



Already Dead

Jaye Ford

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***Already Dead* is another heart-stopping ride of sheer suspense from the author of the bestselling *Beyond Fear*.**

Miranda shrank away from him, arm pressed to the driver's door. 'What's your name?'
'I'm already dead. That's my name now. That's what they called me. I'm Already Dead.'

Journalist Miranda Jack is finally attempting to move on from the death of her husband by relocating up the coast with her young daughter, Zoe. Then a single event changes everything.

On a Monday afternoon as she waits at traffic lights, a stranger jumps into her car and points a gun at her chest.

Forced to drive at high speed up the motorway, Miranda listens to the frantic, paranoid rants of Brendan Walsh, a man who claims he's being chased and that they're both now running for their lives.

Two hours later her ordeal is over in the most shocking fashion. Miranda is safe but she can't simply walk away – not without knowing the truth about that terrifying drive.

As a journalist Miranda has always asked questions. But this time the questions are dangerous – and the answers might get her killed . . .

Already Dead Details

Date : Published September 1st 2014 by Random House Australia

ISBN :

Author : Jaye Ford

Format : Paperback 480 pages

Genre : Thriller, Mystery, Crime, Suspense, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review Already Dead for online ebook

??Jülie ? says

If you are looking for a good suspenseful thriller to settle down with, then look no further than Already Dead by Jaye Ford.

This book wastes no time getting into the nitty gritty and suspense...

After the sudden and inexplicable death of her husband one year ago, and still struggling with too many unanswered questions, Miranda Jack is moving on...literally.

She has packed the last of her things into her car and is leaving Sydney behind, heading off to join her five year old daughter who is already staying in her new home with Miranda's aunt Tilly in a suburb of Newcastle, north of Sydney.

Miranda's aunt Tilly lives on her own in a house that has become too large for one person, so she has invited Miranda, or Jax as she is known to friends, to come and live with her until she finds her feet. They are moving into the downstairs self contained half of Tilly's beautiful home near the beach.

After handing her keys in to the agent, Jax is now sitting in traffic, waiting for the lights to change to green at the intersection that will take her onto the motorway out of Sydney and northward to her new home...her new life...when the front passenger door was pulled open and a man climbed in and pointed a gun at her, screaming at her to drive! This was no joke, the man was clearly distressed and seemingly panic stricken.

Buckle up for a ride to remember as Jax is forced to turn onto the motorway and onto a road she knew would offer few, if any, chances of escape, at least for the next couple of hours.

This was my first Jaye Ford read and it left me wondering how I haven't read more of her books, it was compelling reading to the end.

I can wholly recommend this as a great suspenseful thriller, and will definitely read more of her books myself.

Thanks to NetGalley and Random House for my copy to read and review.

4★s

MaryG2E says

I am a big fan of Jaye Ford and her tense psychological thrillers set in the Newcastle area of Australia. She writes with style, clarity and skill, making her books hard to put down once you are engaged with the story. I regret to say that I had a bit of difficulty engaging with the lead character in this current offering, Already Dead. I thought the premise was very clever, and I was well-disposed to get sucked right into the edginess and suspense at which Ford excels. By about one third of the way through, I felt that the tenor of the story lacked harmony, and so the tale did not grab me as readily as her other offerings.

Miranda (Jax) Jack, is a 35yo widow, ex-journalist, and mother of 6yo Zoe. At the opening of the story,

while in the process of moving from Sydney to a new home with her aunt Tilda in Newcastle, Jax is car-jacked by Brendan Walsh at gunpoint. She endures a terrifying couple of hours in the car on the M1, while Brendan spins out of control. Once her ordeal is over, she is left to tell the investigating police what happened, and to fulfil a promise she made to Brendan. The rest of my review is hidden behind a spoiler alert.

(view spoiler)

Having said that, *Already Dead* is a well-written and tense psychological thriller. I found the first section, the car-jacking, to be heart-in-the-mouth reading. Ford is at her best when describing the minutiae of a dangerous situation in excruciating detail. Though not her best book in my opinion, it was still an entertaining read.

