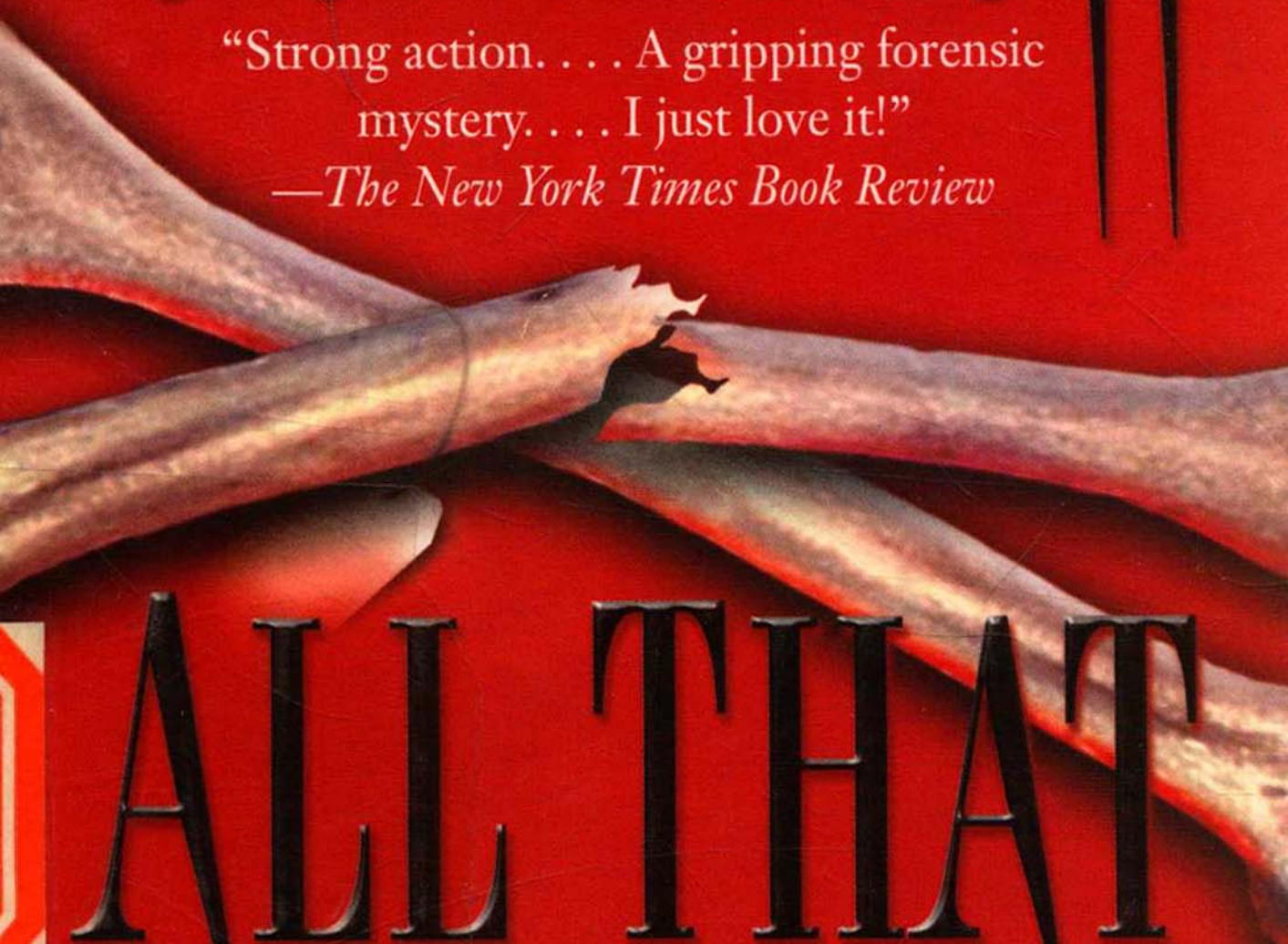


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ALL THAT REMAINS

A Scarpetta Novel

PATRICIA
CORNWELL

ALL THAT
REMAINS

A



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*This book is for
Michael Congdon.
As always, thanks.*

ALL THAT REMAINS

1

Saturday, the last day of August, I started work before dawn. I did not witness mist burning off the grass or the sky turning brilliant blue. Steel tables were occupied by bodies all morning, and there are no windows in the morgue. Labor Day weekend had begun with a bang of car crashes and gunfire in the city of Richmond.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon when I finally returned to my West End home and heard Bertha mopping in the kitchen. She cleaned for me every Saturday and knew from past instruction not to bother with the phone, which had just begun to ring.

