Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

Dead Like You

Written by Peter James

Published by Macmillan

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

DEAD LIKE YOU

PETER JAMES

MACMILLAN



First published 2010 by Macmillan
an imprint of Pan Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited
Pan Macmillan, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Basingstoke and Oxford
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-0-230-70687-3 HB
ISBN 978-0-230-71124-2 TPB

Copyright © Really Scary Books / Peter James 2010

The right of Peter James to be identified as the
author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance
with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be
reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or
transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written
permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorized
act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal
prosecution and civil claims for damages.

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

Typeset by SetSystems Limited, Saffron Walden, Essex
Printed in the UK by CPI Mackays, Chatham ME5 8TD

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not,
by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out,
or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent
in any form of binding or cover other than that in which
it is published and without a similar condition including this
condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Visit **www.panmacmillan.com** to read more about all our books
and to buy them. You will also find features, author interviews and
news of any author events, and you can sign up for e-newsletters
so that you're always first to hear about our new releases.

1997

1

Thursday 25 December

We all make mistakes, all of the time. Mostly trivial stuff, like forgetting to return a phone call, or to put money in a parking meter, or to pick up milk at the supermarket. But sometimes – luckily very rarely – we make the big one.

The kind of mistake that could cost us our life.

The kind of mistake Rachael Ryan made.

And she had a long time to reflect on it.

If . . . she had been less drunk. If . . . it hadn't been so sodding freezing cold. If . . . it hadn't begun to rain. If . . . there hadn't been a queue of a hundred equally drunk revellers at the taxi rank in Brighton's East Street at 2 a.m. on Christmas Eve, or, rather, Christmas morning. If . . . her flat had not been within walking distance, unlike her equally drunk companions, Tracey and Jade, who lived far away, on the other side of the city.

If . . . she had listened to Tracey and Jade telling her not to be so bloody stupid. That there were plenty of taxis. That it would only be a short wait.

*

His whole body stiffened with excitement. After two hours of watching, finally the woman he had been waiting for was turning into the street. She was on foot and alone. Perfect!

She was wearing a miniskirt with a shawl around her shoulders and looked a little unsteady on her legs, from drink and probably from the height of the heels. She had nice legs. But what he was really looking at was her shoes. His kind of shoes. High-heeled with ankle straps. He liked ankle straps. As she came closer, approaching beneath the sodium glare of the street lights, he could

see, through his binoculars, through the rear window, that they were shiny, as he had hoped.

Very sexy shoes!

She was his kind of woman!

*

God, was she glad she had decided to walk! What a queue! And every taxi that had gone past since was occupied. With a fresh, windy drizzle on her face, Rachael tottered along past the shops on St James's Street, past the Royal Sussex County Hospital, then turned right into Paston Place, where the wind became stronger, batting her long brown hair around her face. She headed down towards the seafront, then turned left into her street of Victorian terraced houses, where the wind and the rain played even more havoc with her hairdo. Not that she cared any more, not tonight. In the distance she heard the wail of a siren, an ambulance or a police car, she thought.

She walked past a small car with misted windows. Through them she saw the silhouette of a couple snogging, and she felt a twinge of sadness and a sudden yearning for Liam, whom she had dumped almost six months ago now. The bastard had been unfaithful. OK, he had pleaded with her to forgive him, but she just knew he would stray again, and again – he was that sort. All the same, she missed him a lot at times, and she wondered where he was now. What he was doing tonight. Who he was with. He'd be with a girl for sure.

Whereas she was on her own.

She and Tracey and Jade. *The Three Saddo Singles*, they jokingly called themselves. But there was a truth that hurt behind the humour. After two and a half years in a relationship with the man she had really believed was the one she would marry, it was hard to be alone again. Particularly at Christmas, with all its memories.

God, it had been a shitty year. In August, Princess Diana had died. Then her own life had fallen apart.

She glanced at her watch. It was 2.35. Tugging her mobile phone from her bag, she rang Jade's number. Jade said they were still waiting in the queue. Rachael told her she was almost home.

She wished her a merry Christmas. Told her to wish Tracey a merry Christmas too, and said she'd see them New Year's Eve.

'Hope Santa's good to you, Rach!' Jade said. 'And tell him not to forget the batteries if he brings you a vibrator!'

She heard Tracey cackling in the background.

'Sod off!' she said with a grin.

Then she slipped the phone back into her bag and stumbled on, nearly coming a purler as one high heel of her incredibly expensive Kurt Geigers, which she'd bought last week in a sale, caught between two paving stones. She toyed for a moment with the idea of taking them off, but she was almost home now. She tottered on.

