

RUBICON by Ian Patrick
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For this month's book choice, I have chosen '*Rubicon*' by Ian Patrick. Normally, detectives in crime novels are portrayed as heroes. However, in this story the main protagonist is the antithesis of a hero, which is in sharp contrast to his reluctant partner – a dedicated and professional officer. As a result, '*Rubicon*' proved to be a great read.

THE PLOT

Two cops, on different sides of the law, have the same gangland boss in their sights. DS Sam Batford is a corrupt undercover officer with the Metropolitan Police, who will stop at nothing to get his hands on fearsome crime-lord Vincenzo Guardino's drug supply. DCI Klara Winter runs a team in the National Crime Agency. She is also chasing down Guardino but, unlike Sam, she is determined to bring the gangster to justice and get his drugs off the streets.

Assigned to work together, neither Sam nor Klara are happy about the situation and as Sam gradually begins to cut her out of the loop, Klara soon discovers Guardino is not the only one she needs to track down.

MY REVIEW

'*Rubicon*' is Ian Patrick's debut novel and therefore I had no preconceptions or expectations from the author when I started to read it. However, from the very first chapter, I was immediately hooked.

With a career mostly spent within the Specialist Operations Command of the Metropolitan Police, Ian has used his knowledge and training to develop a compelling story, set against the underbelly of London's drug trade. However, the novel carries a unique twist that sets it apart from others of its kind, as it soon becomes apparent Ian's main character – DS Sam Batford – is definitely not someone who can be relied on to struggle tirelessly on behalf of justice and society. On the contrary, the only person Batford represents is himself.

The clever opening scenario has the reader believing the narrator is merely a hired hit man. The illusion is then shattered as he walks towards the crime scene.

Because Batford is not the kind of main character you would normally expect to find in a detective novel, the story is refreshingly different. An undercover police officer with the Metropolitan Police Covert Intelligence Command, Batford is a totally self-serving and corrupt individual, operating within his own distorted moral compass to feather his nest with illegal drug money.

As a child, his father's harsh and violent discipline helped prepare Batford for the army. However, having joined the army as a young man, he was not only taught discipline but also how to kill. Now, as a rogue police officer, Batford is not above

killing people to further his own criminal ends. Although he is a rotten apple within the force, he is nevertheless a compelling presence throughout the novel, perpetually walking a tightrope between two opposing sides of the law.

Batford's flawed character traits are in strict contrast to the integrity of DCI Klara Winter. Her diligence and strong sense of duty serve to illustrate she is everything Batford is not.

Ambitious and determined to make her mark by ridding the capital's streets of drug dealing, Winter has spent a long time chasing down drug crime lord Vincenzo Guardino. Suspicious of Batford from the start, Winter's misgivings about his assignment to her team are soon compounded when – instead of working with her – he begins to operate on his own, while continually leaving her out of the loop.

Unfortunately, with Batford's superior refusing to discuss his assignment to Winter's team – for reasons of national security, to which Winter is not privy – her complaints fall on stony ground. With Batford protected by his covert status, it is not long before Winter realises Guardino is not her only problem.

Although exciting, the story is quite brutal and, at times, not for the squeamish, especially when Guardino (aka Mr H) starts to suspect he has an informant in his ranks. Batford then finds himself walking a dangerous line, especially as his superiors at the Met have made it clear to him he is on his own if rumbled.

With suspense around every corner, '*Rubicon*' is a fast-paced novel, with intriguing and wildly contrasting characters. Its gripping storyline makes for an exciting read and I can thoroughly recommend it.

THE AUTHOR

Educated in Nottingham, Ian left school at sixteen. Following a short spell in the Civil Service, he then moved to London for a career in the Metropolitan Police, where he spent 27 years as a police officer – the majority as a detective within the Specialist Operations Command. Because a career in policing is a career in writing, Ian became used to carrying a book and pen and making notes. Now retired, the need to write never left him and evolved into fiction. '*Rubicon*' is his debut novel.

Ian now lives in rural Scotland, where he divides his time between family, writing, reading and photography.

'Rubicon is published by Fahrenfright Press and is available to download in eBook format. Paperback format is also available from Amazon.