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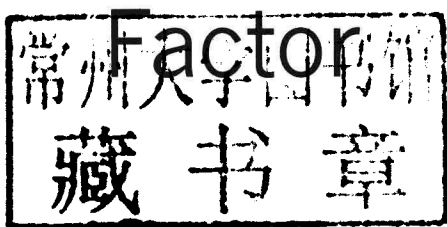
PATRICIA
CORNWELL

OF NEW YORK
CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

THE
SCARPETTA
FACTOR

FIRST TIME IN PAPERBACK

The Scarpetta



PATRICIA CORNWELL



BERKLEY BOOKS
NEW YORK

THE BERKLEY PUBLISHING GROUP

Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA

Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario M4P 2Y3, Canada
(a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)

Penguin Books Ltd., 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Penguin Group Ireland, 25 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd.)

Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia

(a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty. Ltd.)

Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi—110 017, India

Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, North Shore 0632, New Zealand

(a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd.)

Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty.) Ltd., 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196,
South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd., Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

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THE SCARPETTA FACTOR

A Berkley Book / published by arrangement with CEI Enterprises, Inc.

PRINTING HISTORY

G. P. Putnam's Sons hardcover edition / October 2009

Berkley premium edition / September 2010

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For information, address: The Berkley Publishing Group,

a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.,

375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014.

ISBN: 978-0-425-23628-4

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At Risk

“Highly entertaining.”

—*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Book of the Dead

“What a walloping, riveting mix of . . . adventure and psychology. Author Cornwell certainly is skilled at dissecting the not always attractive innards of human nature.” —*Forbes*

Predator

“Cornwell continu[es] to stretch her muscles . . . a fine psychological thriller.” —*The Denver Post*

Trace

“Dr. Kay Scarpetta . . . is back with a vengeance.”
—*The New York Times Book Review*

Blow Fly

“[A] grisly fast-paced thriller . . . utterly chilling.”
—*Entertainment Weekly*

The Last Precinct

“Ignites on the first page . . . Cornwell has created a character so real, so compelling, so driven that this reader has to remind herself regularly that Scarpetta is just a product of an author’s imagination.” —*USA Today*

Black Notice

“Brainteasing . . . one of the most savage killers of her career . . . [a] hair-raising tale with a French twist.” —*People*

Point of Origin

“Packed with action and suspense.” —*Rocky Mountain News*

Titles by Patricia Cornwell

SCARPETTA SERIES

<i>The Scarpetta Factor</i>	<i>Unnatural Exposure</i>
<i>Scarpetta</i>	<i>Cause of Death</i>
<i>Book of the Dead</i>	<i>From Potter's Field</i>
<i>Predator</i>	<i>The Body Farm</i>
<i>Trace</i>	<i>Cruel & Unusual</i>
<i>Blow Fly</i>	<i>All That Remains</i>
<i>The Last Precinct</i>	<i>Body of Evidence</i>
<i>Black Notice</i>	<i>Postmortem</i>
<i>Point of Origin</i>	

ANDY BRAZIL SERIES

Isle of Dogs
Southern Cross
Hornet's Nest

WIN GARANO SERIES

The Front
At Risk

NONFICTION

Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper—Case Closed

BIOGRAPHY

Ruth, A Portrait: The Story of Ruth Bell Graham
(also published as *A Time for Remembering:
The Story of Ruth Bell Graham*)

OTHER WORKS

Food to Die For: Secrets from Kay Scarpetta's Kitchen
Life's Little Fable
Scarpetta's Winter Table

"The coolly graphic autopsy scenes are classic Scarpetta, but new elements . . . keep this tale fresh." —*People*

"Cornwell delivers another suspenseful novel that will keep readers on the edge of their seats."

—*The Stuart News/Port St. Lucie News*

"A thriller that brings together the best of what we loved in the previous fifteen novels—tight plot twists and drama, cool science and technology, characters we care about and their relationships. And something we haven't read in a long time: a sense of hope."

—*The Sunday Oregonian*

"The climax is harrowing."

—*The Arizona Republic*

"A page-turner that will please the author's fan base, and beginners can jump into it fairly easily. After twenty years, Cornwell clearly knows what she's doing, and it's comforting to see a mystery series in which the characters evolve even as the author's skill remains a reliable constant."

—*Omaha World-Herald*

"Cornwell revolutionized the forensic novel with her astonishing accuracy and attention to procedures in *Postmortem*. Twenty years later, she does not falter from her form."

—*The Tampa Tribune*

"Verdict: Cornwell fans will find this reminiscent of the Scarpetta novels that hooked them years ago, and new readers will race to read the previous fifteen. Like a fine wine, Scarpetta has aged well."

—*Library Journal*

"Twenty years after launching the Kay Scarpetta series, Cornwell returns to form in this thoroughly contemporary, high-impact outing. . . . The blend of forensic investigation and high-tech intrigue will please Scarpetta's legions of fans."

—*Booklist*

The Front

"[A] classically written crime novel."

—*USA Today*

“[An] insistent and gripping thriller.”