"I'm not here," I said loudly as I opened the refrigerator.

Bertha stopped mopping. "It was ringing a minute ago," she said. "Rang a few minutes before that, too. Same man."

"No one's home," I repeated.

"Whatever you say, Dr. Kay." The mop moved across the floor again.

I tried to ignore the disembodied answering machine message intruding upon the sun-washed kitchen. The Hanover tomatoes I took for granted during the summer I began to hoard with the approach of fall. There were only three left. Where was the chicken salad?

A beep was followed by the familiar male voice. "Doc? It's Marino . . ."

Oh, Lord, I thought, shoving the refrigerator door shut with a hip. Richmond homicide detective Pete Marino had been on the street since midnight, and I had just seen him in the morgue as I was picking bullets out of one of his cases. He was supposed to be on his way to Lake Gaston for what was left of a weekend of fishing. I was looking forward to working in my yard.

"I've been trying to get you, am heading out. You'll have to try my pager . . ."

Marino's voice sounded urgent as I snatched up the receiver.

"I'm here."

"That you or your goddam machine?"

"Take a guess," I snapped.

"Bad news. They found another abandoned car. New Kent, the Sixty-four rest stop, west-bound. Benton just got hold of me—"

"Another couple?" I interrupted, my plans for the day forgotten.

"Fred Cheney, white male, nineteen. Deborah

Harvey, white female, nineteen. Last seen around eight last night when they drove off from the Harveys' Richmond house, on their way to Spindrift."

"And the car's in the *westbound* lane?" I inquired, for Spindrift, North Carolina, is three and a half hours east of Richmond.

"Yo. Appears they was heading in the opposite direction, back into the city. A trooper found the car, a Jeep Cherokee, about an hour ago. No sign of the kids."

"I'm leaving now," I told him.

Bertha had not stopped mopping, but I knew she had picked up every word.

"Be on my way soon as I finish up in here," she assured me. "I'll lock up and set the alarm. Don't you worry, Dr. Kay."

Fear was running along my nerves as I grabbed my purse and hurried out to my car.

There were four couples so far. Each had disappeared, eventually to be found murdered within a fifty-mile radius of Williamsburg.

The cases, dubbed by the press as The Couple Killings, were inexplicable, and no one seemed to have a clue or credible theory, not even the FBI and its Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, or VICAP, which featured a national database run on an artificial intelligence computer capable of connecting missing persons with unidentified bodies and linking serial crimes. After the first couple's

bodies were found more than two years ago, a VICAP regional team, comprising FBI Special Agent Benton Wesley and veteran Richmond homicide detective Pete Marino, was invited by local police to assist. Another couple would disappear, then two more. In each instance, by the time VICAP could be notified, by the time the National Crime Information Center, or NCIC, could even wire descriptions to police departments across America, the missing teenagers were already dead and decomposing in woods somewhere.

Turning off the radio, I passed through a tollbooth and picked up speed on I-64 East. Images, voices suddenly came back to me. Bones and rotted clothing scattered with leaves. Attractive, smiling faces of missing teenagers printed in the newspapers, and bewildered, distraught families interviewed on television and calling me on the phone.

"I'm so sorry about your daughter."

"Please tell me how my baby died. Oh, God, did she suffer?"

"Her cause of death is undetermined, Mrs. Bennett. There's nothing else I can tell you at this time."

"What do you mean you *don't know*?"

"All that remains is his bones, Mr. Martin. When soft tissue is gone, gone with it is any possible injury . . ."

"I don't want to hear your medical bullshit! I want to know what killed my boy! The cops are

asking about drugs! My boy's never been drunk in his life, much less taken drugs! You hear me, lady? He's dead, and they're making him out to be some sort of punk . . ."

"CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER BAFFLED: Dr. Kay Scarpetta Unable to Tell Cause of Death."

Undetermined.

Over and over again. Eight young people.

It was awful. It was, in fact, unprecedented for me.

Every forensic pathologist has undetermined cases, but I had never had so many that appeared to be related.

