deckers as they moved in and out of their ranks. The few waiting passengers could see he was armed, and stared in horror as he flew past them, jacket flapping, for all the world like a scarecrow come to life.
Rebus followed him up James Craig Walk, across the top of Leith Street, and into Waterloo Place. Soutar stopped for a moment, as though trying to come . to a decision. His' right hand still gripped the revolver. He saw Rebus moving steadily in his direction, and dropped to one knee, taking two-handed aim with the revolver. Rebus stepped into a doorway and waited -for a shot that didn't come. When he peered out again, Soutar had vanished.
Rebus walked slowly towards where Soutar had been. He was nowhere on the street, but a couple of yards further on was a gateway, and beyond it some steps. The steps led to the top of Calton Hill. Rebus took a final deep breath and accepted the challenge.
The rough steps up to the summit were busy with people climbing and descending. Most of them were young and had been drinking. Rebus couldn't even summon the breath to yell something, 'Stop him' or 'Get out of his way'. He knew if he tried to spit, the stuff would be like paste. All he could do was follow.
At the top, Calton Hill was crowded with people sitting on the grass, all eyes turned towards the Castle. The view would have been breathtaking, had Rebus had any breath to spare. The music was being piped up here too. Smoke drifted south across the city, followed by more tinsel colour and rockets. It was like being the onlooker at a medieval siege. A lot of people were drunk. Some were stoned. It wasn't gunpowder you could smell up here.
Rebus had a good look around. He'd lost Davey Soutar. There was no street lighting here, and crowds of people, mostly young and dressed in denim. Easy to lose someone.
Too damned easy.

Soutar could be heading down the other side of the hill, or snaking back down the roadway to Waterloo Place. Or he could be hiding amongst people who looked just like him. Except that the night air was chill. Rebus could feel it turning his sweat cold. And Soutar was only wearing a denim jacket.

As a huge firework burst over the Castle, and everyone stared up at the sky and gasped and cheered, Rebus looked for the one person who wasn't watching. The one person with his head down. The one person shivering like he'd never get warm again. He was sitting on the grass verge, next to a couple of girls who were drinking from cans and ;waving what looked like luminous rubber tubes. The girls had moved away from him a little, so that he looked the way he was: all alone in the world. Behind him on the grass was a gang of bikers, all muscle and gut. They were shouting and swearing, proclaiming hate of the English and all things foreign.

English and all things foreign.
Rebus walked up to Davey Soutar, and Davey Soutar looked up.
And it wasn't him.
This kid was a couple of years younger, strung out on something, his eyes unable to focus.
'Hey,' one of the bikers yelled, 'you trying to pick up my pal?'
Rebus held up his hands. 'My mistake,' he said.
He turned around fast. Davey Soutar was behind him. He'd slipped off his jacket and had wound it around his right arm, all the way down to the wrist and the hand. Rebus knew what was in the hand, disguised now by the grubby denim.
'Okay, pigmeat, let's walk.'

Rebus knew he had to get Soutar away from the crowd. There were probably five bullets still in the revolver. Rebus didn't want any more bodies, not if he could help it.



'Look, enough! Just put it down.'
The police car was at the top of the rise now. Davey Soutar unwound the jacket from his arm and threw it to the ground. A girl at the hot-food van started to scream. Behind Soutar, the police driver switched his headlamps on fullbeam, lighting Soutar and Rebus like they were on stage. The passenger door was open, someone leaning out of it. Rebus recognised Abernethy. Soutar pivoted, aiming the gun. It was all the incentive Abernethy needed. The report from his gun was as loud as anything from the Castle. Meantime, the crowd was applauding again, unaware of the drama behind them.
Soutar was knocked backwards, taking Rebus with him. They fell in a heap, Rebus feeling the young man's damp hair brushing his face, his lips. He swore impressively as he pulled himself out from under the suddenly prone, suddenly still figure. Abernethy was pulling the revolver from Soutar's hand, his foot heavy on the youth's wrist.
'No need for that,' Rebus hissed. 'He's dead.'
'Looks like,' said Abernethy, putting away his own gun. 'So here's my story: I saw a flash, heard a bang, and assumed he'd fired. Sound reasonable?'
'Are you authorised to carry that cannon?'
'What do you think?'
'I think you're'
'As bad as him?'
Abernethy raised an eyebrow. 'I don't think so. And hey, don't mention it.'

