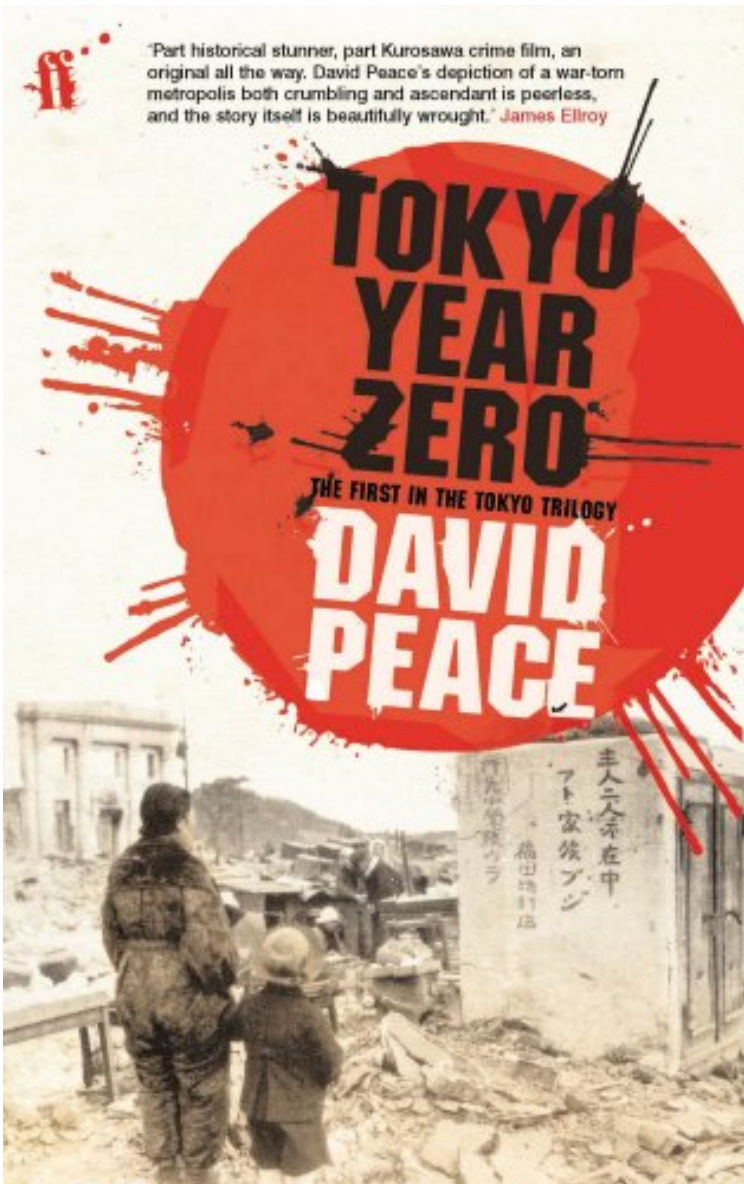


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# Tokyo Year Zero



*Par David Peace*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur August 1946. One year on from surrender and Tokyo lies broken and bleeding at the feet of its American victors. Against this extraordinary historical backdrop, Tokyo Year Zero opens with the discovery of the bodies of two young women in Shiba Park. Against his wishes, Detective Minami is assigned to the case, and as he gets drawn ever deeper into these complex and horrific murders, he realises that his own past and secrets are indelibly linked to those of the dead women and their killer..co.uk Tokyo Year Zero is further proof that David Peace is now one of the most ambitious and accomplished novelists of the modern era -- in any genre. He has always been an innovator, forging a striking synthesis between Noir