3.5★s

Simone says

Over the past five years Jaye Ford has become Australia's first lady of the psychological thriller and she certainly doesn't disappoint in her latest novel *Already Dead*.

Miranda Jack (Jax) has had a rough year following the death of her journalist husband Nick. Needing to get some stability back in her life for both her own sanity and the wellbeing of her daughter Zoe, Jax is moving from Sydney to Newcastle to live with her Aunt Tilda. Yet just as she is about to hit the road north a random, terrifying incident sends her life into a frightening new trajectory.

Carjacked by a man who is clearly in the throes of great mental anguish, Jax cannot believe how alone she feels on the crowded freeway. Was her car really chosen by chance or is there a sinister reasoning she doesn't know about? Vacillating between rage and fear her captor is clearly highly distressed yet offers no answers as to what he wants or where exactly he wants to go.

Jax does eventually make if home safe but she soon realises what happened to her on the freeway is not over by any means. The journalist in her can't ignore the words that were exchanged and the clues that continue to surface as the investigation gathers steam. Is Detective Aiden Hawke the friend he appears to be and is this whole horrible event somehow connected to Nick's death?

As always Jaye Ford keeps the reader on the edge of their seat as the story unfolds. The streets and beaches of Newcastle have never felt so menacing as Jax moves at speed to keep ahead of the malevolent forces in

her wake.

Ford also addresses the growing mental health epidemic of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As we are discovering human beings cannot be subjected to high level violence and trauma (such as in war situations) without some lasting impact on the psyche. The author ties the PTSD angle into the storyline with skill and compassion.

Already Dead had me right from the first page and kept me on the edge of my seat right until the last word.

Selene says

[Singular, 1st person (hide spoiler)]

BookHeroin says

Want a copy of this so bad!

John says

Aussie author Jaye Ford has written another very clever and riveting psychological suspense thriller that grabbed me from the beginning and kept me enthralled and guessing almost to the very end.

Journalist Miranda Jack has been traumatised by the unexplained hit-and-run death of her investigative journalist husband, Nick, a year ago. Since then the shock has left her unable to continue her career as a promising journalist. In an attempt to move on with her life she is relocating up the coast from Sydney to Newcastle with her young daughter Zoe to stay with her Aunt. Just after shutting up her apartment for the last time she is waiting at traffic lights to turn onto the expressway on-ramp when a man jumps into her car, points a gun at her and forces her to drive at high speed up the motorway.

Miranda (better known as Jax) has to listen to the paranoid rants of Brendan Walsh who claims that he is "already dead", people are chasing him and he can't hide from nano-spiders laying eggs in his brain. He continually looks around and up in the sky see if anyone is following them. At other times Brendan collapses into a shivering mass of stress but still keeps his gun pointed at her. Then there are moments of sanity when he tells Jax a little about his life, and his love for his wife and young son. Jax is stunned when he tells her that he had met her five years before when she had interviewed soldiers and their wives prior to postings to Afghanistan.

Jax frantically looks for ways to escape but Brendan keeps up the pressure, making her drive dangerously to evade unknown and invisible followers. Eventually the chase ends tragically and the police take over. The experience leaves Jax traumatised by the event but she is the kind of person who can't walk away without asking questions about the possibility that Brendan may have had moments of truth. This puts Jax in dangerous situations, which might even get her killed and also directly threaten her family.

The first few chapters of the book about the car-jacking, Brendan's ravings and the "chase" are some of the

most nail-biting and action-packed writing I have read for a while. Jaye Ford unfolds an intense psychological drama about a damaged but strong young woman fighting with all her physical, emotional and mental powers to find an answer to the situations that surround her.

This is a top class, action-packed, very human and frequently very moving story which will keep you involved at all times and guessing almost to the end. The book is set in in parts of Sydney and Newcastle that are very familiar to me and are brilliantly described.