'What?'
'Saving your fucking life. After that stunt you pulled, leaving me in the Gar-B.' He paused. 'You've got blood on you.'
Rebus looked. There was plenty of blood. 'There goes another shirt.'
`Trust a Jock to make a comment like that.'
The police driver had got out of the car to look, and a useful crowd was growing, now that the fireworks had finished. Abernethy began to check Soutar's pockets. Best get it over with while the body was warm. It was more pleasant that way. When he got to his feet again, Rebus was gone, and so was the car. He looked in disbelief at his driver.
'Not again.'
Yes, again.
30
Rebus had the police radio on as he drove. The bomb disposal team were halfway through lifting five small packages from the boot of Soutar's car. The packages had been fitted with detonators, and the Semtex was of advanced age, possibly unstable. There were pistols, automatic and bolt-action rifles too. God knew what he'd been planning to use them for.
The fireworks over, the buildings no longer glowed. They'd returned to their normal sooty hue. Crowds were moving through the streets, making their way home or towards last drinks, late suppers. People

were smiling, wrapping arms around themselves to keep warm. They'd all enjoyed a good night out.

Rebus didn't like to think about how close the whole night had come to disaster.

He switched on his siren and emergency lights to clear people from the roadway, then pulled past the line of cars in front of him. It was a few minutes before he realised he was shivering. He pulled the damp shirt away from his back and turned up the heating in the car. Not that heat would stop him shivering. He wasn't shivering from cold. He was headed for Tollcross, the Crazy Hose. He was headed for final business.

But when he arrived, siren and lights off, he saw smoke seeping out through the front doors. He pulled his car hard onto the pavement and ran to the doors, kicking them open. It wasn't rule one in the firefighter's manual, but he didn't have much choice. The fire was in the dancehall.

Only the smoke had so far reached the foyer and beyond. There was no one about. A sign on the front door gave abrupt notice that the club was closed 'due to unforeseen circumstances'.

That's me, thought Rebus, I'm unforeseen circumstances.

He headed for Frankie Bothwell's office. Where else was he going to go? Bothwell was sitting in his chair, prevented from movement by a sudden case of death. His neck flopped over to one side in a way necks shouldn't. Rebus had seen broken necks before. There was bruising on the throat. Strangulation. He hadn't been dead long, his forehead was still warm. But then it was getting warm in the office. It was getting warm everywhere.

The new fire station was at the top of the road. Rebus wondered where the fire crew was.

As he came back into the foyer, he saw that more smoke was belching from the dance hall. The door had been opened. Clyde Moncur was dragging himself into the foyer. He was still alive and wanted to stay that way. Rebus checked Moncur wasn't carrying a gun, then got hold of him by the neck of his jacket and hauled him across the floor. Moncur was trying hard to breathe. He was having a little trouble. He felt light as Rebus dragged him. He kicked open the doors and deposited Moncur at the top of the steps.

Then he went in again.

Yes, the blaze had started here, here in the dance hall. Flames had taken control of the walls and ceiling. All Bothwell's gewgaws and furnishings were melting or turning to ash. The carpet in the seating area had caught. The bottles of alcohol hadn't exploded yet, but they would. Rebus looked around, but couldn't

see much. The smoke was too thick, there was too much of it. He wrapped his handkerchief around his face, but even so he couldn't stop coughing. He could hear a rhythmic thumping sound coming from somewhere. Somewhere up ahead.

It was the little self-contained box where the DJ sat, over beyond the stage. There was someone in there now. He tried the door. It was locked, so sign of a key. He took a few steps back so he could run at it.

Then the door flew open. Rebus recognised the Ulsterman, Alan Fowler. He's used his head to butt the door open, his arms being tied firmly to the back of a chair. They were still tied to the chair as, head low, he came barrelling from the box. He caught Rebus a blow to the stomach and Rebus went down. Rebus rolled and came to his knees, but Fowler was up too, and he was blind mad. For all he knew, it was Rebus who was trying to roast him. He' butted Rebus again, this time in the face. It was a sore one, but Rebus had ridden a Glasgow Kiss before. The blow caught him on his cheek.

The power of it snapped Rebus's head back, sending him staggering. Fowler was like a bull, the chair legs sticking up like swords from his back. Now that he was more or less upright, he went for Rebus with his feet. One caught Rebus on his damaged ear, tearing it, sending a white jab of pain bouncing through his brain. That gave Fowler time for another kick, and this one was going to shatter Rebus's knee ... Until a blow in the face with an empty bottle knocked him sideways. Rebus looked up to see his saviour, his knight in shining armour. Big Ger Cafferty was still wearing his funeral suit and open shirt. He was busy making sure Fowler was down and out. Then he took one look at Rebus, and produced the hint of a smile, looking every bit as amused as a butcher who finds the carcass he's working on is still alive.

He spent a precious few seconds, life and death second, weighing up his options. Then he slung Rebus's arm over his shoulder and walked with him out of the dance hall, through the foyer, and into the night air, the clean, breathable air. Rebus took in huge gulps of it, falling onto the pavement, sitting there, head bowed, his feet on the road. Cafferty sat down beside him. He seemed to be studying his own hands. Rebus knew why, too.

