



Bones Never Lie

By Kathy Reichs Kathy Reichs

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Temperance “Tempe” Brennan faces down the demons of her past in the seventeenth thriller in Kathy Reichs’s phenomenally successful *Bones* series.

Unexpectedly called in to the Charlotte PD’s Cold Case Unit, Dr. Temperance Brennan wonders why she’s been asked to meet with a homicide cop who’s a long way from his own jurisdiction. The shocking answer: Two child murders, separated by thousands of miles, have one thing in common—the killer. Years ago, Anique Pomerleau kidnapped and murdered a string of girls in Canada, then narrowly eluded capture. It was a devastating defeat for her pursuers, Brennan and police detective Andrew Ryan. Now, as if summoned from their nightmares, Pomerleau has resurfaced in the United States, linked to victims in Vermont and North Carolina. When another child is snatched, the reign of terror promises to continue—unless Brennan can rise to the challenge and make good on her second chance to stop a psychopath.

But Brennan will have to draw her bitter ex-partner out of exile, keep the local police and feds from one another’s throats, and face more than just her own demons as she stalks the deadliest of predators into the darkest depths of madness.

In *Bones Never Lie*, Kathy Reichs once again satisfies readers looking for psychological suspense that’s more than skin-deep.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for the novels of Kathy Reichs

“Kathy Reichs writes smart—no, make that brilliant—mysteries that are as realistic as nonfiction and as fast-paced as the best thrillers about Jack Reacher, or Alex Cross.”—**James Patterson**

“Nobody does forensics thrillers like Kathy Reichs. She’s the real deal.”—**David Baldacci**

“Kathy Reichs continues to be one of the most distinctive and talented writers in the genre. Her legion of readers worldwide will agree with me when I declare that the more books she writes, the more enthusiastic fans she’ll garner.”—**Sandra Brown**

“Each book in Kathy Reichs’s fantastic Temperance Brennan series is better than the last. They’re filled with riveting twists and turns—and no matter how many books she writes, I just can’t get enough!”—**Lisa Scottoline**

“I love Kathy Reichs?—always scary, always suspenseful, and I always learn something.”—**Lee Child**

“A genius at building suspense.”—**New York Daily News**

“Reichs, a forensic anthropologist, makes her crime novels intriguingly realistic.”—**Entertainment Weekly**

“Tempe Brennan is the lab lady most likely to dethrone Patricia Cornwell’s Kay Scarpetta.”—**USA Today**

“Every minute in the morgue with Tempe is golden.”—**The New York Times Book Review**

“Reichs always delivers a pulse-pounding story.”—**Publishers Weekly**

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Kathy Reichs, like her character Dr. Temperance Brennan, is a forensic anthropologist, formerly for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in North Carolina and currently for the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale for the province of Quebec. A professor in the department of anthropology at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte, she is one of only ninety-nine forensic anthropologists ever certified by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology. Reichs’s first book, *Déjà Dead*, catapulted her to fame when it became a *New York Times* bestseller and won the 1997 Arthur Ellis Award for Best First Novel. Her latest Temperance Brennan novel, *Bones Never Lie*, was an instant Canadian bestseller. Her website is KathyReichs.com.

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Chapter

1

I received the message first thing Monday morning. Honor Barrow needed me at an unscheduled meeting.

Not what I wanted, with cold germs rolling up their sleeves in my head.

Nevertheless, coming off a weekend of Sudafed, Afrin, and lemon-honey tea, instead of finishing a report on a putrefied biker, I joined a billion others slogging uptown in rush-hour traffic.

By seven-forty-five, I was parked at the back of the Law Enforcement Center. The air was cool and smelled of sun-dried leaves—I assumed. My nose was so clogged, I couldn't sniff out the difference between a tulip and a trash can.

The Democrats had held their quadrennial soiree in Charlotte in 2012. Tens of thousands came to praise or protest and to nominate a candidate. The city had spent \$50 million on security, and as a result, the ground floor of the Law Enforcement Center, once an open lobby, now looked like the bridge of the starship Enterprise. Circular wooden barrier. Bulletproof glass. Monitors displaying the building's every scar and pimple, inside and out.

After signing the register, I swiped my security card and rode to the second floor.

Barrow was passing as the elevator hummed to a stop and opened. Beyond him, through the door he was entering, arrows on a green background directed Crimes Against Property to the left, Crimes Against Persons to the right. Above the arrows, the hornets'-nest symbol of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

"Thanks for coming in." Barrow barely broke stride.

"No problem." Except for the kettledrums in my head and the fire in my throat.

I followed Barrow through the door, and we both turned right.

Detectives crowded the corridor in both directions, most in shirtsleeves and ties, one in khaki pants and a navy golf shirt featuring the intrepid wasp logo. Each carried coffee and a whole lot of firepower.

Barrow disappeared into a room on the left marked by a second green sign: 2220: Violent Crimes Division. Homicide and assault with a deadly.

I continued straight, past a trio of interview rooms. From the nearest, a baritone bellowed indignation in strikingly inharmonious terms.

