



Looking Good Dead

Peter James

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It's a tricky proposition, changing horses midstream. And with *Looking Good Dead*, Peter James continues to do just that. The author's reputation as a purveyor of subtly chilling horror and fantasy had been carefully built up over many years, and James had few British peers in this field. But that is not quite the compliment it sounds, for the horror field is in one of its frequent slumps at present, and apart from a few American giants such as Stephen King, some highly talented figures have languished, in some cases even forfeiting their publishers. It's possible that Peter James saw the way the wind was blowing, and decided to move on from his hitherto lucrative horror work, returning to the crime arena (in which he'd worked before) with the adroit *Dead Simple*, the inaugural book in the series featuring Detective Superintendent Roy Grace. If DS Grace was cut from a familiar cloth (copper struggling with psychological problems), the plotting was innovative and fresh.

And so it's proved to be once again with *Looking Good Dead*. Tom Bryce picks up a CD which has been left behind on a train seat, but when he attempts to track down the owner, he finds himself the only witness to a savage killing. Reporting the crime to the police has disastrous consequences for Bryce, and the lives of both he and his wife are threatened--by a notification on the Internet, no less. When DS Roy Grace becomes involved, he finds himself up against a malign group of very well organised criminals.

As in Peter James' previous outing for Roy Grace, the plotting here is the thing. James addresses the crime genre as if he had never been away, and although Grace is, to be frank, not strikingly different from any other literary coppers, few people will complain when James' storytelling acumen is as authoritative as it is here.

--Barry Forshaw

Looking Good Dead Details

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From Reader Review Looking Good Dead for online ebook

Jenene says

Another excellent thriller!

GS Nathan says

Quite a good book and I enjoyed reading it. I came across an interview with Peter James in The Hindu and that was what led me to this series. I was expecting though, that the Inspector Grace books would become a must read for me, like Colin Dexter's books starring Inspector Morse. Perhaps an unfair expectation....

The story revolves around a couple who get caught up in an unsavoury snuff video operation run by a group of killers. A bit unreal at times, it felt to me, but who am I to say that? Also the eventual unraveling depended a bit too much on luck and not on solid detection -in that sense, somehow I think the book failed. It is after all the alternate explanation that gets to you. James also seems a bit amateurish in explaining how Grace senses where people are lying and where they are telling the truth; a matter of looking at where the eyes go to. Are these that simple?

Anyway, while I am sure I will pick up more Inspector Grace books to read in the future, I will probably not anticipate them the way perhaps I wanted to.

Bettie? says

The front door of the once-proud terraced house opened, and a long-legged young woman, in a short silk dress that seemed to both cling and float at the same time, stepped out into the fine June sunshine on the last morning of her life.

Not for the faint-hearted yet for all those yucky moments, an eye-scorching read with the lead characters coming along nicely.

Teresa Proença says

Um caso policial arrepiante, pela natureza dos crimes e de quem os comete;
Um polícia carismático, pelas sua fragilidade e crenças;
Uma escrita cativante, que nos prende e empolga.
Gostei muito!

Gary says

2nd book in the Roy Grace series by Peter James.

I love the way Peter James writes, they are so easy to read and the characters are well crafted and the plots well planned. The novel is fast paced and instantly grips you leaving you wanting more. I liked it that much I started the next book in the series immediately.

Richard Kunzmann says

I don't easily get creeped out by books these days. Not any more. Not since **Stephen King's *It*** permanently damaged me as a child, when I was reading it under the bedcovers late at night, torch in one jittery hand, twice frightened that my mother would catch me in the forbidden act of reading "that author with evil in his head."

Did you know, momma, what was in mine?

So it's been a while that I got the willies from a book, which makes me very glad that I picked up a copy of **Peter James's *Looking Good Dead***. It's a brilliant thriller. Here's why.

Tom Bryce, a regular Joe salesman, is sitting on the train from London to Brighton thinking about his wife and kids. And like anyone who's ever had a standard class fair, he's stranded next to a right prick yelling into his mobile phone. So when the guy gets off the train and leaves a CD behind, Tom's not exactly in the mood to play Good Samaritan.

This is where we all collectively yell, "Why oh why, Tom, did ya have to take the CD home?"

That night our dear friend Tom watches a **snuff movie**. Then his computer is hacked and before long he's running scared and fighting for the life of his wife and kids. Never mind his own.

At the same time, **Detective Superintendent Roy Grace** is called out to a gruesome discovery in a field on the same day that he's got a hot date lined up. But what he finds out there opens up old wounds; his own wife disappeared many years ago, and since then he's forever been wondering what happened to her and blaming himself.

This is a **superb thriller** in every sense of the word. Peter James drops us right into the households of every day people. He shows us that they also read the Gruffalo to their kids, watch the **Simpsons**, and then he tears them to shreds, and we're left wondering exactly who this bastard is. James also has a great sense of place, constantly feeding us information about Brighton without overpowering us with needless description. In fact, everything about his writing is precise and to the point. He is as efficient a writer as he is a killer of characters, is Mr James.

