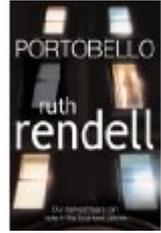


## THE BOOK REVIEW—JANUARY MMXII

Ruth Rendell is perhaps best known for her Inspector Wexford Novels that have been hugely popular both in their original book form and as a successful ITV drama series. Portobello is not a detective novel.



This novel features a number of unsympathetic characters who are drawn together by a single act. The scenes are set against the Portobello area of West London. The area has a rich personality - vibrant, brilliant in colour, noisy, with graffiti that approach art, bizarre and splendid. An indefinable edge to it adds a spice of danger. And, there is nothing safe about Portobello...

The central character Eugene Wren had an addictive personality. He had cut back radically on his alcohol consumption and had given up cigarettes. But an addict always finds a new focus for their addiction.

On a shopping trip one day, Eugene, quite by chance, came across an envelope containing money. He picked it up. For some reason, rather than report the matter to the police, he wrote a note and stuck it up on lamppost near his house: 'Found in Chepstow Villas, a sum of money between eighty and a hundred and sixty pounds. Anyone who has lost such a sum should apply to the phone number below.' This note would link the lives of a number of very different people - each with their obsessions, problems and dreams and despairs.

The tale is told so cleverly that the ending is less important than how each character got there. It's a good read and a book that can be read either in blocks or when the occasion permits.

**Russell rating: \*\*\*\***



Reven's Gate is the first of a thrilling series by number-one best-selling author, [Anthony Horowitz](#). The story starts with a failed break-in at Warehouse in Ipswich and then takes the reader from there to London, North Yorkshire and the limits of your imagination. The central character Matt is 14, orphaned and unhappy. He has few friends. However, he has always known that he has unusual powers but these have made life harder for him.

In this first book we are introduced to Nexus and the Old Ones. What makes the incredible so credible is the way the author weaves in descriptive passages of familiar and mundane objects and events to the world of magic and mystery.

I would have absolutely no hesitation in recommending this book to all ages provided you are prepared to imagine.

**Russell rating: \*\*\*\*\***

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