I opened the sunroof and my spirits were lifted somewhat by the weather. The temperature was in the low eighties, leaves would be turning soon. It was only in the fall and spring that I did not miss Miami. Richmond summers were just as hot, without benefit of ocean breezes to sweep the air clean. The humidity was horrible, and in winter I fared no better, for I do not like the cold. But spring and fall were intoxicating. I drank in the change, and it went straight to my head.

The I-64 rest stop in New Kent County was exactly thirty-one miles from my house. It could have been any rest stop in Virginia, with picnic tables, grills and wooden trash barrels, brick-enclosed bathrooms and vending machines, and newly planted trees. But there was not a traveler or a truck driver in sight, and police cars were everywhere.

A trooper, hot and unsmiling in his blue-gray uniform, walked toward me as I parked near the ladies' room.

"I'm sorry, ma'am," he said, leaning close to my open window. "This rest area's closed today. I'm going to have to ask you to drive on."

"Dr. Kay Scarpetta," I identified myself, switching off the ignition. "The police asked me to come."

"For what purpose, ma'am?"

"I'm the chief medical examiner," I replied.

As he looked me over, I could see the skeptical glint in his eyes. I supposed I did not look particularly "chiefly." Dressed in a stone-washed denim skirt, pink oxford cloth shirt, and leather walking shoes, I was without the accouterments of authority, including my state car, which was in the state garage awaiting new tires. At a glance, I was a not-so-young yuppie running errands in her dark gray Mercedes, a distracted ash-blonde en route to the nearest shopping mall.

"I'll need some identification."

Digging inside my purse, I produced a thin black wallet and displayed my brass medical examiner's shield, then handed over my driver's license, both of which he studied for a long moment. I sensed he was embarrassed.

"Just leave your car here, Dr. Scarpetta. The folks you're looking for are in back." He pointed in the direction of the parking area for

trucks and buses. "Have a nice one," he added inanely, stepping away.

I followed a brick walk. When I rounded the building and passed beneath the shade of trees, I was greeted by several more police cars, a tow truck with light bar flashing, and at least a dozen men in uniforms and plain clothes. I did not see the red Jeep Cherokee until I was almost upon it. Midway along the exit ramp, it was well off the pavement in a dip and obscured by foliage. Two-door, it was coated with a film of dust. When I looked in the driver's window I could see that the beige leather interior was very clean, the backseat neatly packed with various items of luggage, a slalom ski, a coiled yellow nylon ski rope, and a red-and-white plastic ice chest. Keys dangled from the ignition. Windows were partly rolled down. Depressed tire tracks leading from the pavement were clearly visible in the sloping grass, the front chrome grille nudged up against a clump of pines.

Marino was talking to a thin, blond man, someone he introduced as Jay Morrell with the state police, whom I did not know. He seemed to be in charge.

"Kay Scarpetta," I volunteered, since Marino identified me only as "Doc."

Morrell fixed dark green Ray-Bans on me and nodded. Out of uniform and sporting a mustache that was little more than teenage fuzz, he exuded the all-business bravado I

associated with investigators brand-new on the job.

"Here's what we know so far." He was glancing around nervously. "The Jeep belongs to Deborah Harvey, and she and her boyfriend, uh, Fred Cheney, left the Harveys' residence last night at approximately eight P.M. They were heading to Spindrifft, where the Harvey family owns a beach house."

"Was Deborah Harvey's family home when the couple left Richmond?" I inquired.

"No, ma'am." He briefly turned his shades my way. "They were already at Spindrifft, had left earlier in the day. Deborah and Fred wanted to go in a separate car because they planned to return to Richmond on Monday. Both of them are sophomores at Carolina, and needed to come back early to get ready to return to school."

Marino explained as he got out his cigarettes, "Right before they left the Harvey house last night, they called up Spindrifft, told one of Deborah's brothers they was heading out and would be arriving sometime between midnight and one A.M. When they didn't show up by four o'clock this morning, Pat Harvey called the police."

"*Pat Harvey?*" I looked at Marino in disbelief.

It was Officer Morrell who replied, "Oh, yeah. We got us a good one, all right. Pat Harvey's on her way here even as we speak."

A chopper picked her up"—he glanced at his watch—"about a half hour ago. The father, uh, Bob Harvey, he's on the road. Was in Charlotte on business and was supposed to get to Spindrift sometime tomorrow. As far as we know, he hasn't been reached yet, doesn't know what's happened."