Ten yards down I entered a room identified as 2101: Homicide Cold Case Unit.

A gray table and six chairs took up most of the square footage. A copy machine. File cabinets. White erasable board and brown corkboards on the walls. In the rear, a low-rise divider set off a desk holding the usual phone, mug, withered plant, and overfilled in- and out-baskets. A window threw rectangles of sunlight across the blotter.

Not a soul in sight. I glanced at the wall clock. 7:58.

Seriously? Only I had arrived on time?

Head pounding and slightly peeved, I dropped into a chair and placed my shoulder bag at my feet.

On the table were a laptop, a cardboard carton, and a plastic tub. Both containers bore numbers on their covers. The ones on the tub were in a format familiar to me: 090430070901. The file dated to April 30, 2009. A single call had come in at 7:09 a.m.

The numbering system on the carton was different. I assumed the case was from another jurisdiction.

A bit of background.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department had roughly five hundred unsolved murders dating back to 1970. Recognizing that this was a lot of bodies and a lot of folks waiting for justice, in 2003 the CMPD established a cold case unit.

Honor Barrow, twenty years at the murder table, had run the CCU since its inception. The other full-timers included a police sergeant and an FBI agent. A volunteer review team composed of three retired FBI agents, a retired NYPD cop, a civilian academic, and a civilian engineer provided support in the form of pre-investigation triage and analysis. The cold case unit regulars gathered monthly.

As a forensic anthropologist, I work with the not so recently dead. No secret why I was sometimes invited to the dance. But I usually got a heads-up about why my presence was being requested. A query concerning a set of remains. A question about bones, trauma, or decomposition.

Not this time.

Impatient, and curious why I'd been summoned, I drew the tub to me and pried off the lid. Inside were hundreds of pages separated by dividers. I knew the headings on each of the tabs. Victimology. Summary of the Crime. Crime Scene Report. Evidence/Property Collected/Analyzed. Medical Examiner's Report. Witnesses. Related Investigation. Potential Suspects. Recommended Follow-up.

Lying across the files was a case review summary written by Claire Melani, a criminologist and colleague at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I flipped to the first section of her report. And felt my neck muscles tense.

Before I could read further, voices sounded in the hall. Moments later, Barrow appeared with a guy looking like something off the cover of a survivalist manual. Washed-out jeans. Faded army jacket over long-sleeved red tee. Dark hair curling from below a neon-orange cap.

I replaced the report in its tub. "Everyone stuck in traffic?"

"I didn't invite the volunteer team."

Though that surprised me, I said nothing.

Barrow noticed my gaze shift to the survivalist, and introduced him. "Detective Rodas is down from

Vermont.”

“Umparo. Umpie to my friends.” Self-deprecating smile. “Both of them.”

Rodas extended a hand. I took it. Umpie’s grip matched his appearance, rough and strong.

As Barrow and Rodas took seats, a familiar figure framed up in the doorway. Erskine “Skinny” Slidell, cop legend in his own mind.

Can’t say Slidell’s presence thrilled me. Since Skinny works homicide, and I work the morgue, we are often thrown together. Over the years our relationship has had more ups and downs than a polygraph chart. His manner is often grating, but the man clears cases.

Slidell stretched both hands in a “What gives?” gesture and drew in one wrist to look at his watch. Subtle.

“Glad you could pry yourself free from the computer porn.” Smiling, Barrow hooked a chair free from the table with one foot.

“That sister of yours does love a camera.” Cushions hoofed as Slidell deposited his substantial derrière.

Barrow partnered with Slidell back in the eighties and, unlike most, claimed to have enjoyed the experience. Probably their shared concept of witty repartee.

Barrow had just introduced Rodas and Slidell to each other when the door swung out. A man I didn’t recognize entered the room. He had a weak chin and a too-long nose and, standing ramrod, matched me in height. His polyester shirt, tie, and off-the-rack suit suggested midlevel management. His demeanor screamed cop. The four of us watched as polyester man took a place at the table.

“Agent Tinker is SBI.” Barrow’s reference to the State Bureau of Investigation conveyed zero warmth.

I’d heard of Beau Tinker. Intel had him as a narrow thinker with a mile-wide ego. And a player with the ladies.

“Don’t seem like such a long drive was warranted.” Slidell spoke without looking up from the fingers laced on his belly.

Tinker regarded Slidell with eyes as gray and bland as unpolished pewter. “I’m right up the road at the Harrisburg field office.”

Slidell’s jaw muscles bulged, but he said nothing.

Like everywhere else on the planet, North Carolina has its share of interagency rivalries. Sheriff’s, campus, airport, and port police versus local PD’s. The state versus the city boys. The feds versus the world.

Except for some offenses in which it’s required—such as drug trafficking, arson, gambling, and election fraud—SBI involvement in criminal investigations was usually at the request of local departments. The chill coming from Barrow and Slidell suggested no such invite had been issued.

