



## Dead Lines: Hell Is on Speed Dial . . .

*Greg Bear*

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**Dead Lines: Hell Is on Speed Dial . . .** Greg Bear

**From a *New York Times*–bestselling author: A new kind of phone awakens the dead in this technological horror novel “reminiscent of Koontz at his best” (*Booklist*).**

Ever since his life was shattered by the kidnapping and murder of his young daughter, Peter Russell has become a ghost of a man. Once a successful director of adult films, he has been reduced to running questionable errands for an eccentric California millionaire. But everything changes when a Los Angeles start-up offers him the opportunity to create promotional videos for their revolutionary new technology, Trans. The product offers exceptionally powerful, crystal-clear mobile communication that can operate anywhere and everywhere—and Peter sets out to put it into every palm.

But as he uses the device himself, he starts to see his murdered little girl . . .

Soon, there are other voices—disembodied, confused, angry—emanating from a newly invaded dimension. Many are even malevolent . . . and hungry . . . and deadly. As the death toll of Trans-users skyrockets, Peter’s life begins a new spiral downward. Now, he must race to make sense of the horror Trans has wrought before the gateway to Hell bursts wide open.

With *Dead Lines*, author of the Eon series Greg Bear transforms the literary realm of Dean Koontz, Peter Straub, and Stephen King into something unique by ingeniously blending the speculative with the supernatural. You’ll never look at your phone the same way again.

### Dead Lines: Hell Is on Speed Dial . . . Details

Date : Published August 22nd 2017 by Open Road Media Sci-Fi & Fantasy (first published 2001)

ISBN :

Author : Greg Bear

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## From Reader Review Dead Lines: Hell Is on Speed Dial . . . for online ebook

### Smart says

This book was so good! Ghosts are my favorite and this was a really great book! Read this and you won't regret it!

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### Aly says

I have mixed feeling about this book. It is written more with a guy audience in mind, I think, from the porn aspect. I didn't really like any of the characters in the book and for me the book was hard to follow. \* I received a copy of the book free from NetGalley and this is my honest review\*

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### tENTATIVELY, cONVENIENCE says

review of  
Greg Bear's Dead Lines  
by tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE - December 4, 2017

Greg Bear's Quantic followed this one. In my review of *that* I wrote:

"Ok, I've previously drawn parallels between Greg Bear's "Blood Music" & Michael Crichton's "Prey" that were unflattering to Crichton (see <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34...>) & then I HATED Crichton's "State of Fear" (see <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/15...>). SO, I credited Bear w/ being original & discredited Crichton w/ being a paltry 2nd (or 3rd or whatever). THEN Bear writes this - a novel not that dissimilar from Crichton's "State of Fear" but coming out a yr or 2 later." - <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1...>

The reason why I start this review off this way is because Dead Lines, as the predecessor of Quantic, puts Quantic somewhat in perspective. I speculate (does that makes this SR instead of SF? Speculative Reviewing?) that *Bear was trying to make more money by writing in established popular genres*. Who knows? Maybe everyone in his family had flesh-eating disease & the bubonic plague, I mean he might've been desperate for money.

Dead Lines has a list of writers that it's "FOR":

*J. Sheridan Fanu.*  
*Henry James.*  
*M. R. James.*  
*Arthur Machen.*  
*H. P. Lovecraft.*  
*Shirley Jackson.*  
*Fritz Leiber.*  
*Richard Matheson,*

Kingsley Amis.  
Peter Straub.  
Bruce Joel Rubin.  
Ramsey Campbell.  
Dean Koontz.  
Stephen King.  
Clive Barker.

*Scary people, all.*" - p vii

I've heard of most of those authors, some of them are popular horror writers, others a bit more ambiguous. I read an entire Dean Koontz novel & found it to be a bit predictable in its chain-pulling, I read one Stephen King short story & have never had the desire to read anything else by him since - although I've seen more movies based on his bks than even a hypnotist cd ferret out. I don't think of either authors as being worth emulating *but*, having worked in the bkstore biz for 8 yrs, I can say that King was *the most popular writer I've ever known of* so if you want to make money that's apparently the way to go, or the road to hoe, or the road to ho.

&, heck'a'goshen!, King even endorses Dead Lines on the back cover: "A REALLY EXCELLENT NOVEL". I hope he didn't think too hard about that.