—*The Star-Ledger*

In the extraordinary new novel by Patricia Cornwell—the world’s #1 bestselling crime writer—forensic expert Kay Scarpetta is surrounded by familiar faces, yet traveling down the unfamiliar road of fame. . . .

It is the week before Christmas. A tanking economy has prompted Dr. Kay Scarpetta—despite her busy schedule and her continuing work as the senior forensic analyst for CNN—to offer her services pro bono to New York City’s Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. In no time at all, her increased visibility seems to precipitate a string of unexpected and unsettling events, culminating in an ominous package—possibly a bomb—showing up at the front desk of the apartment building where she and her husband, Benton, live. Soon the apparent threat on Scarpetta’s life finds her embroiled in a surreal plot that includes a famous actor accused of an unthinkable sex crime and the disappearance of a beautiful millionaire with whom her niece, Lucy, seems to have shared a secret past.

Scarpetta’s CNN producer wants her to launch a TV show called *The Scarpetta Factor*. Given the bizarre events already in play, she fears that her growing fame will generate the illusion that she has a “special factor,” a mythical ability to solve all her cases. She wonders if she will end up like other TV personalities: her own stereotype.

“A finely crafted, pulse-racing thriller that readers won’t want to put down.”

—*Library Journal*

Praise for the novels of Patricia Cornwell

Scarpetta

“When it comes to the forensic sciences, nobody can touch Cornwell.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

continued . . .

Credits

Very special thanks to the following technical advisers:

Dr. Staci Gruber, director, Cognitive and Clinical Neuroimaging Core, McLean Hospital; assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Barbara A. Butcher, chief of staff and director of forensic investigations, the City of New York Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Deputy Commissioner Paul J. Browne, NYPD

Nicholas Petraco, technical leader in criminalistics, NYPD Forensic Investigation Division

Lieutenant-Commander Detective Squad Mark Torre, commanding officer, bomb squad, NYPD

Dr. Louis Schlesinger, professor of forensic psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Dr. Marcella Fierro, former chief medical examiner of Virginia

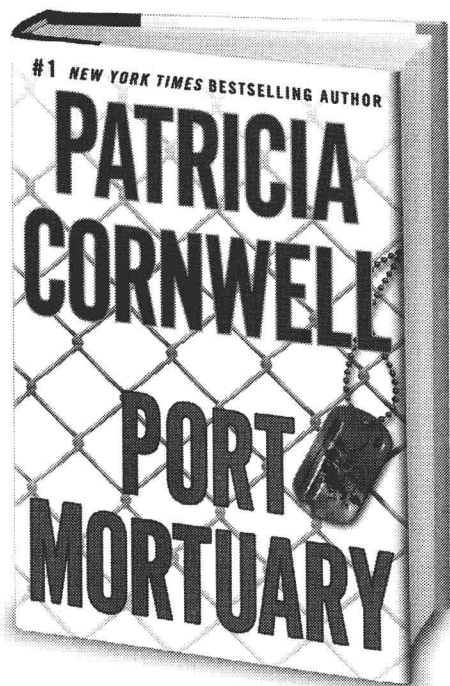
Assistant District Attorney Lisa Friel, chief of the Sex Crimes Unit, New York County district attorney's office

The Reverend Lori Bruno, psychic and medium, of Hex: Old World Witchery, Salem, Massachusetts

IF YOU ENJOYED *THE SCARPETTA FACTOR*,
OTHER RECOMMENDED SCARPETTA STORIES
THAT RELATE TO THE ONE
YOU JUST READ INCLUDE:

THE BODY FARM
POINT OF ORIGIN
BLACK NOTICE
THE LAST PRECINCT
BLOW FLY
BOOK OF THE DEAD
SCARPETTA

**THE BRAND-NEW SCARPETTA
NOVEL FROM THE WORLD'S
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*To Michael Rudell—
lawyer, friend, Renaissance man*

And as always, to Staci

We owe respect to the living.
To the dead we owe only truth.
Voltaire, *Oeuvres Completes*, 1785

A frigid wind gusted in from the East River, snatching at Dr. Kay Scarpetta's coat as she walked quickly along 30th Street.

It was one week before Christmas without a hint of the holidays in what she thought of as Manhattan's Tragic Triangle, three vertices connected by wretchedness and death. Behind her was Memorial Park, a voluminous white tent housing the vacuum-packed human remains still unidentified or unclaimed from Ground Zero. Ahead on the left was the Gothic redbrick former Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, now a shelter for the homeless. Across from that was the loading dock and bay for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, where a gray steel garage door was open. A truck was backing up, more pallets of plywood being unloaded. It had been a noisy day at the morgue, a constant hammering in corridors that carried sound like an amphitheater. The mortuary techs were busy assembling plain pine coffins, adult-size, infant-size, hardly able to keep up with the growing demand for city burials at Potter's Field. Economy-related. Everything was.

Scarpetta already regretted the cheeseburger and fries in the cardboard box she carried. How long had they

been in the warming cabinet on the serving line of the NYU Medical School cafeteria? It was late for lunch, almost three p.m., and she was pretty sure she knew the answer about the palatability of the food, but there was no time to place an order or bother with the salad bar, to eat healthy or even eat something she might actually enjoy. So far there had been fifteen cases today, suicides, accidents, homicides, and indigents who died unattended by a physician or, even sadder, alone.