And now the fire engines were arriving, men leaping out of cabs, doing things with hoses. One of them complained about the police car. The keys were in the ignition, so the fireman backed it up.

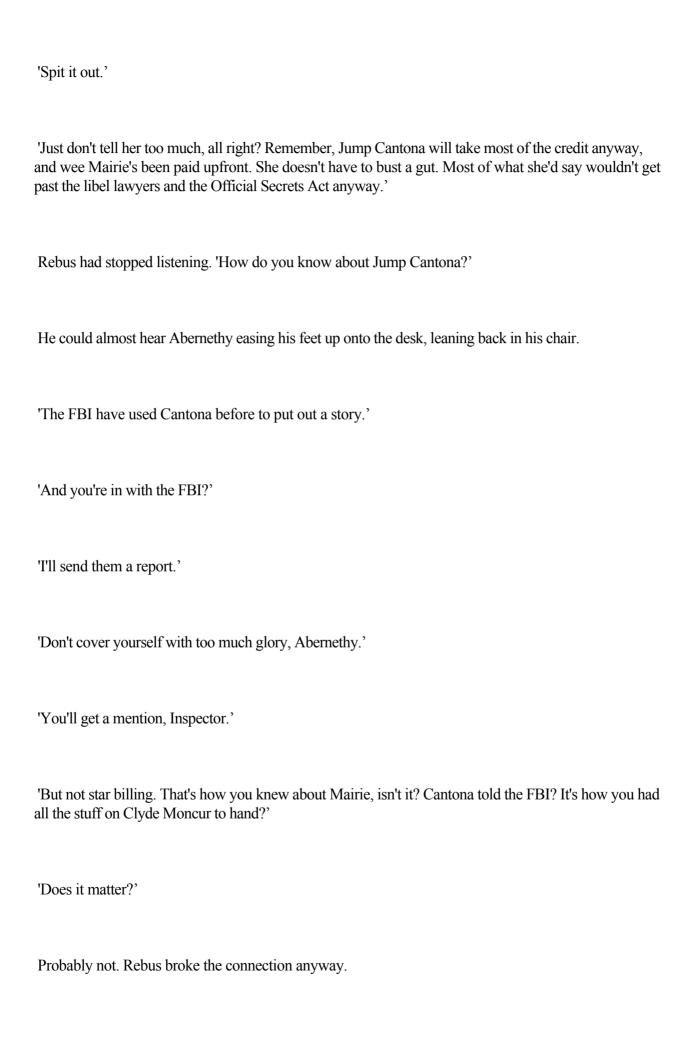
At last Rebus could speak. 'You did that?' he asked. It was a stupid question. Hadn't he given Cafferty nearly all the information he'd needed? 'I saw you going in,' Cafferty said, his voice raw. 'You were gone a long time.'

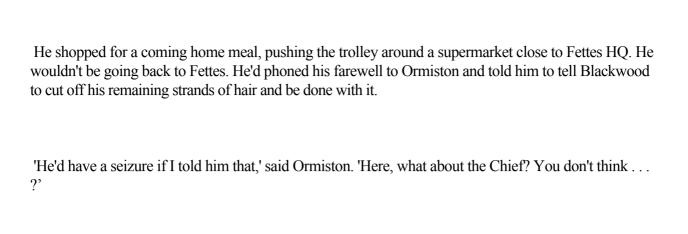
'You could have let me die.'

Cafferty looked at him. 'I didn't come in for you. I came in to stop you bringing out that bastard Fowler. As it is, Moncur's done a runner.'
'He can't run far.'
'He better try. He knows I won't give up.'
'You knew him, didn't you? Moncur, I mean. He's an old pal of Alan Powler's. When Fowler was UVF, the UVF laundered money using your salmon farm. Moncur bought the salmon with his good US dollars.'
'You never stop.'
'It's my business.'
'Well,' said Cafferty, glancing back at the club, 'this was business, too. Only, sometimes you have to cut a few corners. I know you have.'
Rebus was wiping his face. 'Problem is, Cafferty, when you, cut a corner, it bleeds.'
Cafferty studied him. There was blood on Rebus's ear, sweat cloying his hair. Davey Soutar's blood still spattered his shirt, mixed now with smoke. And Kilpatrick's handprint was still there. Cafferty stood up.
'Not thinking of going anywhere?' Rebus said.
'You going to stop me?'