The walk and the rain had sobered her up a little, but she was still too drunk, and too coked up, not to think it was odd that at almost three on Christmas morning a man in a baseball cap a short distance in front of her was trying to lug a fridge out of a van.

He had it half out and half in as she approached. She could see he was struggling under its apparent weight and suddenly he cried out in pain.

Instinctively, because she was kind, she ran, stumbling, up to him.

'My back! My disc! My disc has gone! Oh, Jesus!'

'Can I help?'

It was the last thing she remembered saying.

She was hurled forward. Something wet slapped across her face. She smelt a sharp, acrid reek.

Then she blacked out.

NOW

2

Wednesday 31 December

Yac spoke into the metal thing on the tall brick wall. 'Taxi!' he said.

Then the gates opened, swanky wrought-iron ones, painted black, with gold spikes along the top. He climbed back into his white and turquoise Peugeot estate and drove up a short, twisting drive. There were bushes on either side, but he did not know what kind they were. He hadn't got to bushes in his learning yet. Only trees.

Yac was forty-two. He wore a suit with a neatly pressed shirt and a carefully chosen tie. He liked to dress smart for work. He always shaved, combed his short dark hair forward to a slight peak and rolled deodorant under his armpits. He was aware that it was important not to smell bad. He always checked his fingernails and his toenails before leaving home. He always wound up his watch. He always checked his phone for messages. But he had only five numbers stored on the phone and only four people had his, so it wasn't often that he received any.

He glanced at the clock on the dashboard: 6.30 p.m. Good. Thirty minutes to go before he needed to have any tea. Plenty of time. His Thermos sat on the seat beside him.

At the top the drive became circular, with a low wall in the middle enclosing a fountain that was lit up in green. Yac steered carefully around it, past a quadruple garage door and one wall of the huge house, coming to a halt by steps leading up to the front door. It was a big, important-looking door and it was closed.

He began to fret. He didn't like it when passengers weren't already outside, because he never knew how long he would have to wait. And there were so many decisions.

Whether to switch the engine off. And if he switched the engine

off, should he switch the lights off? But before he switched the engine off he needed to do some checks. *Fuel.* Three-quarters of a tank. *Oil.* Pressure normal. *Temperature.* Temperature was good. So much to remember in this taxi. Including to switch the meter on if they did not come out in five minutes. But most important of all, his drink of tea, on the hour, every hour. He checked the Thermos was still there. It was.

This wasn't actually *his* taxi, it belonged to someone he knew. Yac was a journeyman driver. He drove the hours the guy who owned it did not want to drive. Mostly nights. Some nights longer than others. Tonight was New Year's Eve. It was going to be a very long one and he had started early. But Yac didn't mind. Night was good. Much the same as day to him, but darker.

The front door of the house was opening. He stiffened and took a deep breath, as he had been taught by his therapist. He didn't really like passengers getting into his taxi and invading his space – except ones with nice shoes. But he had to put up with them until he could deliver them to their destination, then get them out again and be free.

They were coming out now. The man was tall and slim, his hair slicked back, wearing a tuxedo with a bow tie and holding his coat over his arm. She had a furry-looking jacket on, red hair all done nicely, flowing around her head. She looked beautiful, as if she might be a famous actress, like the ones he saw pictures of in the papers that people left in his taxi or on television of stars arriving at premieres.

But he wasn't really looking at her; he was looking at her shoes. Black suede, three ankle straps, high heels with glinting metal around the edges of the soles.

'Good evening,' the man said, opening the door of the taxi for the woman. 'Metropole Hotel, please.'

'Nice shoes,' Yac said to the woman, by way of reply. 'Jimmy Choo. Uh-huh?'

She squealed in proud delight. 'Yes, you're right. They are!'

He recognized her intoxicating scent too, but said nothing. *Oscar de la Renta Intrusion*, he thought to himself. He liked it.

He started the engine and quickly ran through his mental

checks. *Meter on. Seat belts. Doors closed. Into gear. Handbrake off.* He had not checked the tyres since dropping off the last fare, but he had done so half an hour ago, so they might still be all right. *Check in mirror.* As he did, he caught another glimpse of the woman's face. Definitely beautiful. He would like to see her shoes again.

'The main entrance,' the man said.

Yac did the calculation in his head as he steered back down the drive: 2.516 miles. He memorized distances. He knew most of them within this city because he had memorized the streets. It was 4,428 yards to the Hilton Brighton Metropole, he recalculated; or 2.186 nautical miles, or 4.04897 kilometres, or 0.404847 of a Swedish mile. The fare would be approximately £9.20, subject to traffic.

