

You loved your last book...but what  
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Lov**ereading** will help you find new  
books to keep you inspired and entertained.

---

**Opening Extract from...**

# **The Impossible Dead**

Written by Ian Rankin

Published by Orion Books

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Lov**ereading**.  
Please print off and read at your leisure.

---

**Ian Rankin**

The Impossible  
Dead



First published in Great Britain in 2011 by Orion Books,  
an imprint of The Orion Publishing Group Ltd  
Orion House, 5 Upper Saint Martin's Lane,  
London WC2H 9EA

An Hachette UK Company

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Copyright © 2011 John Rebus Ltd.

The moral right of Ian Rankin to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

All the characters in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

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

ISBN (Hardback) 978 0 7528 8953 5

ISBN (Export Trade Paperback) 978 0 7528 8954 2

Typeset by Deltatype Ltd, Birkenhead, Merseyside

Printed 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.

**One**

# 1

‘He’s not here,’ the desk sergeant said.

‘So where is he?’

‘Out on a call.’

Fox stared hard at the man, knowing it wouldn’t do any good. The sergeant was one of those old-timers who reckoned they’d seen it all and faced most of it down. Fox glanced at the next name on his list.

‘Haldane?’

‘Sick leave.’

‘Michaelson?’

‘Out on the call with DI Scholes.’

Tony Kaye was standing just behind Fox’s left shoulder. An instant before the words were out of his mouth, Fox knew what his colleague was going to say.

‘This is taking the piss.’

Fox turned to give Kaye a look. News would now travel through the station: job done. The Complaints had come to town, found no one home, and had let their annoyance show. The desk sergeant shifted his weight from one foot to the other, trying not to seem too satisfied at this turn of events.

Fox took a moment to study his surroundings. The notices pinned to the walls were the usual stuff. It was a modern police station, meaning it could just as easily have been the reception area of a doctors’ surgery or DSS office, as long as you disregarded the sign warning that the Alert Status had been lifted from LOW to MODERATE. Nothing to do with Fox and his men: there’d been reports of a blast in woodland outside Lockerbie. Kids, probably,

and a good long way from Kirkcaldy. Nevertheless, every police station in the country would have been notified.

The button on the counter had a hand written sign next to it saying Press For Attention – which was what Fox had done three or four minutes ago. There was a two-way mirror behind the counter, and the desk sergeant had almost certainly been watching the three arrivals – Inspector Malcolm Fox, Sergeant Tony Kaye and Constable Joe Naysmith. The station had been told they were coming. Interviews had been arranged with DI Scholes, and DSs Haldane and Michaelson.

‘Think this is the first time we’ve had this stunt pulled on us?’ Kaye was asking the desk sergeant. ‘Maybe we’ll start the interviews with you instead.’

Fox flipped to the second sheet of paper in his folder. ‘How about your boss – Superintendent Pitkethly?’

‘She’s not in yet.’

Kaye made a show of checking his watch.

‘Meeting at HQ,’ the desk sergeant explained. Joe Naysmith, standing to Fox’s right, seemed more interested in the leaflets on the counter. Fox liked that: it spoke of easy confidence, the confidence that these officers *would* be interviewed, that delaying tactics were nothing new to the Complaints.

The Complaints: the term was already outdated, even though Fox and his team couldn’t help using it, at least among themselves. Complaints and Conduct had been their official title until recently. Now they were supposed to be Professional Ethics and Standards. Next year they’d be something else again: the name Standards and Values had been mooted, to nobody’s liking. They were The Complaints, the cops who investigated other cops. Which was why those other cops were never happy to see them.

And seldom entirely cooperative.

‘HQ means Glenrothes?’ Fox checked with the desk sergeant.

‘That’s right.’

‘How long to drive there – twenty minutes?’

‘Provided you don’t get lost.’

The phone on the desk behind the sergeant started to ring. ‘You can always wait,’ he said, turning to lift the receiver, keeping his back to Fox as he started a muffled conversation.

Joe Naysmith was holding a pamphlet about home security. He plonked himself on one of the chairs by the window and started reading. Fox and Kaye shared a look.

‘What do you reckon?’ Kaye asked at last. ‘Whole town’s out there waiting to be explored ...’

Kirkcaldy: a coastal town in Fife. Kaye had driven them there in his car. Forty minutes from Edinburgh, most of them spent in the outside lane. As they had crossed the Forth Road Bridge, they’d discussed the long queue of traffic on the opposite carriageway, heading into the capital at the start of another working day.

