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The Naming of the Dead

Written by Ian Rankin

Published by Orion Books

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IAN

RANKIN

THE NAMING

OF THE DEAD



An Orion paperback

First published in Great Britain in 2006

by Orion

This paperback edition published in 2007

by Orion Books Ltd,

Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane,

London WC2H 9EA

An Hachette UK company

20 19 18

Reissued 2011

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-7528-8368-7

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

The Orion Publishing Group's policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

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SIDE ONE

The Task of Blood

Friday 1 July 2005

In place of a closing hymn, there was music. The Who, 'Love Reign O'er Me'. Rebus recognised it the moment it started, thunderclaps and teeming rain filling the chapel. He was in the front pew; Chrissie had insisted. He'd rather have been further back: his usual place at funerals. Chrissie's son and daughter sat next to her. Lesley was comforting her mother, an arm around her as the tears fell. Kenny stared straight ahead, storing up emotion for later. Earlier that morning, back at the house, Rebus had asked him his age. He would be thirty next month. Lesley was two years younger. Brother and sister looked like their mother, reminding Rebus that people had said the same about Michael and him: *The pair of you, the spit of your mum*. Michael ... Mickey if you preferred. Rebus's younger brother, dead in a shiny-handled box at the age of fifty-four, Scotland's mortality rate that of a Third World nation. Lifestyle, diet, genes – plenty of theories. The full post-mortem hadn't come through yet. Massive stroke was what Chrissie had told Rebus on the phone, assuring him that it was 'sudden' – as if that made a difference.

Sudden meant Rebus hadn't been able to say goodbye. It meant his last words to Michael had been a joke about his beloved Raith Rovers in a phone call three months back. A Raith scarf, navy and white, had been draped over the coffin alongside the wreaths. Kenny was wearing a tie that had been his dad's, Raith's shield on it – some kind of animal holding a belt-buckle. Rebus had asked the significance, but Kenny had just shrugged. Looking along

the pew, Rebus saw the usher make a gesture. Everyone rose to their feet. Chrissie started walking up the aisle, flanked by her children. The usher looked to Rebus, but he stayed where he was. Sat down again so the others would know they didn't have to wait for him. The song was only a little over halfway through. It was the closing track on *Quadrophenia*. Michael had been the big Who fan, Rebus himself preferring the Stones. Had to admit, though, albums like *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia* did things the Stones never could. Daltrey was whooping that he could use a drink. Rebus had to agree, but there was the drive back to Edinburgh to consider.

The function room of a local hotel had been booked. All were welcome, as the minister had reminded them from the pulpit. Whisky and tea would be poured, sandwiches served. There would be anecdotes and reminiscences, smiles, dabs at the eyes, hushed tones. The staff would move quietly, out of respect. Rebus was trying to form sentences in his head, words which would act as his apology.

I need to get back, Chrissie. Pressure of work.

He could lie and blame the G8. That morning in the house, Lesley had said he must be busy with the build-up. He could have told her, *I'm the only cop they don't seem to need*. Officers were being drafted in from all over. Fifteen hundred were coming from London alone. Yet Detective Inspector John Rebus seemed surplus to requirements. Someone had to man the ship – the very words DCI James Macrae had used, with his acolyte smirking by his shoulder. DI Derek Starr reckoned himself the heir apparent to Macrae's throne. One day he'd be running Gayfield Square police station. John Rebus posed no threat whatsoever, not much more than a year away from retirement. Starr himself had said as much: *Nobody'd blame you for coasting, John. It's what anyone your age would do*. Maybe so, but the Stones were older than Rebus; Daltrey and Townshend were older than him too. Still playing, still touring.

The song was ending now, and Rebus rose to his feet again. He was alone in the chapel. Took a final look at the purple velvet screen. Maybe the coffin was still behind it; maybe it had already been moved to another part of the crematorium. He thought back to adolescence, two brothers in their shared bedroom, playing 45s bought down Kirkcaldy High Street. 'My Generation' and 'Substitute', Mickey asking about Daltrey's stutter on the former, Rebus saying he'd read somewhere that it was to do with drugs. The only drug the brothers had indulged in was alcohol, mouthfuls stolen from the bottles in the pantry, a can of sickly stout broken open and shared after lights-out. Standing on Kirkcaldy promenade, staring out to sea, and Mickey singing the words to 'I Can See For Miles'. But could that really have happened? The record came out in '66 or '67, by which time Rebus was in the army. Must have been on a trip back. Yes, Mickey with his shoulder-length hair, trying to copy Daltrey's look, and Rebus with his forces crop, inventing stories to make army life seem exciting, Northern Ireland still ahead of him ...

