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# 'Black Rose Days' by Martin Malone: Book Review

By Rachel Casey



Dan Somers has returned to Ireland under the pretense of sorting out the inheritance from his mother. But what he hasn't told his wife, Irene, is that he wants to find out what happened to Ena, his first wife, who was murdered thirty-one years previously. A crime that Dan himself was the chief suspect for at the time.

Told from the perspectives of Dan, Irene and Ena, Martin Malone's *Black Rose Days* paints a bleak picture of Ena's life as she tries to overcome the stigma that comes with her social standing. She tries to build a life with Dan, despite his mother's obvious protests. But the opinions of the locals, and her opinions of herself, constantly stand in her way, and she finds herself inevitably doing the wrong thing again and again.

*Black Rose Days* is not a typical murder-mystery. The heart of the story is the question of who killed Ena. All we know at the beginning is that it wasn't Dan, even though most people believe that it was. But that's about all that's conventional about this story. It doesn't have the pacing of a 'whodunnit'. It's much slower and doesn't keep you gripped with every page turn. Information isn't revealed to you as is normal for that genre, and you're not given many clues as to who the murderer is. The reveal at the end isn't explosive and shocking and you're not left reeling at the information you're given.

But if you look at *Black Rose Days* for what it is rather than what it isn't, then it's a more enjoyable book. It's a story about people more than plot. It's an exploration into the character of Ena and how her life ended up the way it did; married to a man she didn't particularly love, but who she did care for. Cheating on him regularly and drinking heavily, but always being one step away from turning it all around. Just never able to actually take the step.

It's a grim story, so don't expect a particularly happy ending. The reader finds out what happened to Ena, but Dan only figures out part of it. The ending is not the big reveal that 'whodunnits' have, the characters aren't all gathered in a room and told exactly what happened. But it's a fitting ending for the book, and satisfying enough for the reader to be happy.

*Black Rose Days* is interesting and unusual. Fans of character driven plots will enjoy it, but classic murder-mystery fans might be a bit let down.

*Black Rose Days* is available from New Island Books

## REVIEW OVERVIEW

Black Rose Days	★★★★☆
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>3.5</b>
	★★★★☆ OVERALL SCORE

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Rachel Casey

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