Bear, even at his worst, wch is what I'd say Dead Lines is, still has interesting ideas that put his stories a notch above the furthest my belt can stretch. In this case, a new post-cell-phone technology taps into some unexpected places. The pre-story flash-forward (of sorts) hints at the ambitious plot:

*"We were all there in that city that draws its paycheck from the manufacture of ghosts. We were there when one man started handing out free talk. And we are there now, sad little dolls made of dust."* - p 1

Ain't it the truth. But what is all this 'free talk' stuff I've been hearing about? Is it like 'Freedom Fries'?

""If you take the damned thing, turn it off while you're here/"

""They don't turn off," the young man explained to Peter, drawing closer. His wide blue eyes assessed Peter's character and the size of his wallet. "You can turn the ringer down, however."

"Peter smiled as if at a half-heard joke. "What is it?" he asked.

""Free talk," Joseph said. "But it doesn't work.["]" - p 12

That's b/c *freedom isn't free*. It is on sale this wk only tho. Buy 2 get 1 free. Unfortunately, all 3 of them are ghosts:

"With Baslan out of the doorway, Peter had a clear view through an arch to the dining room, about thirty feet from the porch. A little boy in a frilled shirt and knee stockings stood there. He looked sick; not sick, dead; worse than dead, unraveling. His face turned in Peter's direction, skin as pale and cold as skim milk. The head seemed jointed like a doll's. The grayish eyes saw right through him, and suddenly the outline blurred, precisely as if the boy had fallen out of focus in a camera viewfinder." - pp 35-36

Oh, he probably just came back from the dr's. You know what I say: A highwayman said: "Your money or your life!", a dr just thinks: "Your money & *then* you life." Business is business. Maybe the dr just gave him a steroid shot in the hip. The next thing you know, a mere 23 pp later, you're seeing *another* ghost:

"Through his tears, he saw that the woman's face was like a flat sheet of mother-of-pearl. Her eyes opened to quizzical hollows. Less than solid, she resembled a paper doll frayed by careless snipping. Peter could actually see her edges ripple." - pp 59-60

If I don't write something here before I move on to the next quote it'll seem that the ghost above is the "she". The wd be funny but I've decided against misleading YOU, dear reader, in that way.

"She introduced the guests to Peter. Two he had met long ago, writers from a group Phil had belonged to for almost thirty years, the Mysterians." - p 69

Now, maybe that's a take-off of "The Futurians", an early-to-mid 20th century SF group. Or maybe Peter's the question-mark. Get it? Question Mark & the Mysterians? HahahAHahahA.. Another good touch is to have Peter be a former sexploitation Psychotronic moviemaker a little down on his luck:

"["]Out of the onetime slammer comes a promo campaign headed by Peter Russell, the edgiest sexploitation director ever." Weinstein's face grew serious. "And to be honest, Russ Meyer turned us down. But then he suggested you, one Russell to another." - p 101

The clues fall into place like glue traps raining from heck:

"["]In less than twenty years, world will run out of bandwidth. Radio, TV, cell phones, wireless, all will halt screeching growth." He smiled. "But world's problem is solvable, I have solved it."

"Kreiser rose and started to move his arms, slowly at first, then describing large arcs. No need for waves, for radiation. I discover new source of bandwidth, forbidden information channels, not truly radiation at all, unknown until now. Channels in what I call Bell continuum" - p 105

I call it the "Taco Bell Continuum" but it's basically the same thing.

""Like cell phones, Trans units always tie into network. They are always on. What is more remarkable, as they work, they actually change surrounding space, perhaps permanently. They alter information permittivity." - p 107

Hence, Free Love.

""Yes, but we use term as a metaphor," Kreiser said. "A capacitor stores up charge. Space stores up information, but over time, it fades, dissipates. When Trans accesses the forbidden channels, she increases space's permittivity. Information does not fade, but builds up until it jumps like a spark.["]" - p107

It's like when you go to hug someone & you get shocked by static electricity & the next thing you know their whole life story flashes in front of you & you realize they're a serial killer & they know that you know & they stab you to death. Happens all the time.

As a (non-Psychotronic) moviemaker myself I appreciated this next bit:

""I presume I'm going to shoot HD video," he continued, his tongue gluey. "I've never used a Betacam, or whatever it is now. I'd like to see some of the equipment, just to know what to rent."

Karl shrugged. "Hell, with what's in Circuit City right now, you might as well buy. Only cost you a couple of grand for something pretty terrific."

"Peter shook his head. "This is professional, Karl."

""That's what I'm *saying*, Peter. Something the size of your hand, locked onto a hundred-dollar tripod, will give you great results. What kind of budget?"" - p 142

A "couple of grand"?! **Pshaw!** I use a \$35 'sports' camera bought at another famous chain store & I'm the best moviemaker in the world!