They'd been close back then, Rebus always sending letters and postcards, his father proud of him, proud of both the boys.

The spit of your mum.

He stepped outside. The cigarette packet was already open in his hand. There were other smokers around him. They offered nods, shuffling their feet. The various wreaths and cards had been lined up next to the door, and were being studied by the mourners. The usual words would crop up: 'condolence' and 'loss' and 'sorrow'. The family would be 'in our thoughts'. Michael wouldn't be mentioned by name. Death brought its own set of protocols. The younger mourners were checking for text messages on their phones. Rebus dug his own out of his pocket and switched it on. Five missed calls, all from the same number. Rebus knew it from memory, pushed the

buttons and raised the phone to his ear. Detective Sergeant Siobhan Clarke was quick to answer.

‘I’ve been trying you all morning,’ she complained.

‘I had it switched off.’

‘Where are you anyway?’

‘Still in Kirkcaldy.’

There was an intake of breath. ‘Hell, John, I completely forgot.’

‘Don’t worry about it.’ He watched Kenny open the car door for Chrissie. Lesley was motioning to Rebus, letting him know they were headed for the hotel. The car was a BMW, Kenny doing all right for himself as a mechanical engineer. He wasn’t married; had a girlfriend but she hadn’t been able to make it to the funeral. Lesley was divorced, her own son and daughter off on holiday with their dad. Rebus nodded at her as she got into the back of the car.

‘I thought it was next week,’ Siobhan was saying.

‘I take it you’re phoning for a gloat?’ Rebus started walking towards his Saab. Siobhan had been in Perthshire the past two days, accompanying Macrae on a recce of G8 security. Macrae was old pals with Tayside’s Assistant Chief Constable. All Macrae wanted was a nosy, his friend happy to oblige. The G8 leaders would meet at Gleneagles Hotel, on the outskirts of Auchterarder, nothing around them but acres of wilderness and miles of ring-fenced security. There had been plenty of scare stories in the media. Reports of three thousand US Marines landing in Scotland to protect their president. Anarchist plots to block roads and bridges with hijacked trucks. Bob Geldof had demanded that a million demonstrators besiege Edinburgh. They would be housed, he said, in people’s spare rooms, garages and gardens. Boats would be sent to France to pick up protesters. Groups with names like Ya Basta and the Black Bloc would aim for chaos, while the People’s Golfing Association wanted to break the cordon to play a few holes of Gleneagles’ renowned course.

'I'm spending two days with DCI Macrae,' Siobhan was saying. 'What's to gloat about?'

Rebus unlocked his car, and leaned in to slide the key into the ignition. He straightened again, took a last drag on his cigarette and flicked the butt on to the roadway. Siobhan was saying something about a Scene of Crime team.

'Hold on,' Rebus told her. 'I didn't catch that.'

'Look, you've got enough on your plate without this.'

'Without what?'

'Remember Cyril Colliar?'

'Despite my advancing years, the memory's not quite packed in.'

'Something really strange has happened.'

'What?'

'I think I've found the missing piece.'

'Of what?'

'The jacket.'

Rebus found that he'd lowered himself on to the driver's seat. 'I don't understand.'

Siobhan gave a nervous laugh. 'Me neither.'

'So where are you now?'

'Auchterarder.'

'And that's where the jacket's turned up?'

'Sort of.'

Rebus swung his legs into the car and pulled the door shut. 'Then I'm coming to take a look. Is Macrae with you?'

'He went to Glenrothes. That's where the G8 control centre is.' She paused. 'Are you sure you should be doing this?'

Rebus had started the engine. 'I need to make my apologies first, but I can be there inside the hour. Will I have any trouble getting into Auchterarder?'

'It's the calm before the storm. When you're driving through town, look for the sign to the Cloutie Well.'

'The what?'

'Easier if you just come and see for yourself.'

'Then that's what I'll do. Scene of Crime on their way?'

'Yes.'

'Which means word will get around.'

'Should I tell the DCI?'