I wish I could stop with the laurels there, but his research and deep understanding of the **Brighton Metropolitan Police** shines through, especially in his treatment of cyber crime and modern technologies. Here's another great detail: I love looking out for how authors tie their novels back to the titles. In Peter James's case, when the words "**Looking Good Dead**" are spoken, you don't know if you want to laugh or slam the book shut and run.

A well-rounded novel this: great characters, great plotting, and a story that could become all too real. I'm going to commit sacrilege in the crime-reading world and say I enjoyed this book more than **Michael Connolly's *The Poet***,

Just do me a favour: don't read this under the bedcovers with a torch.

Amanda McGill says

A disappointing second novel in the Roy Grace series.

Tom Bryce is your average Joe commuter. On one typical afternoon coming home from work, the person beside him leaves behind a CD. Unable to catch up with the owner, he takes it home and inserts the CD into his computer. Tom is shocked to see a murder taking place on his computer. Tom and his family are now being threatened by the murderers who made the CD. Can Roy Grace catch them before Tom and his family get killed?

I loved the first book in the series *Dead Simple*, so this novel was a disappointment since it didn't have a lot of the elements from the first novel. I just felt that I was along for the ride, there was nothing that had me shocked or surprised.

I will still read the remaining books in the series, but I will go into them with some hesitation.

Sarah says

Eighth book of my holiday reads.

This is the second book in the series and can easily be read as a stand alone.

I loved the theme of the dark web in this book. A poor unsuspecting bloke picking up a CD of which I could never have imagined what he ends up watching. Down to not just handing it in like any good citizen would do, he puts himself and his family under threat.

I love the bit of romance going on in Graces personal life as well as his working relationship with his colleagues that at times brought some much needed relief to this truly gripping read. Another great read and can't wait to read more in the series.

Simon Taylor says

After a disappointing first outing in 2011, Roy Grace was rested and given another go in this unimproved follow-up.

Grace is in charge of a new investigation which has many of the hallmarks of *Dead Simple*: gratuitous

violence, graphic sex and offensive dialogue. Three characters wet themselves and one defecates, and the murders are simply horrific.

Where some superior writers find their plots meandering into the unpleasant, James appears to take delight from the opportunity to write about gore, smut and paedophilia and shoe horns it in, however unnecessary. Given there is no child abuse in the case at any point, the sheer number of references suggests James has a bee in his bonnet about the issue, or a dark pleasure in alluding to it. The question begged of almost all of the unsavoury content: does this add anything? The answer: usually not.

Supporting characters are given too much page time. A whole chapter is dedicated to the woman who finds the body. A whole chapter about her new part in a musical and all sorts of useless trivia, only for her to never be mentioned again. This isn't characterisation; it's pointless. When he's finished that, we learn everything but the OS coordinates of the exact spot in Brighton where the action is set at that moment, a social profiling going back 20 years and a run down of where's good for a kebab nearby. I'm all for immersive settings, but Rankin's Edinburgh or McBride's Aberdeen this is not.

Elsewhere, when layers of pointless detail isn't being laboured on every extra and setting, James has somehow put together a cast transcending class that nevertheless are united in their anti-Labour, anti-Blair, anti-Iraq views. There are too many references to the then-Blair government to be editorially justified. I want a story, Mr. James, not an agenda.

The exception to the universal thought process is the new character – an un-PC old timer who comes in with no reason other than to give James an opportunity to pour out racist, homophobic bile and then have Grace tell him off. It seems like another excuse to commit the horrible words to page.

The much maligned mediums are back, but don't wreck the book the way they did with *Dead Simple*. Having said that, the climax comes out of nowhere and is not at all satisfying. The various loose ends aren't tied up so much as the author merely states they don't matter any more.

I did enjoy the last line though. It raised a small smile.

A poor excuse for a “snuff book”, fittingly full of dung beetles, and a very definite end to Grace's career on my bookshelf.

Kirsten says

An excellent thriller! A follow-up to *Dead Simple*, it is that rarity a second book that is better than the first. Roy Grace is back and is up against a conspiracy and a high-tech computer crime is involved.

As an avid BBC Radio 4 listener, I chuckled at the character of the Weatherman and his quoting of the Shipping Forecast. Though, I do wonder what non-Beeb listeners would make of that.

This book has a great pace and characters that you can really get behind! Can't wait for book #3.

Abbie | ab_reads says

I read the second instalment of the Roy Grace series *Looking Good Dead* in two breathless sittings! I loved this one even more than *Dead Simple*, it's fast-paced crime thriller action at its best!