There were a few unfinished plot elements that puzzled me but I think they may be seed roots left by the author to grow a sequel about the unexplained death of Nick. I do hope so as Jax is a powerful, complex and wounded character and Jaye Ford is a writer at the top of her form.

Earlier this year I really enjoyed BLOOD SECRET and commented that Jaye Ford is a world class author of psychological thrillers. ALREADY DEAD confirms my opinion - it was a great read and is highly recommended to those who like this kind of thriller.

My thanks to Net Galley and the publisher for a copy of this book for review.

Jenny says

Already Dead is about how a young mother was attempting to move on from the death of her husband. Miranda Jack thought that by moving from Sydney to Newcastle with her daughter, Zoe would help them heal. However, on the way to Newcastle, Brendan Walsh jump into her car with a gun and this incident changed Miranda and Zoe's life for ever. The readers of Already Dead will follow what happens to Miranda and Brendan.

Already Dead is the first book I have read of Jaye Ford, and I enjoy it. I was impressed with the way, Jaye Ford highlighted one of the primary health issues for ex-servicemen PTSD. I like the way, Jaye Ford portrayed and entwined her characters. Already Dead started me to realise I should be more careful to lock my car doors when I am driving on my own. I also enjoy Jaye Ford writing style it engages the readers after the first page.

Readers of Already Dead will learn about how some suffers handle grief when loved ones die. Also, readers of Already Dead will start to understand PTSD and how it affects the suffer and everyone around them. I hope readers who read Already Dead start to realise that PTSD is a problem and society should start to think of better ways to help the suffers.

I recommend this book.

Brenda says

Miranda Jack (Jax to her friends) loaded the final boxes into her car ready for the journey to Newcastle where she hoped to make a new life with her six year old daughter Zoe. Zoe was with her Aunt Tilda in the Newcastle suburb of Merewether where she was excited to be having a sleep-over; Jax needed the time and space to get the home she'd shared with Zoe and husband Nick in Sydney cleared out; the home she'd spent

the past twelve months in without Nick. She still hadn't received the answers she was desperate for and the grief and sense of loss was never-ending. She was determined that their move would start to ease the pain.

As she headed to the freeway for the almost two hour drive which was ahead of her, the tears still lingered. But at a set of traffic lights where she waited for the green, she was suddenly shocked and terrified when a total stranger leapt into the passenger seat and ordered her to drive. The sight of the vicious looking gun pointing at her caused her breathing to hitch in fright. And with the gun on her she was having trouble concentrating – with the traffic all around her, all doing 110 kph, she knew the dangers. But as she listened to him rant and rave, go silent then yell and scream, she wasn't sure where the biggest danger lay.

When her ordeal was finally over, Jax found she needed answers. Why had it happened? Who was Brendan Walsh; the few things he had told her – were they real or imagined? With Jax being a journalist, the questions came easily to her – but the answers were not so forthcoming. And was she asking the wrong people her questions? Suddenly her terror returned; danger was surrounding her once again. Who could she trust? But she would not stop now...

This amazing and suspenseful thriller grabbed me from the very first page with the pace full on until the very end. Gripping, breath-taking and terrifying, *Already Dead* is everything you want in a thriller. It was unputdownable! I found myself thinking about it when I wasn't reading it, and anxious to get back to it. The plot is incredibly believable, with car-jackings a horrible truth. I loved that it was set in my area as well, as I could visualise where the author was taking me all the way through the book. In my opinion this is Aussie author Jaye Ford's best yet – she is most definitely at the top of her game. I have no hesitation in recommending *Already Dead* extremely highly.

With thanks to Random House and NetGalley for my copy to read and review.