'I'll let you decide.' Rebus had wedged the phone between his shoulder and his cheek, so he could steer the mazy course to the gates of the crematorium.

'You're breaking up,' Siobhan said.

Not if I can help it, Rebus thought to himself.

Cyril Colliar had been murdered six weeks before. Aged twenty, he'd been locked away on a fixed ten-year stretch for a vicious rape. At the end of the sentence, he'd been released, despite the reservations of prison warders, police and social services. They reckoned he was as big a threat as ever, having shown no remorse, denying his guilt despite DNA evidence. Colliar had returned to his native Edinburgh. All the body-building he'd done in prison paid off. He worked as a nighttime bouncer and daytime muscle. His employer on both counts was Morris Gerald Cafferty. 'Big Ger' was a villain of long standing. It had been Rebus's job to confront him about his latest employee.

'What do I care?' had been the retort.

'He's dangerous.'

'Way you're hassling him would try the patience of a saint.' Cafferty swinging from side to side on his leather swivel chair, behind his desk at MGC Lettings. Anyone was slow with the weekly rent on one of Cafferty's flats, Rebus reckoned that was where Colliar would take over. Cafferty ran minicabs too, and owned at least three raucous bars in the less salubrious parts of town. Plenty of work for Cyril Colliar.

Right up until the night he'd turned up dead. Skull caved in, the blow coming from behind. Pathologist reckoned he'd have died from that alone, but just to make sure, someone had added a syringe of very pure heroin. No indication that the deceased had been a user. 'Deceased' was the word most of the cops on the case had used – and grudgingly at that. Nobody bothered with the term 'victim'. Nobody could say the words out loud – *bastard got what he deserved* – that wasn't the done thing these days.

Didn't stop them thinking it, sharing it through eye contact and slow nods. Rebus and Siobhan had worked the case, but it had been one amongst many. Few leads and too many suspects. The rape victim had been interviewed, along with her family and her boyfriend from the time. One word kept coming up in discussing Colliar's fate.

'Good.'

His body had been found near his car, down a side street next to the bar he'd been working. No witnesses, no scene-of-crime evidence. Just the one curiosity: a sharp blade had been used to slice away part of his distinctive jacket. It was a black nylon bomber, emblazoned with the phrase *CC Rider* on the back. This was what had been removed, so that the white inner lining was revealed. Theories were in short supply. It was either a clumsy attempt to disguise the deceased's identity, or there had been something hidden in the lining. Tests had proved negative for traces of drugs, leaving the police to shrug and scratch their heads.

To Rebus, it looked like a hit. Either Colliar had made an enemy, or a message was being sent to Cafferty. Not that their several interviews with Colliar's employer had been enlightening.

'Bad for my reputation,' was Cafferty's main reaction. 'Means either you catch whoever did it ...'

'Or?'

But Cafferty hadn't needed to answer. And if Cafferty

got to the culprit first, it would be the last that was ever heard of them.

None of which had helped. The inquiry had hit a wall, around the same time G8 preparations started focusing minds – most of them driven by images of overtime pay – elsewhere. Other cases had intruded, too, with victims – *real* victims. The Colliar murder team had been wound down.

Rebus lowered his driver's-side window, welcoming the cool breeze. He didn't know the quickest route to Auchterarder; knew Gleneagles could be reached from Kinross, so had headed that way. A couple of months back, he'd bought satnav for the car, but hadn't got round to reading the instructions yet. It lay on the passenger seat, screen blank. One of these days he'd take it to the garage which had installed the car's CD player. An inspection of the back seat, floors and boot had failed to turn up anything by The Who, so Rebus was listening to Elbow instead – Siobhan's recommendation. He liked the title track, 'Leaders of the Free World'. Stuck it on repeat. The singer seemed to think something had gone wrong since the sixties. Rebus tended to agree, even coming at it from a different direction. He reckoned the singer would have liked more change, a world run by Greenpeace and CND, poverty made history. Rebus had been on a few marches himself in the sixties, before and after joining the army. It was a way to meet girls, if nothing else. Usually there was a party somewhere afterwards. These days, though, he saw the sixties as the end of something. A fan had been stabbed to death at a Stones concert in 1969, and the decade had petered out. The 1960s had given youth a taste for revolt. They didn't trust the old order, certainly didn't respect it. He wondered about the thousands who would descend on Gleneagles, confrontation a racing certainty. Hard to imagine it in this landscape of farms and hillsides, rivers and glens. He knew that Gleneagles' very isolation would have

been a factor in its choice as venue. The leaders of the free world would be safe there, safe to sign their names to decisions which had already been taken elsewhere. On the stereo, the band were singing about climbing a landslide. The image stuck with Rebus all the way to the outskirts of Auchterarder.