crime writing and Yorkshire realism. Nineteen Seventy-Four was a visceral and atmospheric novel set in the year of the Silver Jubilee, with the Yorkshire Ripper at his sanguinary work. This book was the second of the Riding Quartet, and demonstrated what readers had come to expect -- a totally individual voice, with the characters (such as past-his-best journalist Jack Whitehead) memorably drawn. Tokyo Year Zero, Peace's new novel, is another adroit synthesis, this time between the sprawling historical novel and the gritty crime genre. The author's picture of a city at war (the year is 1946) rivals that of any modern novelist in vividness and authenticity. It is one year on from the surrender, and Tokyo is struggling to maintain its pride after the American victory that destroyed its imperialist ambitions. The police force barely functions, and a variety of unpleasant individuals struggle for supremacy in Tokyo's thriving black market. Peace's protagonist, Detective Minami, is assigned a difficult case: the bodies of two women are found in Sheba Park, but as he begins to dig beneath the surface of an increasingly baffling and complex mystery, Minami finds (to his dismay) that his personal past -- and personal secrets -- are somehow involved with the murderer and his savage killings. This first book in the Tokyo trilogy is as surprising and idiosyncratic an offering as we have come to expect from David Peace, and it's a safe bet that readers will be impatient for the remaining books in the sequence. --Barry Forshaw

Extrait

The fifteenth day of the eighth month of the twentieth year of Showa

Tokyo, 90, fine

Detective Minami! Detective Minami! Detective Minami!

I open my eyes. From dreams that are not my own. I sit up in my chair at my desk. Dreams I do not want. My collar is wet and my whole suit damp. My hair itches. My skin itches

Detective Minami! Detective Minami!

Detective Nishi is taking down the blackout curtains, bright warm shafts of dawn and dust filling the office as the sun rises up beyond the tape-crossed windows

Detective Minami!

Did you just say something? I ask Nishi

Nishi shakes his head. Nishi says, No. I stare up at the ceiling. Nothing moves in the bright light. The fans have stopped. No electricity. The telephones silent. No lines. The toilets blocked. No water. Nothing

Kumagaya was hit during the night, says Nishi. There are reports of gunfire from the Palace

I didnt dream it, then?

I take out my handkerchief. It is old and it is dirty. I wipe my neck again. Then I wipe my face. Now I check my pockets

They are handing out potassium cyanide to the women, the children and the aged, saying this latest cabinet reshuffle foretells the end of the war, the end of Japan, the end of the world

Nishi holds up a small box and asks, You looking for these?

I snatch the box of Muroal out of his hands. I check the contents. Enough. I stuff the box back into my jacket pocket

The sirens and the warnings all through the night; Tokyo hot and dark, hidden and cowed; night and day, rumours of new weapons, fears of new bombs; first Hiroshima, then Nagasaki, next is Tokyo

Bombs that mean the end of Japan, the end of the world

No sleep. Only dreams. No sleep. Only dreams

Night and day, this is why I take these pills

This is what I tell myself, night and day

They were on the floor, says Nishi

I nod. I ask, You got a cigarette?

Nishi shakes his head. I curse him. There are five more days until the next special ration. Five more days

The office door swings open

Detective Fujita storms into the room. Detective Fujita has a Police Bulletin in his hand. Fujita says, Sorry, more bad news

He tosses the bulletin onto my desk. Nishi picks it up

Nishi is young. Nishi is keen. Too young

Its from the Shinagawa police station, he says, and reads: Body discovered in suspicious circumstances at the Womens Dormitory Building of the Dai-Ichi Naval Clothing Department

Just a moment, I tell him. Surely anything to do with the Naval Clothing Department falls under the jurisdiction of the Kempeitai?

This is a case for the military police, not civilian

I know, says Fujita. But Shinagawa are requesting Murder Squad detectives. Like I say, Im really sorry I pulled it

No one wants a case. Not today. Not now

I get up from my desk. I grab my hat

Come on, I tell Fujita and Nishi. Well find someone else. Well dump the case. Just watch me

I go out of our room and down the main hallway of the First Investigative Division of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department; down Police Arcade, room to room, office to office, door to door

Door to door. No one. Office to office. No one. Room to room. No one. Everyone evacuated or absent

No one wants a case. Not today

Just Fujita, Nishi and me now

I curse. I curse. I curse

I stand in the corridor. I ask Nishi, Wheres Chief Kita?