'Do you have high-flush or low-flush toilets in your house?' he asked.

After a few moments of silence while Yac pulled out into the road, the man glanced at the woman, raised his eyes and said, 'Low flush. Why?'

'How many toilets do you have in your house? I bet you've got a lot, right? Uh-huh?'

'We have enough,' the man said.

'I can tell you where there's a good example of a high-flush toilet – it's in Worthing. I could take you there to see it if you're interested.' Hope rose in Yac's voice. 'It's a really good example. In the public toilets, near the pier.'

'No, thank you. They're not my thing.'

The couple in the back fell silent.

Yac drove on. He could see their faces in the glow of the street lights, in his mirror.

'With your low-flush toilets, I bet you have some push-button ones,' he said.

'We do,' the man said. 'Yes.' Then he put his mobile phone to his ear and answered a call.

Yac watched him in the mirror before catching the woman's eyes. 'You're a size five, aren't you? In shoes.'

'Yes! How did you know?'

'I can tell. I can always tell. Uh-huh.'

'That's very clever!' she said.

Yac fell silent. He was probably talking too much. The guy who owned the taxi told him there had been complaints about him talking too much. The guy said people didn't always like to talk. Yac did not want to lose his job. So he kept quiet. He thought about the woman's shoes as he headed down to the Brighton seafront and turned left. Instantly the wind buffeted the taxi. The traffic was heavy and it was slow going. But he was right about the fare.

As he pulled up outside the entrance to the Metropole Hotel, the meter showed £9.20.

The man gave him £10 and told him to keep the change.

Yac watched them walk into the hotel. Watched the woman's hair blowing in the wind. Watched the Jimmy Choo shoes disappearing through the revolving door. Nice shoes. He felt excited.

Excited about the night ahead.

There would be so many more shoes. Special shoes for a very special night.

3

Wednesday 31 December

Detective Superintendent Roy Grace stared out of his office window into the dark void of the night, at the lights of the ASDA superstore car park across the road and the distant lights of the city of Brighton and Hove beyond, and heard the howl of the gusting wind. He felt the cold draught that came though the thin pane on his cheek.

New Year's Eve. He checked his watch: 6.15. Time to go. Time to quit his hopeless attempt at clearing his desk and head home.

It was the same every New Year's Eve, he reflected. He always promised himself that he would tidy up, deal with all his paperwork and start the next year with a clean slate. And he always failed. He would be coming back in tomorrow to yet another hopeless mess. Even bigger than last year's. Which had been even bigger than the one the year before.

All the Crown Prosecution files of the cases he had investigated during this past year were stacked on the floor. Next to them were small, precarious tower blocks of blue cardboard boxes and green plastic crates crammed with unresolved cases – as cold cases were now starting to be called. But he preferred the old title.

Although his work was predominantly concerned with current murders and other major crimes, Roy Grace cared about his cold cases very much, to the point that he felt a personal connection with each victim. But he had been unable to dedicate much time to these files, because it had been a strangely busy year. First, a young man had been buried alive in a coffin on his stag night. Then a vile snuff-movie ring had been busted. This had been followed by a complex case of a homicidal identity thief, before he'd successfully potted a double-killer who had faked his disappearance. But

he'd had precious little acknowledgement for getting these results from his departing boss, Assistant Chief Constable Alison Vosper.

Perhaps next year would be better. Certainly it was filled with promise. A new ACC, Peter Rigg, was starting on Monday – five days' time. Also starting on Monday, which would greatly relieve his workload, was a brand-new Cold Case Team comprised of three former senior detectives under his command.

But most important of all, his beloved Cleo was due to give birth to their child in June. And some time before then, at a date still to be sorted out, they would be getting married, so long as the one obstacle standing in their way could be removed.

His wife, Sandy.

She had disappeared nine and a half years ago, on his thirtieth birthday, and, despite all his efforts, no word had been heard from her since. He did not know whether she had been abducted or murdered, or had run off with a lover, or had had an accident, or had simply, elaborately, faked her disappearance.

For the past nine years, until his relationship with Cleo Morey had begun, Roy had spent almost all of his free time in a fruitless quest to discover what had happened to Sandy. Now he was finally putting her into the past. He had engaged a solicitor to have her declared legally dead. He hoped the process could be fast-tracked so they would be able to get married before the baby was born. Even if Sandy did turn up out of the blue, he would not be interested in resuming a life with her, he had decided. He had moved on in his own mind – or so he believed.