He didn't think he'd been there before. All the same, he seemed to know the place. Typical small Scottish town: a single, well-defined main street with narrow side roads leading off, built to a notion that people would walk to their local shops. Small, independently owned shops at that: he didn't see much that would inflame the anti-globalisation campaigners. The baker was even selling limited edition G8 pies.

The good folk of Auchterarder, Rebus seemed to recall, had been vetted, under guise of providing them with ID badges. These would be necessary so they could cross the eventual barricades. Yet as Siobhan had pointed out, there was an eerie tranquillity to the place. Only a few shoppers, and one joiner who seemed to be measuring up windows for protective boards. The cars were muddy 4x4s, which had probably spent more time on farm tracks than motorways. One woman driver was even wearing a headscarf, something Rebus hadn't seen in a while. Within a couple of minutes he was at the far end of town and heading towards the A9. He did a three-point turn and this time kept his eyes open for signposts. The one he wanted was next to a pub, pointing down a lane. He signalled, following the road past hedges and driveways, then a newer housing estate. The landscape opened before him, showing distant hills. In moments he was out of town again, flanked by neat hedgerows which would leave their mark on his car if he had to make way for a tractor or delivery van. There were some woods to his left, and another pointer told him this was home to the Cloutie Well. He knew the word from cloutie dumpling: a sticky steamed dessert his mother had

sometimes made. He remembered the taste and texture as being similar to Christmas pudding. Dark and cloying and sugary. His stomach gave a small protest, reminding him that he hadn't eaten in hours. His stop at the hotel had been brief, a few quiet words with Chrissie. She'd hugged him, just as she had done back at the house earlier that morning. All the years he'd known her, there hadn't been many hugs. In the early days, he'd actually fancied her; awkward under the circumstances. She'd seemed to sense this. Then he'd been best man at the wedding, and, during one dance, she'd blown mischievously in his ear. Later, on the few occasions when she and Mickey had been separated, Rebus had taken his brother's side. He supposed he could have called her, said something, but he hadn't. And when Mickey had got into that spot of bother, ended up in jail, Rebus hadn't visited Chrissie and the kids. Mind you, he hadn't visited Mickey that often either, in jail or since.

There was more history: when Rebus and his own wife had separated, Chrissie had blamed him entirely. She'd always got on well with Rhona; kept in touch with her after the divorce. That was family for you. Tactics, campaigning and diplomacy: the politicians had it easy by comparison.

Back at the hotel, Lesley had mimicked her mother, giving him a hug too. Kenny had thought for a second before Rebus put the lad out of his misery by extending a hand to be squeezed. He wondered if there would be any fallings-out; there usually were at funerals. With grief came blame and resentment. Just as well he hadn't stayed. When it came to the potential for confrontation, John Rebus punched well above his already substantial weight.

There was a parking area just off the road. It looked like new-build, trees having been cleared, chippings of bark strewn across the ground. Room enough for four cars, but only one was waiting. Siobhan Clarke was leaning against it, arms folded. Rebus pulled on the brake and got out.

'Nice spot,' he said.

'Been here over a hundred years,' she told him.

'Didn't think I drove that slowly.'

She offered only a twist of the mouth, leading him into the woods, arms still folded. She was dressed more formally than usual: knee-length black skirt and black tights. Her shoes were smudged, having walked this same trail earlier.

'I saw the sign yesterday,' she was saying. 'The one leading off the main drag. Decided I'd take a look.'

'Well, if the choice was that or Glenrothes ...'

'There's a noticeboard back at the clearing, tells you a bit about the place. All sorts of witchy goings-on down the years.' They were ascending a slope, rounding a thick, twisted oak. 'The townspeople decided there must be sprites living here: shrieks in the dark, that sort of thing.'

'Local farmhands more like,' Rebus offered.

She nodded agreement. 'All the same, they started leaving little offerings. Hence the name.' She glanced around at him. 'You'll know what cloutie means, you being the only native Scot around here?'