‘Coming over here, stealing our jobs,’ Kaye had joked, sounding his horn and giving a wave. Naysmith seemed to be the one with the local knowledge.

‘Linoleum,’ he’d said. ‘Used to be what Kirkcaldy was famous for. And Adam Smith.’

‘Who did he play for?’ Kaye had asked.

‘He was an economist.’

‘What about Gordon Brown?’ Fox had added.

‘Kirkcaldy,’ Naysmith had confirmed, nodding slowly.

Now, standing in the police station’s reception area, Fox weighed up his options. They could sit and wait, growing restless. Or he could phone his boss in Edinburgh with a complaint of his own. His boss would then call Fife HQ and eventually something would happen – the equivalent of a wee boy running to his daddy when the big kid’s done something.

Or ...

Fox looked at Kaye again. Kaye smiled and batted Naysmith’s leaflet with the back of his hand.

‘Break out the pith helmets, young Joe,’ he said. ‘We’re heading into the wild.’

They parked the car on the seafront and stood for a few moments staring out across the Firth of Forth towards Edinburgh.

‘Looks sunny over there,’ Kaye complained, buttoning his coat. ‘Bet you wish you’d worn more than a donkey jacket.’

Joe Naysmith had become inured to comments about his latest designer buy, but he did turn the collar up. There was a fierce wind blowing in from the North Sea. The water was choppy, and puddles along the promenade offered evidence that the tide was prone to break over the sea wall. The gulls overhead looked to be working hard at staying airborne. There was something odd about the design of this waterfront: almost no use had been made of it. Buildings tended to face away from the view and towards the

town centre. Fox had noted this elsewhere in Scotland: from Fort William to Dundee, the planners seemed to deny the existence of any shoreline. He'd never understood it, but doubted Kaye and Naysmith would be able to help.

Joe Naysmith's suggestion had been a beach walk, but Tony Kaye was already heading for one of the wynds leading uphill towards Kirkcaldy's shops and cafés, leaving Naysmith to dig out eighty-five pence in change for the parking. The narrow main street had roadworks on it. Kaye crossed to the other side and kept climbing.

'Where's he going?' Naysmith complained.

'Tony has a nose,' Fox explained. 'Not just any old café will do.'

Kaye had stopped at a doorway, made sure they could see him, then headed inside. The Pancake Place was light and spacious and not too busy. They took a corner table and tried to look like regulars. Fox often wondered if it was true that cops the world over tended to act the same. He liked corner tables, where he could see everything that was happening or might be about to happen. Naysmith hadn't quite learned that lesson yet and seemed happy enough to sit with his back to the door. Fox had squeezed in next to Kaye, eyes scanning the room, finding only women intent on their conversations, past being interested in the three new arrivals. They studied their menus in silence, placed an order, and waited a few minutes for the waitress to return with a tray.

'Good-looking scone,' Naysmith commented, getting to work with his knife and the pat of low-fat spread.

Fox had brought the folder with him. 'Don't want you getting too comfortable,' he said, emptying its contents on to the table. 'While the tea's cooling, you can be refreshing your memories.'

'Is it worth the risk?' Tony Kaye asked.

'What risk?'

'A smear of butter on the cover sheet. Won't look exactly professional when we're doing the interviews.'

'I'm feeling reckless today,' Fox countered. 'I'll take a chance ...'

With a sigh from Kaye, the three men started reading.

Paul Carter was the reason they'd come to Fife. Carter held the rank of detective constable and had been a cop for fifteen years. He was thirty-eight years old and came from a family of cops – both his father and an uncle had served in Fife Constabulary. The uncle, Alan Carter, had actually made the original complaint



against his nephew. It involved a drug addict, sexual favours, and turning a blind eye. Two other women then came forward to say that Paul Carter had arrested them for drunken behaviour, but offered to drop any charges if they would be 'accommodating'.

'Does anybody actually ever say "accommodating"?' Kaye muttered, halfway down a page.

'Courtroom and newspapers,' Naysmith replied, brushing crumbs from his own copy of the case notes.

Malcolm Fox had some of those newspaper reports in front of him. There were photos of Paul Carter leaving court at the end of a day's testimony. Pudding-bowl haircut; face pitted by acne. Giving the photographer a hard stare.