All chiefs were summoned to a meeting at 7 a.m.

I take out my pocket watch. Its already past eight

7 a.m.? I repeat. Maybe today is the day then?

Didnt you hear the nine oclock news last night? he asks. Theres to be an Imperial broadcast at noon today

I eat acorns. I eat leaves. I eat weeds

A broadcast about what? I ask

I dont know, but the entire nation has been instructed to find a radio so that they can listen to it

Today is the day then, I say. People return to your homes! Kill your children! Kill your wives! Then kill yourself!

No, no, no, says Nishi

Too young. Too keen

If were going to go, interrupts Fujita, lets at least go via Shimbashi and get some cigarettes

Thats a very good idea, I say. No cars for us, anyway

Lets take the Yamate Line round to Shinagawa, he says. Take our time, walk slowly and hope were too late

If the Yamate Line is even running, I remind him

Like I say, says Fujita again. Take our

time. Detective Fujita, Nishi and I walk down the stairs, through the doors, and leave Headquarters by the back way, on the side of the building that faces away from the grounds of the Imperial Palace That looks out on the ruins of the Ministry of Justice. The shortest route to Shimbashi from Sakuradamon is through the Hibiya Park, through this park that is now no park Black winter trees in the white summer heat Even if we are routed in battle, Nishi is saying, the mountains and the rivers remain. The people remain Plinths without statues, posts with no gates The hero Kusunoki pledged to live and die seven times in order to save Japan, he states. We can do no less No foliage. No bushes. No grass now We must fight on, he urges. Even if we have to chew the grass, eat the earth and live in the fields Just stark black winter trees With our broken swords and our exhausted arrows, I say. Our hearts burnt by fire, eaten by tears In the white summer heat Nishi smiling, Exactly The white heat Nishi in one ear and now the harsh noise of martial music from a sound-truck in the other as we leave the park that is no park, down streets that are no streets, past buildings that are no buildings Oh so bravely, off to Victory / Insofar as we have vowed and left our land behind Buildings of which nothing remains but their front walls; now only sky where their windows and their ceilings should be Who can die without first having shown his true mettle / Each time I hear the bugles of our advancing army The dates on which these buildings ceased to be buildings witnessed in the height of the weeds that sprout here and there among the black mountains of shattered brick I close my eyes and see wave upon wave of flags cheering us into battle The shattered brick, the lone chimneys and the metal safes that crashed down through the floors as these buildings went up in flames, night after night The earth and its flora burn in flames / As we endlessly part the plains Night after night, from the eleventh month of last year, siren after siren, bomb after bomb Helmets emblazoned with the Rising Sun / And, stroking the mane of our horses Bomb after bomb, fire after fire, building after building, neighbourhood after neighbourhood until there are no buildings, there are no neighbourhoods and there is no city, no Tokyo Who knows what tomorrow will bring life? Only the survivors now Or death in battle? Hiding under the rubble, living among the ruins, three or four families to a shack of rusted iron and salvaged wood, or in the railway or the subway stations The lucky ones We must fight on, repeats Detective Nishi. For if we do not fight on, the Emperor himself will be executed and the women of Japan will be subjected to methodical rape so that the next Japanese will not be Japanese I curse him Beneath telegraph poles that stand as grave markers, down these streets that are no streets, we walk as Nishi rants on In the mountains of Nagano, we shall make our final stand; on Maizuruyama, on Minakamiyama, on Zozan! There are people on these streets that are no streets now, people that are no people; exhausted ghosts in early morning queues, bitter-enders waiting for lunches outside hodge-podge dining halls in old movie theatres, their posters replaced by slogans We Are All Soldiers on the Home Front The sound-truck has gone and with it that song we have heard every day for the last seven years, Roei no Uta Just the noise of Nishi's voice now Every man under sixty-five, every woman under forty-five will take up a bamboo spear ...