We're straight into a grisly new case with Grace and his team, and this one was seriously grim! Crime books often scare me more than horror novels because of the reality of it... the thought of what real people are capable of doing to each other chills me to the bone. Some scenes of this book seriously disturbed me!

I also applaud Peter James for tackling the problem of racism and homophobia in the workplace - but can we please have Roy punch Norman Potting in the next book?! What a DICK. I loved being back with all the old crew though, Cleo and Emma-Jane are my faves!

I love the style of the series, the tone is cheeky and the police procedures are as meticulously researched as ever! Looking forward to reading the rest of the series in time.

a 5 star crime read!

Joe Stamber says

After reading the first in this series *Dead Simple* I commented that Roy Grace is almost impossible to dislike and he endeared himself more to me in *Looking Good Dead*. Sure, he's a bit of a stereotype as far as middle-aged(ish) cops go, but he's just likeable. Grace is aided and abetted by a group of characters who are diverse, well thought out and generally do a good job.

However, as with the previous novel, James also displays his ability to create annoying characters, namely the whole of Tom Bryce's family. Yes, I know they are having a tough time and that two of them are small children! James and the audio narrator really pull out all the stops in making them so irritating that the reader is rooting for their enemies.

Looking Good Dead has a lot of similarities to its predecessor. It's a very entertaining story, with the investigating team chasing wild geese and generally blundering through the case while waiting for a break to help them out. Grace works his socks off but his lack of progress keeps his boss on his back and the papers at his throat.

There are occasional pauses in the excitement so that James can meander off for a while with some random information, background stuff I suppose, but it never detracts from the story. Roy even has time for a little romance, which was a nice reward for his endeavours. With a few coincidences, a slice of luck and the obligatory hint from the medium, the tale draws to a conclusion, leaving the reader and perhaps one or two of the characters feeling pretty satisfied.

Michael says

This was a reread, finding that I had no unread books while I waited for the postman to deliver my last order,

and it was a good reread. it had been too long since I had spent time with Roy Grace which tells me I need to check my Peter James bookmark to determine what the next couple of books are that I haven't read yet.

I like how James shows us the workings of a major crime unit in Brighton and Hove; quite different in many ways from what we're shown for American units. I also like how he takes the time to introduce us to the Brighton and Hove of today and yesterday.

If you haven't read any of James' 'Dead' novels and if you like a good police procedural then I urge you to do yourself a favor and meet Roy Grace

Elisabeth says

I didn't find James' second novel as good as the first novel. I'm very disappointed...

Leftbanker says

Spoilers Ahead

Had this novel been less than 150 pages I could have given it three stars but at 336 pages it's simply horrible. There is so little "story" to this story that it could have been squeezed into a short story or a novella at best. This is quite possibly the worst-paced "thriller" I've ever made it through. If you edited out all of the superfluous trivia you could have read the whole thing in 45 minutes.

Here is the story. A regular Joe finds a DVD on commuter train that gives the user access to a snuff flick website. His computer is almost immediately hacked by the nefarious snuff flickers and they threaten his life if he goes to the police. This is about all that happens for over half of the book with the pages being filled with the mundane and highly tedious details of regular Joe's family life and his horrible wife who is a compulsive eBay shopper. She seems like a complete moron although her husband remarks at one point that she has a lot of wisdom.

The police inspector Roy Grace is an equally tedious individual. There is absolutely no indication that he is any good at his job and the rest of his colleagues seem just as dull.

At one point regular Joe's wife is abducted by the snuff flickers but instead of getting to the fucking point and telling us just what is happening to her we are taken on a rambling and completely idiotic stream-of-consciousness that tells us that Grace's dad liked to build toy boats, that he has a Mars bar and coffee for breakfast, that Norman Potting is dressed well, and something about someone's kid being taken to the zoo.

Instead of copying and pasting some doggerel from the book I'll just write a pastiche.

The police arrive to ask a man about where the killers may be hiding. He asks them if they would like something to drink. He offers them tea but he also has coffee. Or perhaps they would prefer a soft drink? How about some biscuits? Would they care for biscuits?

I wish that I had a nickel for every time I screamed out loud while reading some stupid bit of trivia, "Why

the fuck do I care about this?" There is almost nothing to this book. It begins with a horrible snuff flick although there is no sex involved which seems highly unlikely. I seriously doubt that in this day and age of special effects that there is much call for actually killing someone in a movie meant for sick perverts. We learn almost nothing about this sinister world because so much of the book was dedicated to giving the most tedious details of the lives of regular Joe and family, Roy Grace, and a couple other members of the department.

The whole plot device of the family being kidnapped is stupid and doesn't make a lick of sense. Why in the world would the snuff flickers go after regular Joe? After he had gone to the police they had nothing left to gain and everything to lose.

And how many times did they mention regular Joe's wife and her vodka problem? she's in the hands of snuff flickers who are about to cut her up like a fresh fish and he's worried about her drinking? This was beyond stupid.