He had a sudden image of his mother lifting the pudding out of its pan. The pudding wrapped in ...

'Cloth,' he told her.

'And clothing,' she added as they entered another clearing. They stopped and Rebus breathed deeply. Damp cloth ... damp, rotting cloth. He'd been smelling it for the past half-minute. The smell clothes gave off in his old house, the one he'd grown up in, when they weren't aired, when the damp and the mildew got to them. The trees around him were strung with rags and remnants. Pieces had fallen to the ground, where they were decomposing to a mulch.

'Tradition has it,' Siobhan said quietly, 'they were left here for good luck. Keep the sprites warm, and they'd see no harm came to you. Another theory: when kids died young, their parents left something here, by way

of remembrance.’ Her voice caught, and she cleared her throat.

‘I’m not made of glass,’ Rebus assured her. ‘You can use words like “remembrance” – I’m not going to start blubbing.’

She nodded again. Rebus was walking around the clearing. Leaves and soft moss underfoot, and the sound of a stream, just a thin trickle of water pushing up from the ground. Candles and coins had been left by its edges.

‘Not much of a well,’ he commented.

She just shrugged. ‘I was here a few minutes ... didn’t really warm to the atmosphere. But then I noticed some of the newer clothing.’ Rebus saw it too. Strung from the branches. A shawl, a boilersuit, a red polka-dot handkerchief. A nearly-new training shoe, its laces dangling. Even underwear and what looked like children’s tights.

‘Christ, Siobhan,’ Rebus muttered, not really knowing what else to say. The smell seemed to be growing stronger. He had another flashback: to a ten-day bender many years before ... coming out of it to find that a load of washing had been sitting in the machine, waiting to be hung. When he’d opened the door, this same smell had hit him. He’d washed everything again, but still had to throw it all away afterwards. ‘And the jacket?’

All she did was point. Rebus walked slowly towards the tree in question. The piece of nylon had been pierced by a short branch. It swayed just a little in the breeze. Threads straggling from it, but no mistaking the logo.

‘*CC Rider,*’ Rebus said in confirmation. Siobhan was running her hands through her hair. He knew she had questions, knew she would have been turning them over in her mind all the time she’d been waiting for him. ‘So what do we do?’ he prompted.

‘It’s a crime scene,’ she began. ‘A team are on their way from Stirling. We need to secure the locus, comb the area

for evidence. We need to reassemble the original murder squad, start doorstepping locally ...'

'Including Gleneagles?' Rebus interrupted. 'You're the expert, so you tell me: how many times have the hotel staff been vetted? And how do we go about doorstepping in the middle of a week-long demo? Securing the locus won't be a problem, mind you, not with all the secret service teams we're about to welcome ...'

Naturally she had considered all these points. He knew as much and his voice trailed off.

'We keep it quiet till the summit's over,' she suggested. 'Tempting,' he admitted.

She smiled. 'Only because it gives *you* a head start.'

He admitted as much with a wink.

She sighed. 'Macrae needs to be told. Which means he'll tell Tayside Police.'

'But the SOCOs are coming from Stirling,' Rebus added, 'and Stirling belongs to Central Region.'

'So that's just the three police forces who need to know ... Shouldn't have any trouble keeping it under wraps.'

Rebus was looking around. 'If we can at least get the scene checked and photographed ... take the cloth back to the lab ...'

'Before the fun and games start?'

Rebus puffed out his cheeks. 'Kicks off on Wednesday, right?'

'The G8 does, yes. But there's the Poverty March tomorrow and another planned for Monday.'

'In Edinburgh, though, not Auchterarder ...' Then he saw what she was getting at. Even with the evidence at the lab, the whole place could be under siege. Getting from Gayfield Square to the lab at Howdenhall meant crossing the city ... always supposing the technicians had managed to force their way into work.

'Why leave it here?' Siobhan asked, studying the patch again. 'Some sort of trophy?'

'If so, why here specifically?'

'Could be local. Any family connections with the area?'

'I think Colliar's solid Edinburgh.'

She looked at him. 'I meant the rape victim.'

Rebus formed his mouth into an O.

'Something to consider,' she added. Then she paused.

'What's that sound?'

Rebus patted his stomach. 'While since I've eaten. Don't suppose Gleneagles is open for afternoon tea?'

'Depends on your overdraft. There are places in town. One of us should stay for the SOCOs.'