"Peter stopped at an old pay phone near an Asian grocery, one of the last pay phones in Los Angeles—they were being dismantled everywhere. Everyone was going wireless." - p 231

True dat. The reader reading this might not even *remember* pay phones. They were the things that rival drug dealers pissed on the mouthpieces of.

& that, gentle wo(men), concludes today's PowerPoint on sails.

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## **Taylor Bright says**

Thank to Netgalley and the publisher for giving me this ebook to review!  
Actual rating 2.5 stars.

I had such high hopes for this novel. It was one that really caught my attention and I was thrilled when I received it. The plot just didn't click with me and the characters, especially our MC, were just too bland and two dimensional.  
I forced myself to read until the ending and I was just all around underwhelmed by everything that happened. As someone who loves horror and is just dipping into Sci-Fi, this one left me upset by the lack of substance it brought.  
The only reason it's a 2.5 is because the concept is one that is very interesting to me, it just didn't get executed to my liking.

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## **Bonnye Reed says**

G Nab I received a free electronic copy of this novel from Netgalley, Greg Bear, and Open Road Integrated Media in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for sharing your hard work with me. This book was originally published by Ballantine Books in 2004.

I am always tickled when I run across a Greg Bear novel - and am thrilled to see them being re-issued. Thank you, Open Road Integrated Media, for keeping the oldie's but goodies accessible.  
This is not a Bear tale that I had run across before. I can tell you that it is massively scary and a good bit funny, if you can laugh at yourself successfully. We only look old on the outside, us boomer babies. Well, except for Michelle, but she had a deal going with the devil, I think. No one should look that good pushing 60. I promise you that you will look at your convenient cell phone in a much different way in about 5 hours read time, and nothing about this tale is dated.  
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orig pub Ballantine Books 2004  
Open Road Integrated Media

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## **Toni Boughton says**

I haven't liked everything by Greg Bear, but I know I'm always going to get something interesting when I read one of his books. Unfortunately, while 'Dead Lines' quickly ramps up the spine-chilling suspense and increasing sense of weird things happening, the denouement came out of nowhere. It seemed weird to introduce the 'bad guy' right at the end, with no other real mention or hint of it before. It threw me off, quite frankly, and kicked me out of the story.

Worth a read, but be prepared to weather some inconsistencies. Also, be aware that this is a re-release of a book previously published in 2005.

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## **Benjamin Stahl says**

Reading this crap was similar to waking up with a hangover and moping around the house wanting to have a wank but not being able to get hard. I just couldn't get settled into the story - it was all over the place and lacked any depth or realism whatsoever. Clearly, Greg Bear had little idea where he wanted this story to go because through the ramblings of some three-hundred pages, the story doesn't go anywhere. Things that are meant to be creepy but aren't, just seem to happen. They have no relevance to anything, and the character merely drifts through them with little thought or interpretation. The climax is over the top, and has no solid groundwork, thus instead of being able to make sense of the author's vague and chaotic descriptions, you find yourself wondering why the hell it is happening in the first place. This book - though not the worst thing I've read - was still terrible...

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## **Cheryl says**

"A ghost is a role without an actor."

This is a re-publication of this book that was originally published in 2004. I am glad that it is being re-introduced to readers.

I buy quite a few of Greg Bear's books because the book summaries always sound so good (whoever writes his summaries deserves a raise). And then I end up usually being disappointed - always forgetting that hard science fiction is not my cup of tea. But not this time. This book is exceptionally good. BUT it's not hard sci fi so that's probably the key.

Peter Russell is 58 years old. He used to direct soft porn movies, has tried rather unsuccessfully being a writer and also failed as a husband. He has been doing errands for his millionaire neighbors for quite a few years. But life has dumped a load of bad happenings on him over the last couple of years and when he's offered a job with a start-up tech company, he needs the money and the distraction. But his troubles are far from over.

The book I always hold up as my standard for spooky stories is GHOST STORY by Peter Straub. I loved that book and periodically re-read it. But I liked this book - a lot. It is a creepy "what if" tale that had me turning on lights to chase away the shadows in the corners of the room. I liked protagonist Russell. I liked the pacing of the story. Don't go into it expecting explanations of some of the happenings. Just relax and prepare to be disturbed.

I received this book from Open Road Media through Net Galley in exchange for my unbiased review.

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## Mert says

Mix of sci fi and horror.

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## Pat Cummings says

For those who would dine on old, dead dreams of glory, Hollywood is always willing to set a place at the table. In his house in the Glendale Hills, Peter Russell has been dining for years on his defunct dream.

