



RAPID READS

ADVANCE READING COPY

JAMES
HENEGHAN

FIT
TO
KILL

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RAVEN BOOKS

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For Lucy

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To Come

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Summary: A journalist finds himself in the midst of the hunt for a brutal serial killer who is murdering women in Vancouver's West End. (RL 5.0)



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CHAPTER ONE

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Vancouver's Stanley Park peninsula hunched its granite shoulders against an early November storm. Relentless rain and gale-force winds howled in from the ocean. West Enders knew that something terrible was going to happen. They stayed indoors and waited anxiously.

Julie Dagg was an exception. Nothing could make her stay home and miss her workouts. Twenty-five years old, she watched what she ate and kept herself slim and fit with regular workouts. Tuesdays and Thursdays

she practiced yoga and self-defense for two hours at the Tae Kwon Do Academy on Robson Street. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays she grunted and sweated through weight training and cardio for an hour at the West End Fitness Center on Denman.

Tonight she'd worked mostly with free weights and was now finishing off with twenty minutes of cardio on the stationary bicycle.

Life was good. An hour or two each day was all it took. Stay fit, look great, live longer.

The gym, almost empty tonight because of the foul weather, would be closing soon, at 10:00 PM. Time to go home. Sauna first, then a quick shower. Her roommate Billie would be waiting for her with a nightcap. A career nurse at St. Paul's Hospital, Billie was a lot of fun to live with. Before turning in they would watch tv together for a while. Or they might talk again about their plans for next summer's hiking vacation

in Umbria. It would be Julie's first trip to Italy. She was looking forward to it. An image from one of Billie's travel brochures popped into her head. A terraced vineyard under the golden light of an Umbrian sunset. Julie sighed happily.

Peeling off her Lycra exercise togs in the changeroom was like shedding a skin. She relaxed in the sauna, then showered and toweled herself dry. She pulled on her warm tracksuit and raincoat and headed out onto a deserted Denman Street, gym bag swinging by her side.

She crossed the street, almost blown off her feet in the gusting wind. Traffic lights bounced and screeched on their overhead cables.

A man stood well back in the darkness of the Royal Bank doorway watching her.

Julie hurried through the rain. Her apartment was only a few blocks away, near Stanley Park. When she reached the mini-park and Pearl's Restaurant—closed

Mondays—she heard heavy footsteps behind her and quickened her pace.

The footsteps came closer. She turned her head and saw a man in a dark raincoat. She dropped her gym bag and ran.

The man ran after her.

Heart thumping with fear, she whirled around as he reached out to grab her. She ducked her head and moved into him fast. Hard kick. Knee in his crotch. Like the Tae Kwon Do Academy had taught her. He bent, gasping with pain. But he recovered before Julie could jab her apartment key in his eye.

With a cry, he hurled himself at her, looping an arm around her neck and cutting off her air. She kicked and struggled. But it was no good—he was too strong.

He dragged her into the bushes of the mini-park.

Terrified, heart bursting, Julie was forced down onto the ground. She couldn't cry out or scream, for the arm locked round her neck was like an iron bar. He wound

something—duct tape—around her head, sealing her mouth shut. Then he jerked her arms behind her back and snapped handcuffs onto her wrists.

She could hardly breathe. He ripped away her clothing and pressed her body into the wet earth and dead leaves. Then he heaved and gasped above her and spilled words in her ears.

All she knew before she died was the sound of his voice, the scream of the wind and the cold wet earth.