'Better be you then; don't want accusations that I'm hogging the limelight. In fact, you probably deserve a complimentary beaker of Auchterarder's finest tea.' He turned to go, but she stopped him.

'Why me? Why now?' Her arms stretching from her sides.

'Why not?' he answered. 'Just call it kismet.'

'That's not what I mean ...'

He turned towards her again.

'What I mean,' she said quietly, 'is that I'm not sure I want them caught. If they are, and it's been down to me ...'

'If they are, Shiv, it'll be down to their cock-up.' He stabbed a finger in the direction of the patch. 'That, and maybe even a bit of teamwork ...'

The Scene of Crime unit hadn't been thrilled by the news that Rebus and Siobhan had entered the locus. Prints of their shoes had been taken, for purposes of elimination, along with hair samples.

'Go easy,' Rebus had warned. 'I can't afford to be generous.'

The SOCO had apologised. 'Got to get the root, else we can't get the DNA.' On the third try with the tweezers, he'd been successful. One of his colleagues had almost finished

videoing the scene. Another was still taking photographs, and yet another was in conversation with Siobhan about how much of the other clothing they should remove to the lab.

'Just the most recent,' she told him, her eyes on Rebus. He nodded his agreement, sharing her train of thought. Even if Colliar was a message to Cafferty, didn't mean there weren't other messages here.

'Sports shirt seems to have a company logo on it,' the SOCO commented.

'Your job could hardly be easier,' Siobhan said with a smile.

'My job's collection. The rest is down to you.'

'Speaking of which,' Rebus interrupted, 'any chance this could all go to Edinburgh rather than Stirling?'

The SOCO stiffened his shoulders. Rebus didn't know him but he knew the type: late-forties, half a lifetime's experience. There was plenty of rivalry between the various police regions as it was. Rebus held up his hands in mock surrender.

'All I mean is, it's an Edinburgh case. Makes sense if they don't have to keep traipsing through to Stirling every time there's something you need to show them.'

Siobhan was smiling again, amused by his use of 'they' and 'them'. But she gave a slight nod too, recognising a useful ploy when she saw one.

'Especially now,' Rebus was arguing, 'with the demos and everything.' He looked up to where a helicopter was circling. Gleneagles surveillance, had to be. Someone up there wondering at the sudden appearance of two cars and two unmarked white vans at the Clotie Well. Returning his gaze to the SOCO, Rebus realised the chopper had sealed the deal. A time like this, cooperation was paramount. It had been hammered home in memorandum after memorandum. Macrae himself had said as much at the past dozen or so briefings at Gayfield Square.

Be nice. Work together. Help each other. Because, for these few short days, the world would be watching.

Maybe the SOCO had been at similar briefings. He was nodding slowly, turning away to continue his work. Rebus and Siobhan shared another look. Then Rebus reached into his pocket for his cigarettes.

'No traces, please,' one of the other SOCOs warned him, so Rebus moved away, back towards the car park. He was just lighting up when another car appeared. The more the merrier, he thought to himself as DCI Macrae leapt out. He was dressed in what looked like a new suit. New tie, too, and a crisp white shirt. His hair was grey and sparse, face saggy, nose bulbous and red-veined.

He's the same age as me, Rebus thought. Why does he seem so much older?

'Afternoon, sir,' Rebus said.

'Thought you were supposed to be at a funeral.' The tone was accusatory, as though Rebus might have fabricated a death in the family to secure a Friday lie-in.

'DS Clarke interrupted proceedings,' Rebus explained. 'Thought I'd show willing.' Making it sound like a sacrifice. The words worked, too, Macrae's tightened jaw relaxing a little.

I'm on a roll, Rebus thought. First the SOCO, now the boss. Macrae had been pretty good actually, green-lighting a day off for Rebus as soon as news broke of Mickey's death. He'd told Rebus to go get slaughtered, and Rebus had obliged – the Scotsman's way of dealing with death. He'd found himself in a part of town he didn't know, no idea how he got there . . . walked into a chemist's and asked where he was. Answer: Colinton Village Pharmacy. He'd thanked them by making the purchase of some aspirin . . .

'Sorry, John.' Macrae said now, taking a deep breath. 'How did it go?' Trying to sound concerned.

'It went,' was all Rebus said. He watched the helicopter bank steeply as it turned for home.