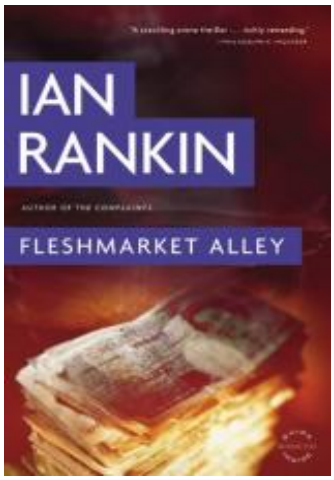
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Fleshmarket Alley

by Ian Rankin



About the Book

Inspector John Rebus has confronted Edinburgh?s most hardened criminals, its bloodiest crime scenes, and its most dangerous backstreets but nothing could have prepared him for what he finds on Fleshmarket Alley.

In the city?s red-light district, men live out their sordid fantasies, and women with no other choice sell their bodies to make a buck. It?s a neighborhood of lost inhibitions, forgotten scruples, and hopeless dreams. In its seediest clubs, refugees seeking asylum are subjected to the whims of the most ruthless characters in the crime world men Rebus knows all too well.

Discussion Guide

1. How does Ian Rankin reveal himself as a writer interested in using fiction to ?tell the truths the real world can?t??

2. There are similarities between the lives of the author and his protagonist --- for instance, both Rankin and John Rebus were born in Fife, lost their mother at an early age, enjoy a drink, and have children with physical problems. Is it in any way useful to think of John Rebus as Ian Rankin?s alter ego?

3. Could it be said that Rebus is trying to make sense in a general way of the world around him, or is he seeking answers to the ?big questions?? Is it relevant that he is a believer in God and comes from a Scottish Presbyterian background? Would Rebus see confession in the religious and the criminal senses as similar?

4. How does Rankin explore notions of Edinburgh as a character in its own right? In what way does he contrast the glossily public and seedily private faces of the city with the public and private faces of those Rebus meets?

5. How does Rankin use musical sources --- the Elvis references in ?The Black Book,? for instance, or the Rolling

Stones allusions in ?Let It Bleed? --- as a means of character development through the series? What does Rebus?s own taste in music and books say about him as a person?

6. What is your impression of Rebus? If you have read more than one of the Rebus novels, discuss how his character has developed.

7. If Rebus has a problem with notions of ?pecking order? and the idea of authority generally, what does it say about him that he chose careers in hierarchical institutions such as the army and then the police?

8. How does Rebus relate to women --- as lovers, objects of flirtation, family members, and colleagues?

9. Do the flashes of gallows humor shown by the pathologists but sometimes also in Rebus?s own comments increase or dissipate narrative tension? Does Rebus use black comedy for the same reasons the pathologists do?

10. Do Rebus?s personal vulnerabilities make him sympathetic to the frailties of others?

11. How does Rebus compare to other long-standing popular detectives created by British writers, such as Holmes, Poirot, Morse, or Dalgliesh? Are there more similarities or differences among them?

Author Bio

Ian Rankin is a #1 international bestselling author. Winner of an Edgar Award and the recipient of a Gold Dagger for fiction and the Chandler-Fulbright Award, he lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, with his wife and their two sons.

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