

Long Shadows

Sometimes the past just won't stay buried...

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

IT'S BEEN SAID that bad deeds cast long shadows. In New York City in 1922, a five-year-old boy is awakened by footsteps in the house in the middle of the night. Several strangers enter his room and ask which room is his father's. Terrified, he tells them. In the minutes that follow the boy hears screams from his parent's bedroom, then pleading, followed by gunshots and finally silence.

In the weeks that follow the boy and his sister are about to leave New York by steamer, accompanied by their aunt and bound for the family's Irish homeland, when a messenger hands the boy a package. Inside he discovers a small revolver, a pocket watch, and a folded page from a newspaper account describing the murder of his mother and his father's disappearance. The children's father, Brendan Daly, had been vying for control of an Irish group of criminals known as the White Hand Gang. In the margin of the paper are written four names and twelve numbers. Before the messenger can be questioned about the

package he disappears into the crowd.



NINETY YEARS PASS, and the world has moved on – or has it? In New York, the men who had killed his mother and kidnapped his father have never been found. In Brighton, England, the boy, Gavin Daly, now a wealthy ninety-five year old antiques dealer and collector, visits his older sister Aileen in the Intensive Care Unit of a

Sussex Hospital. She has been brutally tortured and left for dead, her home ransacked of valuable possessions that her brother had spent a lifetime acquiring. One of the stolen objects is a watch – more specifically an antique Philippe Patik pocket watch, extremely rare and worth millions. More importantly, it was their father's watch, returned to Gavin and his sister on the deck of the steamship so many years ago.

And Gavin wants it back.

Detective Superintendent Roy Grace is assigned the case, and the savage attack on the elderly woman has him thirsting for a result. Slowly but surely he makes progress in identifying the perpetrators, but Grace realizes he is not alone in his quest: Gavin Daly has his own agenda, and the wealth to make it happen. Their paths are bound to converge, but with very different ends in mind.

UNKNOWN TO GRACE, there is also a long shadow falling over his personal life. A man he helped put in prison twelve years ago has recently been released, and is nursing a king-sized grudge against the detective. His life has fallen apart, and he wants Grace to suffer a similar fate, though he hasn't yet decided the details. When he tracks Grace down and finds that the

detective and his partner Cleo have an infant newborn, the answer – a terrible, twisted one – lies in front of him.

And yet another shadow looms over Grace, as we learn more about his ex-wife Sandy, who disappeared ten years earlier. Having had no success in tracking her down, and finally finding happiness in his relationship with Cleo, Grace has recently successfully petitioned the courts to have Sandy declared legally dead so he could remarry.

Only she might be very much alive.

Peter James is one of the most accomplished thriller writers alive today. He never takes the easy road by peppering his tales with gratuitous violence or hackneyed melodrama, relying instead on deftly combing multiple converging plotlines, always buttressed by detailed and well-researched accounts of police procedure to sustain the suspense. His debut novel in the Roy Grace series, *Dead Simple*, is a paradigm of a superbly-conceived, perfectly executed thriller, and in *Dead Man's Time* James showcases his ability to reach across generations and continents and produce an original and utterly engrossing tale.

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Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetingler*, *The Rap Sheet*, *Shots Magazine*, *Crime Time*, *Reviewing The Evidence*, *January* magazine, and the *Montreal Review of Books*, as well as on his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com

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