She had been at work by six a.m. to get an early start, completing her first two autopsies by nine, saving the worst for last—a young woman with injuries and artifacts that were time-consuming and confounding. Scarpetta had spent more than five hours on Toni Darien, making meticulously detailed diagrams and notes, taking dozens of photographs, fixing the whole brain in a bucket of formalin for further studies, collecting and preserving more than the usual tubes of fluids and sections of organs and tissue, holding on to and documenting everything she possibly could in a case that was odd not because it was unusual but because it was a contradiction.

The twenty-six-year-old woman's manner and cause of death were depressingly mundane and hadn't required a lengthy postmortem examination to answer the most rudimentary questions. She was a homicide from blunt-force trauma, a single blow to the back of her head by an object that possibly had a multicolored painted surface. What didn't make sense was everything else. When her body was discovered at the edge of Central Park, some thirty feet off East 110th Street shortly before dawn, it was assumed she had been jogging last night in the

rain when she was sexually assaulted and murdered. Her running pants and panties were around her ankles, her fleece and sports bra pushed above her breasts. A Polartec scarf was tied in a double knot tightly around her neck, and at first glance it was assumed by the police and the OCME's medicolegal investigators who responded to the scene that she was strangled with an article of her own clothing.

She wasn't. When Scarpetta examined the body in the morgue, she found nothing to indicate the scarf had caused the death or even contributed to it, no sign of asphyxia, no vital reaction such as redness or bruising, only a dry abrasion on the neck, as if the scarf had been tied around it postmortem. Certainly it was possible the killer struck her in the head and at some point later strangled her, perhaps not realizing she was already dead. But if so, how much time did he spend with her? Based on the contusion, swelling, and hemorrhage to the cerebral cortex of her brain, she had survived for a while, possibly hours. Yet there was very little blood at the scene. It wasn't until the body was turned over that the injury to the back of her head was even noticed, a one-and-a-half-inch laceration with significant swelling but only a slight weeping of fluid from the wound, the lack of blood blamed on the rain.

Scarpetta seriously doubted it. The scalp laceration would have bled heavily, and it was unlikely a rainstorm that was intermittent and at best moderate would have washed most of the blood out of Toni's long, thick hair. Did her assailant fracture her skull, then spend a long interval with her outside on a rainy winter's night before

tying a scarf tightly around her neck to make sure she didn't live to tell the tale? Or was the ligature part of a sexually violent ritual? Why were livor and rigor mortis arguing loudly with what the crime scene seemed to say? It appeared she had died in the park late last night, and it appeared she had been dead for as long as thirty-six hours. Scarpetta was baffled by the case. Maybe she was overthinking it. Maybe she wasn't thinking clearly, for that matter, because she was harried and her blood sugar was low, having eaten nothing all day, only coffee, lots of it.

She was about to be late for the three p.m. staff meeting and needed to be home by six to go to the gym and have dinner with her husband, Benton Wesley, before rushing over to CNN, the last thing she felt like doing. She should never have agreed to appear on *The Crispin Report*. Why for God's sake had she agreed to go on the air with Carley Crispin and talk about postmortem changes in head hair and the importance of microscopy and other disciplines of forensic science, which were misunderstood because of the very thing Scarpetta had gotten herself involved in—the entertainment industry? She carried her boxed lunch through the loading dock, piled with cartons and crates of office and morgue supplies, and metal carts and trollies and plywood. The security guard was busy on the phone behind Plexiglas and barely gave her a glance as she went past.

At the top of a ramp she used the swipe card she wore on a lanyard to open a heavy metal door and entered a catacomb of white subway tile with teal-green accents and rails that seemed to lead everywhere and nowhere.

When she first began working here as a part-time ME, she got lost quite a lot, ending up at the anthropology lab instead of the neuropath lab or the cardiopath lab or the men's locker room instead of the women's, or the decomp room instead of the main autopsy room, or the wrong walk-in refrigerator or stairwell or even on the wrong floor when she boarded the old steel freight elevator.

Soon enough she caught on to the logic of the layout, to its sensible circular flow, beginning with the bay. Like the loading dock, it was behind a massive garage door. When a body was delivered by the medical examiner transport team, the stretcher was unloaded in the bay and passed beneath a radiation detector over the door. If no alarm was triggered indicating the presence of a radioactive material, such as radiopharmaceuticals used in the treatment of some cancers, the next stop was the floor scale, where the body was weighed and measured. Where it went after that depended on its condition. If it was in bad shape or considered potentially hazardous to the living, it went inside the walk-in decomp refrigerator next to the decomp room, where the autopsy would be performed in isolation with special ventilation and other protections.

If the body was in good shape it was wheeled along a corridor to the right of the bay, a journey that could at some point include the possibility of various stops relative to the body's stage of deconstruction: the x-ray suite, the histology specimen storage room, the forensic anthropology lab, two more walk-in refrigerators for fresh bodies that hadn't been examined yet, the lift for those