Paula Phillips says

On what started off as a normal day for Miranda, a day that was supposed to be a fresh start for her - away from the limelight and from those who knew of her husband's death, became a day that would change her life forever when a random guy hopped into her car with a gun and told her to drive and keep on driving. Miranda has been carjacked by Brendan who has told Miranda that he has been followed and that he must get to his wife and son one last time and say goodbye because he is "Already Dead". Miranda believes he is being paranoid, but even at the back of her mind - her journalistic tendencies and skills start ticking away and she wonders if there is any truth to his story. We later discover that Miranda has already met Brendan - years ago when she did an article about War soldiers and their families. Brendan we learn after he came back from the war started suffering from PTSD like many of those who have served and found it hard to find work until he got hooked up doing a few private security gigs. One of those gigs was being a bodyguard for Nina - a DA who has just been a couple of days earlier found murdered. Is Brendan connected to the murder and is the same people who committed it, after him? What will happen though when Miranda tries to return to her normal life and strange things keep happening? Was there more to Brendan's story than the police believed? Find out in this fast-paced Australian Thriller novel "Already Dead" by Jaye Ford. If you love Thrillers and Suspense novels, then this book is your beverage.

Phrynne says

Jaye Ford is rapidly becoming one of my favourite authors. I love that her main characters are always strong, independent women who do not need a hero on a white charger to rescue them. Although they occasionally make debatable decisions they do not actually place themselves in danger by sheer stupidity as is often the case in these types of books.

I also loved that in this book the main character, journalist Miranda Jacks, gets carjacked just up the road from me and then drives right by my house on her way up north. I always get a little extra enjoyment out of a novel set in Sydney:)

Four easy stars for a very enjoyable and suitably tense thriller.

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

"She was waiting for traffic lights at the start of rush hour on a Monday afternoon when a man opened her front passenger door, got in and pointed a gun at her chest... 'Drive'."

Miranda Jack (Jax) is stunned when a strange man climbs into her car and forces her to drive north on the highway at gunpoint. He is highly agitated, pressing the gun barrel into her ribs while looking frantically over his shoulder, and when Jax asks what he wants, who he is, he roars at her; *I'm already dead. That's my name now. That's what they called me. That's me. Nice to meet you. I'm Already Dead.*"

Two hours later, Jax stands trembling on the road's edge, the man's gun in her hand, surrounded by police, and trying to understand what just happened. Brendan Walsh, her abductor, is dead, and Jax is wondering how much of what he told her during their crazed journey is true. The investigating detective seems certain that Brendan's ravings can be dismissed as the paranoid delusions of a soldier suffering PTSD but Jax, a journalist, isn't so sure. She needs answers... but the questions she is asking may prove deadly.

Thrilling from the very first page, *Already Dead*, is an exciting tale of suspense. I read it in a single sitting, absorbed by the intensity of emotion, the fast paced action and the complex characterisation.

Jax is an interesting protagonist. Still struggling with her husband's unsolved murder barely 12 months earlier, it is because she has no answers about his death that she becomes obsessed with investigating Brendan's. Ford brilliantly captures Jax's vacillating emotions through out the story creating a believable and appealing character who draws on her instincts and inner strength to expose the truth.

Ford's exploration of the issues associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Already Dead* gives added depth to this work of crime fiction. Walsh has struggled to readjust to civilian life after two tours in Afghanistan and people are quick to blame PTSD for his accusations. Jax, in the wake of the abduction, is also suffering from the disorder's symptoms - nightmares and anxiety, exacerbated by her still fresh grief and a history of tragedy. After her ordeal Jax, and Detective Aiden Hawke, are quick to dismiss her continuing sense of unease as a reaction to the stress, allowing events to quickly spiral out of control.

Well crafted with page turning appeal, Jaye Ford's fourth novel, *Already Dead*, is a gripping psychological thriller. You will never feel safe idling at traffic lights again.

Marianne says

Already Dead is the fourth novel by Australian journalist and author, Jaye Ford. A year after the murder of her husband, investigative reporter Nick Westing, Miranda Jack is leaving their Sydney home for the last time to join her daughter Zoe at her aunt's house in Newcastle. A little teary with sentiment, Jax's reactions are not at their optimum when an armed man gets in the car at the traffic lights and orders her to drive.