Pat Harvey was the National Drug Policy Director, a position the media had dubbed Drug Czar. A presidential appointee who not so long ago had been on the cover of *Time* magazine, Mrs. Harvey was one of the most powerful and admired women in America.

"What about Benton?" I asked Marino. "Is he aware Deborah Harvey is Pat Harvey's daughter?"

"He didn't say nothing about it to me. When he called, he'd just landed in Newport News—the Bureau flew him in. He was in a hurry to find a rental car. We didn't talk long."

That answered my question. Benton Wesley would not be rushing here in a Bureau plane unless he knew who Deborah Harvey was. I wondered why he had not said anything to Marino, his VICAP partner, and I tried to read Marino's broad, impassive face. His jaw muscles were flexing, the top of his balding head flushed and beaded with sweat.

"What's going on now," Morrell resumed, "is I got a lot of men stationed around to keep out traffic. We've looked in the bathrooms, poked around a little, to make sure the kids

aren't in the immediate area. Once Peninsula Search and Rescue get here, we'll start in on the woods."

Immediately north of the Jeep's front hood the well-attended landscaping of the rest stop was overcome by brush and trees that within an acre became so dense I could see nothing but sunlight caught in leaves and a hawk making circles over a distant stand of pines. Though shopping malls and housing developments continued their encroachment upon I-64, this stretch between Richmond and Tidewater so far had remained unspoiled. The scenery, which I would have found reassuring and soothing in the past, now seemed ominous to me.

"Shit," Marino complained as we left Morrell and began walking around.

"I'm sorry about your fishing trip," I said.

"Hey. Ain't it the way it always goes? Been planning this damn trip for months. Screwed again. Nothing new."

"I noticed that when you pull off the Interstate," I observed, ignoring his irritation, "the entrance ramp immediately divides into two ramps, one leading back here, the other to the front of the rest stop. In other words, the ramps are one-way. It's not possible to pull into the front area for cars, then change your mind and drive back here without going a considerable distance the wrong way on the ramp and risking hitting someone. And I would guess there

was a fair amount of travelers on the road last night, since it's Labor Day weekend."

"Right. I know that. It don't take a rocket scientist to figure out that somebody intended to ditch the Jeep exactly where it is because there were probably a lot of cars parked in front last night. So he takes the ramp for trucks and buses. Probably was pretty deserted back here. Nobody sees him, and he splits."

"He may also not have wanted the Jeep found right away, explaining why it's well off the pavement," I said.

Marino stared off toward the woods and said, "I'm getting too old for this."

A perpetual complainer, Marino had a habit of arriving at a crime scene and acting as if he did not want to be there. We had worked with each other long enough for me to be used to it, but this time his attitude struck me as more than an act. His frustration went deeper than the canceled fishing trip. I wondered if he had had a fight with his wife.

"Well, well," he mumbled, looking toward the brick building. "The Lone Ranger's arrived."

I turned around as the lean, familiar figure of Benton Wesley emerged from the men's room. He barely said "hello" when he got to us, his silver hair wet at the temples, the lapels of his blue suit speckled with water as if he had just washed his face. Eyes fixed impassively on the Jeep, he slipped a pair of sunglasses from his breast pocket and put them on.

"Has Mrs. Harvey gotten here yet?" he asked.

"Nope," Marino replied.

"What about reporters?"

"Nope," Marino said.

"Good."

Wesley's mouth was firmly set, making his sharp-featured face seem harder and more unreachable than usual. I would have found him handsome were it not for his imperviousness. His thoughts and emotions were impossible to read, and of late he had become such a master at walling off his personality that I sometimes felt I did not know him.

"We want to keep this under wraps as long as possible," he went on. "The minute the word's out all hell is going to break loose."

I asked him, "What do you know about this couple, Benton?"

"Very little. After Mrs. Harvey reported them missing early this morning, she called the Director at home and then he called me. Apparently, her daughter and Fred Cheney met at Carolina and had been dating since their freshman year. Both of them supposedly good, clean-cut kids. No history of any sort of trouble that might account for them getting tangled up with the wrong type of person out here—at least according to Mrs. Harvey. One thing I did pick up on was she had some ambivalence about the relationship, thought Cheney and her daughter spent too much time alone."