It was four days since the guilty verdict had been delivered, along with the sheriff's comment that Detective Constable Carter's own colleagues seemed 'either wilfully stupid or wilfully complicit'. Meaning: they'd known for years Carter was a bad cop, but they'd protected him, lied for him, maybe even attempted to falsify witness statements and put pressure on witnesses not to come forward.

All of which had brought the Complaints to town. Fife Constabulary needed to know, and in order to reassure the public (and more importantly, the media) that the investigation would be rigorous, they had asked a neighbouring force to run the inquiry. Fox had been given a copy of Fife Constabulary's Suspension Policy and Suspension Process Considerations, along with the Chief Constable's written report outlining why the three officers under investigation were still at work, this being 'in the best interests of the force'.

Fox took a sip of tea and skimmed another page of notes. Almost every sentence had been underlined or highlighted. The margins were filled with his own scribbled queries, concerns and exclamation marks. He knew most of it by heart, could stand up and recite it to the café's customers. Maybe they were gossiping about it anyway. In a town this size, sides would have been taken, opinions rigidly formed. Carter was a slimeball, a sleazebag, a predator. Or he'd been stitched up by a low-life junkie and a couple of cheap dates. Where was the harm in anything he'd done? And what had he done anyway?

Not much, except bring his police force into disrepute.

'Reminds me a bit of Colin Balfour,' Tony Kaye said. 'Remember him?'

Fox nodded. Edinburgh cop who liked to visit the cells if women were being held overnight. The prosecution against him had faltered, but an internal inquiry had seen him kicked off the force anyway.

‘Interesting that the uncle’s the one who spoke up,’ Naysmith commented, drawing them back to the current case.

‘But only after he retired from the force,’ Fox added.

‘Even so ... Must have stirred up the family a bit.’

‘Could be some history there,’ Kaye offered. ‘Bad blood.’

‘Could be,’ Naysmith agreed.

Kaye slapped a hand down on the pile of papers in front of him. ‘So where does any of this get us? How many days are we going to be shuttling backwards and forwards?’

‘As many as it takes. Might only be a week or two.’

Kaye rolled his eyes. ‘Just so Fife Constabulary can say they’ve got one bad apple and not a whole cider factory?’

‘Do they make cider in factories?’ Naysmith asked.

‘Where do you think they make it?’

Fox didn’t bother joining in. He was wondering again about the main player, Paul Carter. There was no use trying to interview the man, even though he was available. He’d been found guilty, held in custody, but had yet to receive a sentence. The sheriff was ‘deliberating’. Fox reckoned Carter would go to jail. Couple of years and maybe a listing on the Sex Offenders Register. He was almost certainly talking to his lawyers about an appeal.

Yes, he’d talk to his legal team, but not to the Complaints. The man had nothing to gain by grassing up his mates at the station, the ones who’d stood by him. Fox couldn’t offer him any kind of deal. The most they could hope for was that he would let something slip. If he talked at all.

Which he wouldn’t.

Fox doubted anyone would talk. Or rather, they’d talk but say nothing worth hearing. They’d had plenty of warning this day was coming. Scholes. Haldane. Michaelson. The sheriff had singled them out for their conflicting or confused testimony, their muddying of the water, their memory lapses. Their immediate boss in CID, Detective Chief Inspector Laird, had escaped criticism, as had a detective constable called Forrester.

‘Forrester’s the one we should be talking to,’ Kaye said suddenly, breaking off from his argument with Naysmith.

‘Why?’

‘Because her first name’s Cheryl. My years of experience tell me that makes her a woman.’

‘And?’

‘And if one of her colleagues was a sex pest, surely she’d have had an inkling. Surrounded by blokes circling the wagons when the rumours start flying ... She’s got to know something.’ Kaye rose to his feet. ‘Who’s for a refill?’

‘Let me check first.’ Fox took out his phone and found the number for the station. ‘Maybe Scholes is back from his wee jaunt.’ He punched in the number and waited, while Kaye flicked the back of Naysmith’s head with a finger and offered his services as a barber.

‘Hello?’ It was a woman’s voice.

‘DI Scholes, please.’

‘Who’s calling?’

Fox looked around the café. ‘I’m from the Pancake Place. He was in earlier and we think he left something.’

‘Hold on, I’ll put you through.’

‘Thank you.’ Fox ended the call and started gathering up all the paperwork.

‘Nicely played,’ Tony Kaye said. Then, to Naysmith: ‘Back into your donkey jacket, Joe. Let’s get that jackhammer started ...’