As they speed up the motorway, Jax listens to her passenger ranting while fearing for her life. Hours later, her ordeal ends in dramatic fashion. Jax is safe, but her journalist training triggers a head full of questions she can't ignore. They are questions that her aunt, her friends, her ex-boss and, most of all, the local cop, Detective Senior Sergeant Aiden Hawke would rather she let go.

The more people she talks to, the more of her carjacker's paranoid ramblings seem based in fact. A pursuit by two men and a burglary later, Aiden Hawke is listening to her, if not answering questions, and Jax begins to wonder just whom she can trust.

Ford jumps straight into the action with this tale and doesn't let up, building the tension while racing through to a heart-stopping climax. The setting is well-conveyed and will be familiar to locals and those travelling the area. Her characters are realistic and appealing (or suitably nasty), and their dialogue is credible.

This is a tale that touches on subjects both topical and age-old: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and corruption feature, and Ford's characters are wise and eloquent about grief and loss and starting again. "I know Nick's dead. I know he's not coming back. I've accepted that. But he still takes up space inside me. I don't want to lose that." Tilda's hand closed around Jax's. "You won't. It'll never leave you. It won't always be right in the centre of you, but you'll always be able to find it."

Already Dead is easy to envisage as a movie or mini-series, and there is plenty of scope for Ford to write a sequel which would be well-received. A gripping page-turner.

MarciaB - Book Muster Down Under says

Former Journalist Miranda Jack (aka Jax) is a widow with a young daughter. Still in the depths of grief after her husband, Nick, was killed in a hit and run accident twelve months before and, having put her career on hold, she has finally finished packing up their last bits and pieces and is on her way to Newcastle where her Aunt Tilda and Zoe await her so they can begin their new life in their new home.

Suddenly, the unthinkable happens when, whilst stopped at a traffic light in Wahroonga, a man climbs into her car with a gun pointed at her and tells her to drive.

Terrified of what might happen if she doesn't obey him, she does what he asks but soon realises that he is fast losing touch with reality. Mumbling incoherently to himself while the gun never wavers too far from her, she tries to calm him down by telling stories in an attempt to build rapport with him and learns that his real name is Brendan Walsh and that he's on the run!

As he vacillates between rage, delusion and mumbling, he begins to offer up bits and pieces of information such as the fact that he is married and has a son but that someone is following him and they won't give up.

Two hours later, Jax's terrifying thrill ride ends in the most horrific manner she has ever borne witness to and she thinks that her ordeal is over. But all is not as it should be! Who was Brendan Walsh really? Why did he choose to get into her car?

As she finds herself being drawn deeper into the whys and wherefores of her traumatic experience with Brendan with a police investigation headed by Detective Aiden Hawke ensuing, she realises that her torment has only just begun! For Jax is about to discover an intricate web of deceit and murder, where nobody appears to be who she thought they were and her journalistic instincts will need to take a backseat. Who's side is Detective Hawke on? What does a recent murder of another journalist have to do with Brendan?

Will she have the courage to prove that she is a force to be reckoned with or can she count herself among those already dead!

As a lover of thrilling suspense, I can't believe that this was my first Jaye Ford novel and am still banging my head against the wall because I fear that my reading pile is going to topple right over once I add her previous three books to it!

In *Already Dead*, Jaye addresses the subject of post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) by taking an ordinary every day thirty-something woman and mother, who is trying to find herself in the aftermath of all the tragedy she has endured, putting her through paces that none of us would ever wish on our own worst enemy, initially with a man suffering from this debilitating condition and, thereafter, as a survivor, placing her in contact with those left behind, the questions, guilt, anger and consequences which could eventuate. Whilst she fictionalises events, based loosely on facts gained through her multitude of research, the possibilities are endless and we are given an admirable protagonist who, like anyone in her situation would be, is scared - of dying, of leaving her child an orphan, of not being able to ask questions, of not getting answers.