'You know I'll try.'
A car drew up. In it were Cafferty's men, the two from the kirkyard plus weasel-face. Cafferty walked to the car. Rebus was still sitting on the pavement. He got up slowly now, and walked towards the police car. He heard Cafferty's car door shutting, and looked at it, noting the licence plate. As the car passed him, Cafferty was looking at the road ahead. Rebus opened his own car and got on the radio, giving out the licence number. He thought about starting his engine and giving chase, but just sat there instead, watching the firemen go about their business.
I played it by the rules, he thought. I cautioned him and then I called in. It didn't say in the rules that you had to have a go when there were four of them and only one of you.
Yes, he'd played it by the rules. The good feeling started to wear off after only minutes, and damned few minutes at that.
They finally picked Clyde Moncur up at a ferry port. Special Branch in London were dealing with him. Abernethy was dealing with him. Before he'd left, Rebus had asked a simple question.
'Will it happen?'
'Will what happen?'
'Civil war.'
'What do you think?'
So much for that. The story was simple. Moncur was visiting town to see how the money from US Shield was being spent. Fowler was around to make sure Moncur was happy. The Festival had seemed the perfect cover for Moncur's trip. Maybe Billy had been executed to show the American just how ruthless SaS could be

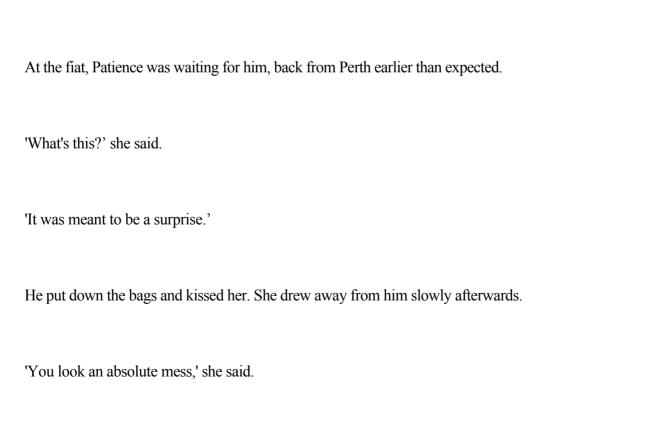
In hospital, recovering from his stab wounds, DCI Kilpatrick was smothered to death with his pillow. Two of his ribs had been cracked from the weight of his attacker pressing down on him.
'Must've been the size of a grizzly,' Dr Curt announced. 'Not many grizzlies about these days,' said Rebus.
He phoned the Procurator Fiscal's office, just to check on Caro Rattray. After all, Cafferty had spoken of her. He just wanted to know she was okay. Maybe Cafferty was out there tying up a lot of loose ends. But Caro had gone.
'What do you mean?'
'Some private practice in Glasgow offered her a partnership. It's a big step up, she grabbed it, anyone would.'
'Which office is it?'
Funny, it was the office of Cafferty's own lawyers. It might mean something or nothing. After all, Rebus had given Cafferty some names. Mairie Henderson had gone down to London to try to follow up the Moncur story.
Abernethy phoned Rebus one night to say he thought she was terrific.
'Yes,' said Rebus, 'you'd make a lovely couple.'
'Except she hates my guts.'
Abernethy paused. 'But she might listen to you.'





But Rebus had rung off. He didn't want to talk about Ken Smylie, didn't want to think about it. He knew as much as he needed to. Kilpatrick had been on the fringe; he was more useful to The Shield that way. Bothwell was the executioner. He'd killed Billy Cunningham and he'd ordered the deaths of Millie Docherty and Calumn Smylie. Soutar had done his master's bidding in both cases, except Millie had proved messy, and Soutar had left her where he'd killed her. Bothwell must have been furious about that, but of course Davey Soutar had other things on his mind, other plans. Bigger things.

Rebus bought the makings for the meal and added bottles of rose champagne, malt whisky and gin to the trolley. A mile and a half to the north, the shops on the Gar-B estate would be closing for the evening, pulling down heavy metal shutters, fixing padlocks, double-checking alarm systems. He paid with plastic at the check-out and drove back up the hill to Oxford Terrace. Curiously, the rust bucket was sounding healthier these days. Maybe that knock from Hay's van had put something back into alignment. Rebus had replaced the glass, but was still debating the doorframe.



He shrugged. It was true, he'd seen boxers in better shape after fifteen rounds. He'd seen punchbags in



'Well, my sister told me one. You'll love it.'
She arched back her head, thinking. 'God, how does it go?'
Rebus unscrewed the top from the gin bottle and poured liberally.
'Whoah!' Patience said. 'You don't want us getting mortal.'
He splashed in some orange. 'Maybe I do.'
She kissed him again, then pulled away and clapped her hands. 'Yes, I've got it now. There's this octopus in a restaurant, and it's 'I've heard it,' said Rebus, dropping ice into her glass.

About this Title

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