The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... That both my parents didn’t live to see me become a success. I was 19 when my mum Isabel died. She was only 58 and was seriously ill for six months. My dad James saw my first couple of books published before he died at 72, but they weren’t a success.

I would steal Francis Bacon’s triptych, Three Studies For Figures At The Base Of A Crucifixion, from Tate Britain. The song that means most to you... Solid Air by John Martyn reminds me of my teenage years. The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Winning the Gold Dagger award for Best Crime Novel in 1997 for Black And Blue. It sold four times more than my previous books and suddenly I was a bestselling author.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be the lead singer of a rock band. I was in The Dancing Pigs when I was 19 – we did about six gigs but we weren’t very good. The quality of dummy copy like this... It’s a Next Week copy on the style sheet. This is a swathe of dummy copy like this... I was in a band called The Dancing Pigs when I was 19 – we did about six gigs but we weren’t very good.

Believe in yourself. This is PS text on the style sheet. This is PS text on the style sheet. This is PS text on the style sheet. This is PS text on the style sheet. This is PS text on the style sheet.

From top: a dolphin, Venice’s Hotel Cipriani, Snickers and Caramel bars, The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie by Muriel Spark is the archetypal Edinburgh novel. It gets to the underbelly of the city.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I’d start the day walking with my wife Miranda through the temperate rainforest at Tofino on Vancouver Island. Then we’d take our children – Jack, 20, and Kit, 18 – to Chanonry Point on the Black Isle in northern Scotland to watch the dolphins. They come within yards of the shore. Kit is in a wheelchair, but he loves the wind in his hair and the rain on his face. For lunch, we’d have fresh langoustines at a fish restaurant called Sutor Creek ten miles away in Cromarty. Then I’d take Miranda to Venice. We’d head to the Zatterre promenade for a fish dinner with local white wine at the Riviera restaurant, and stay the night at the Hotel Cipriani.

The one and was diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome – a chromosome disorder which means he doesn’t develop normally. I dealt with my anger and frustration by writing the Rebus novel Black And Blue, which was the book that took off. If Kit hadn’t come along the books may not have succeeded and we wouldn’t have the money for the things that make his life better.

The misapprehension about yourself... Paul Muldoon. It’s about the British Army meeting the Native American Bush at Chanonry Point. The way you want to be remembered... I’d like to be laid to rest beneath a rose bush at Chanonry Point.

THE definitive answer. This week it’s Rebus author Ian Rankin.

To write the perfect novel... For me, the priority activity if you were the Prime Minister Nick Clegg to see what he’s useful for! The priority activity if you were the Prime Minister Nick Clegg to see what he’s useful for! The priority activity if you were the Prime Minister Nick Clegg to see what he’s useful for! The priority activity if you were the Prime Minister Nick Clegg to see what he’s useful for! The priority activity if you were the Prime Minister Nick Clegg to see what he’s useful for!


As told to Rob McGibbon

The order of service at your funeral... I’m not that religious but I still want a church funeral. I would come in to The Rolling Stoners’ You Can’t Always Get What You Want. There’d be an acoustic version of Solid Air and everyone would leave to Silver Machine by Hawkwind.

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