A recent interview with author Sara Foster had Jaye explaining that she had *"seen a lot of media coverage about soldiers with PTSD and wanted to recognise some of the battles they face at home, as well as explore some of the issues within a crime setting"*. She further went on to say that she loves to *"write about ordinary women thrust into danger who must find the strength of will to survive ... of the tough times in our lives and what it can take to dig deep enough."*

Her writing is powerful, with her use of short sharp sentences conveying the urgency of her voice, so much so, that you can't help but keep turning the pages, as the third person narrative point of view effectively transports the reader into the mind of a woman who has been placed in a situation where she is no longer sure of what is real or imagined. And it doesn't end there!

She continually ups the ante by throwing in other characters whose motives are questionable and, by revealing only a layer at a time the real circumstances surrounding the carjacking, she keeps the suspense taut as she makes Jax's life (and ours) a living terror.

A person who suffers with mild anxiety myself (although far from the intense level of PTSD and anxiety portrayed in this novel), I've always been interested in reading about other people's perspectives surrounding this severe affliction and the effects it has on those close to us. Jaye has revealed a bit more of it for me and, even though I was tucked up in my bed most nights while reading this novel, the hairs on my body stood on end as I surreptitiously checked that the blinds were closed and all the "what ifs" were never far from my

thoughts.

My only quibble (and it's not a quibble at all really) - the fact that Jax never did receive any closure on Nick's death. But perhaps Jaye has something more in store for us on that front! At this stage, we can only hope.

All in all, an edge-of-your-seat psychological thriller with complex characters, fast-paced action and unrelenting suspense that I wouldn't hesitate to recommend.

Pat says

This is another winner by Jaye Ford. Miranda Jack (Jax) is leaving her Sydney home to move to Newcastle with her Aunt Tilda. Her daughter Zoe awaits her there. Her husband, investigative reporter Nick Westaway, had been killed a year ago and Jax wants to move on and start afresh. But as she waits for traffic to move and an armed man jumps into her car and orders her to drive.

Jax asks for his name in an attempt to humanise herself and he tells her it is 'already dead'. As she drives Jax learns a little of his story. This awakens the journalist in her. Abruptly he leaves the car and she continues to her Aunt's place, but the man's story haunts her and she starts to delve into it. Little does she know the danger she is putting herself and her family in.

Ford writes a darn good thriller with strong female leads. I have enjoyed all her books so far.

Lizzy Chandler says

Jaye Ford is becoming known for delivering fast, page-turning thrillers in the style of Nicci French. At the centre of her novels are women, often thirty-something, often mums. They come from middle- and working-class backgrounds in regional NSW.

In Ford's novels, these women are put in jeopardy, sometimes by strangers, other times by those close to them. What differentiates Ford's characters from many female thriller figures is they don't rely on a man to rescue them. While there may be a male love interest, her female protagonists are up to the challenge, ready to fight with all their resources, physical, emotional and mental, to survive and triumph.

Already Dead,* Ford's latest novel, is no exception. As the story opens, the main character, Jax, a widow with a young child, finds herself in the centre of an unfolding drama: a stranger bails her up at a set of lights and jumps in her car just as she is about to get on the freeway heading north from Sydney toward Newcastle. Jax is at a crossroads of her life, literally. Her investigative journalist husband has died; she has walked away from her own journalistic career; she is struggling to find herself as a single mum. Emotionally, she's at a low ebb, but the events that unfold give her no choice but to step up, to find the inner resources to fight her way out of danger. Before long, she is woven in a web of intrigue, facing more questions than she has answers for. Is her unwelcome passenger a psychotic killer filled with paranoid fantasies? Or is someone really after him – and, by extension, her, once she has spent time with him?

As Jax struggles to differentiate reality from her fears, the reader is taken along a thrilling ride. While she

attempts to solve the intrigue that surrounds her mysterious passenger, she has a hard time keeping herself, her daughter and aunt safe. Can she trust the detective, Aiden Hawke, who appears at an opportune time, or is he part of the conspiracy her unwelcome passenger is running from? When the pace accelerates toward an action-packed and thrilling ending, a danger Jax could only imagine becomes real and present, worrying the reader that maybe, this time, guts won't be enough.

This review first appeared on my blog.