A one-time creator of “nudie films” and Playboy cartoons, he planned novels, plays, short stories that somehow never were completed. Peter’s creative stream was first diverted by the easy sex of his heyday, and then dammed up by the murder of one of his twin daughters.

Now he retains just enough charm to get by. He provides the likable “face” of business for a misanthropic millionaire, and charms the trophy wife of his employer, his remaining daughter, and just about every woman he meets (except his ex-wife). And even though he is not in the movie business anymore, he does still have connections.

Those connections bring him an innovative new cell phone, a hefty commission check, and an exciting chance to get back in the game. He will create a complete marketing campaign for the Trans, an eerily clear communication device that, according to the inventor, taps into a space “below our world, lower than networks used by atoms or subatomic particles, to where it is very quiet.”

What if some of the things you see every day aren’t really there? What if they just look normal? You seldom compare notes with anybody, do you? You don’t bring along a video camera and record every minute of your daily life to see what you might have seen that wasn’t there after all.

Even as he dreams of revived glory, the spirit of Rod Serling is waiting to detour him into nightmare. Peter’s “signpost up ahead” is a phone call to let him know his best friend is dead. After that call, his life becomes more like a *Twilight Zone* episode with each passing day. His dead daughter, his deceased friend, and a host of other “ghosts”, living and not, begin to haunt his life.

Peter’s efforts to understand these things take him from one memorable extreme to another: he consults a charismatic psychic, takes a funereal road-trip to San Francisco to dump his friend’s ashes in the sea, and visits a famous prison-turned-office bloc where the death chamber is now the server room for a telecommunications startup. Phone calls from Prague and an invisible chess opponent come to seem equally mundane in Peter’s new world, as the tale moves in increments from creepy understanding to real horror, ending in a crashing climax of fire and discovery.

Greg Bear’s *Dead Lines* is truly spooky, in the way ghost stories seldom are after we enter our cynical middle years. Peter, like most of Bear’s readers, does not believe in psychics, ghosts or paranormal powers. He may not be happy, but at least he is content with his life and himself. The power of Bear’s story is that we understand how Peter loses both that easy contentment and his disbelief.

We travel with him on his downhill path to the queasy realization that Hamlet was right. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophies. And if we're lucky, none of them have our cell phone numbers.

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### **Jeanne Pocius Dorismond says**

#### **Remarkable**

I enjoy Stephen King and Dean Koontz, perhaps best of all the current sages of horror fiction, mostly because they are not afraid to address the spiritual aspects of fear...Now I must add Greg Bear to that mighty duo. This book is haunting, in so many good ways that to begin to list them will delay you from delving into the book sooner. Do yourself a favor and read this book, then let me know what you think. A+ Bravo

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### **Tracy says**

Interesting storyline, but not engrossing

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### **Lisa Cleveland says**

Peter, Peter, Peter. I guess I don't understand the bad and mediocre reviews for this book. I thought it was great. Maybe it worked so well for me because I've not read any Greg Bear books. I'm not big on sci-fi, but I do love the scary stuff. This wasn't horror, but it was a ghost story, of sorts. Truth is, it gave me a big dose of the wollygaggins! Which is an odd way of saying that occasionally my hair was standing straight up, noises were heart attacks just waiting to happen, and shadows seemed to dance around. For me, the whole book was moody, and that's what I like in a ghost story. In this case GHOSTS story. Peter was at times difficult to like, but very easy to love. That ending was kind of incredible. I was smiling and teary eyed too. All in all a darn good story, and one I'd recommend to folk who like an off beat murder/ghosts story. My thanks to the publishers and Netgalley for the free e-book.

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### **Thom says**

The blurb on the author's site is a sparse "A high tech ghost story..."

The main character is pushed around by the plot, by the other characters, and eventually by ghosts as well. A lot of the story is learning how he is going to react next.

While science-fiction-ish, the mechanism behind these new phones is not explained terribly well. "Deeper than atoms" or something like that. So it's not great sci-fi, and I didn't find it particularly great horror either.

I listened to the book as read by Jason Culp. He did a pretty good job with the main character and the narrative, but some of the supporting cast - especially the women - were not the best.

I'll stick with Greg Bear for science fiction, but will likely give his future horror titles a pass.

## **Plum-crazy says**

Not really the horror tale I was expecting/hoping for...more of a supernatural mystery.

While the initial idea of this book sounds good it doesn't really fulfil it's potential. By the end of the book I found myself flicking back to conversations & situations to see if I'd missed something as the continuity didn't seem to be there & I was finding it muddling. I'm therefore left with too many unresolved questions for my liking....ah, well....

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