He shovelled several piles of documents around on his desk. By stacking one heap on top of another, it made the desk look tidier, even if the workload remained the same.

Strange how life changed, he thought. Sandy used to hate New Year's Eve. It was such an artifice, she used to tell him. They always spent it with another couple, a police colleague, Dick Pope, and his wife, Leslie. Always in some fancy restaurant. Then afterwards Sandy would invariably analyse the entire evening and pull it apart.

With Sandy, he had come to view the advent of New Year's Eve with decreasing enthusiasm. But now, with Cleo, he was looking

forward to it hugely. They were going to spend it at home, alone together, and feast on some of their favourite foods. Bliss! The only downer was that he was the duty Senior Investigating Officer for this week, which meant he was on twenty-four-hour call – which meant he could not drink. Although he had decided he would allow himself a few sips of a glass of champagne at midnight.

He could hardly wait to get home. He was so in love with Cleo that there were frequent moments in every day when he was overcome by a deep yearning to see her, hold her, touch her, hear her voice, see her smile. He had that feeling now, and wanted nothing more than to leave and head for her house, which had now, to all intents and purposes, become his home.

Just one thing stopped him.

All those damned blue boxes and green crates on the floor. He needed to have everything in order for the Cold Case Team on Monday, the first official working day of the New Year. Which meant several hours of work still ahead of him.

So instead he sent Cleo a text with a row of kisses.

For a time, this past year, he had managed to delegate all these cold cases to a colleague. But that hadn't worked out and now he had inherited them all back. Five unsolved major crimes out of a total number of twenty-five to be reinvestigated. Where the hell did he begin?

The words of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* came into his head suddenly: 'Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop.'

So he began at the beginning. Just five minutes, he thought, then he would quit for the year and head home to Cleo. As if echoing his thoughts, his phone pinged with an incoming text. It was an even longer row of kisses.

Smiling, he opened the first file and looked at the activity report. Every six months the DNA labs they used would run checks on the DNA from their cold-case victims. You just never knew. And there had been several offenders who must have long thought they had got away with their crimes but who had successfully been brought to trial and were now in prison because of advances in DNA extraction and matching techniques.

The second file was a case that always touched Roy Grace deeply. Young Tommy Lytle. Twenty-seven years ago, at the age of eleven, Tommy had set out from school on a February afternoon to walk home. The one lead in the case was a Morris Minor van, spotted near the scene of the boy's murder, which was later searched. From the files, it was obvious that the Senior Investigating Officer at the time was convinced the owner of the van was the offender, but they were unable to find that crucial forensic evidence that would have linked the boy to the van. The man, a weirdo loner with a history of sexual offences, was released – but, Grace knew, still very much alive.

He turned to the next file: *Operation Houdini.*

Shoe Man.

Names of operations were thrown up randomly by the CID computer system. Occasionally they were apt. This one was. Like a great escapologist, this particular offender had so far avoided the police net.

The Shoe Man had raped – or attempted to rape – at least five women in the Brighton area over a short period of time back in 1997, and in all likelihood had raped and killed a sixth victim whose body had never been found. And it could have been a lot more – many women are too embarrassed or traumatized to report an attack. Then suddenly the attacks appeared to have stopped. No DNA evidence had been recovered from any of the victims who had come forward at the time. But techniques for obtaining it were less effective then.

All they had to go on was the offender's MO. Almost every criminal had a specific modus operandi. A way of doing things. His or her particular 'signature'. And the Shoe Man had a very distinct one: he took his victim's panties and one of her shoes. But only if they were classy shoes.

Grace hated rapists. He knew that everyone who became a victim of crime was left traumatized in some way. But most victims of burglaries and street crimes could eventually put it behind them and move on. Victims of sexual abuse or sexual assault, particularly child victims and rape victims, could never ever truly do that. Their lives were changed forever. They would spend the rest of their days

living with the knowledge, struggling to cope, to hold down their revulsion, their anger and their fear.

It was a harsh fact that most people were raped by someone they knew. Rapes by total strangers were exceedingly rare, but they did happen. And it was not uncommon for these so-called 'stranger rapists' to take a souvenir – a trophy. Like the Shoe Man had.

Grace turned some of the pages of the thick file, glancing through comparisons with other rapes around the country. In particular, there was one case further north, from the same time period, that bore striking similarities. But that suspect had been eliminated, as evidence had established that it definitely could not have been the same person.

So, Shoe Man, Grace wondered, *are you still alive? If so, where are you now?*