Was Rodas the draw? If so, why the interest in Raleigh about a case from Vermont?

Slidell considers himself a hot property in the homicide squad. Too hot to gasbag around a table, as he'd once put it. I also wondered why he was here.

I remembered the file in the plastic tub.

I glanced over at Slidell. His gaze was up now, aimed at Tinker with the kind of expression normally reserved for pedophiles and mold.

Did the hostility go beyond turf issues? Did Slidell share history with Tinker? Or was Skinny just being Skinny?

Barrow's voice cut into my thoughts. "I'm going to let Detective Rodas start off."

Barrow leaned back and repositioned the neck chain holding his badge. He often reminded me of a large leathery turtle. Skin dark and crinkled as that on a shrunken head, eyes wide-set and bulgy above a pointed little nose.

Rodas opened the carton, withdrew a stack of reports, and slid one to each of us. "Sorry if my style's less formal than yours." His voice was deep and gruff, the kind you associate with white cheddar and the Green Mountain Boys. "I'll give you the rundown, then take questions on anything that's unclear."

I started flipping through pages. Heard Tinker and Slidell doing the same.

"Between two-thirty and three p.m., on October 18, 2007, a twelve-year-old white female named Nellie Gower disappeared while riding her bicycle home from school. Six hours later, the bike was found on a rural two-lane a quarter mile from the Gower farm."

A nuance in tone caused me to look up. Rodas's Adam's apple made a round-trip before he continued. "Nellie's body was discovered eight days later at a granite quarry four miles outside town."

I noted that Rodas was using the child's name, not depersonalizing, as cops often do—the kid, the vic. It didn't take Freud to recognize that Rodas was emotionally invested in the case.

"The ME found no signs of trauma or sexual assault. The child was fully clothed. Manner of death went down as homicide, cause as unknown. The scene yielded nothing. Ditto the body. No tire tracks, no trace, no blood or saliva, no forensics at all.

"The usual persons were interviewed—registered sex offenders, parents and relatives, friends, friends' families, neighbors, babysitters, a Girl Scout leader, those working at the school, the church, the community center. Anyone with even the remotest link to the victim."

Rodas dug spirals of bound three-by-fives from the tub and winged them around the table croupier-style. Went silent as each of us viewed the grim cards we'd been dealt.

The first several prints showed the quarry. A leaden sky overhung an expanse of rock and soil bereft of trees. On the left, a gravel road climbed from the foreground toward a ragged horizon.

Temporary barricades had been set up along the road. Parked behind them were cars, pickups, and media vans. Drivers and passengers stood in twos and threes. Some conversing, others staring across the sawhorses

or looking at the ground. A number wore T-shirts printed with the words Find Nellie above the face of a smiling adolescent.

I knew the players. Samaritans who'd devoted hours to searching and to answering phones. Gawkers eager for a glimpse of a body bag. Journalists seeking the best slant on another human tragedy.

Inside the barrier were cruisers, a crime scene truck, a coroner's van, and a pair of unmarked cars, each angled as though suddenly frozen in flight. I recognized the usual responders. Evidence and coroner's techs. A woman in a windbreaker with Medical Examiner printed in yellow block letters on the back. Cops in uniform, one with his head cocked to speak into a shoulder radio.

A canopy had been erected at center stage. Below the blue plastic, yellow tape stretched from pole to pole, forming a rough rectangle. Enclosed in the rectangle was a painfully small mound. Rodas squatted beside it, face grim, notepad in hand.

The next series focused on the child. Nellie Gower lay on her back, legs straight, arms tight to her torso. Her red wool jacket was zipped to her chin. Her sneaker laces were looped in symmetrical bows. The bottom of a polka-dot blouse was neatly tucked into bright pink jeans.

Several photos framed the face printed on the tees. No smile now.

Nellie's hair covered her shoulders in long chocolate waves. I noted that it was parted down the center of her scalp and evenly draped, as though combed and arranged.

Eight days of exposure had wrought the inevitable. The child's features were bloated, her skin mottled purple and green. A maggot mass filled her mouth and each of her nostrils.

The last three shots were close-ups of the child's right hand. Dotted the palm were traces of a filmy white substance.

"What's that?" I asked.

"CSS bagged both hands. The ME swabbed her skin and scraped under her nails. The trace guys thought it might have been remnants of a tissue."

I nodded, still staring at the photos. Synapses were firing in my brain. I remembered another child. Another set of heartbreaking photos.

I knew why I'd been called. Why Skinny was here.

"Sonofabitch."

Rodas ignored Slidell's outburst. "We got a few leads, phone tips, a witness saying a teacher showed unusual interest in Nellie, a neighbor claiming he saw her in a truck with a bearded man. Nothing panned out. Eventually, the case went cold. We're a small department. I had to move on. You know how it is."

Rodas looked at Slidell, then Barrow. Met eyes that knew only too well. "But it ate at me. Kid like that. Whenever I had spare time, I'd pull the file, hoping to spot something I missed."

Again, the Adam's-apple bob. "According to all accounts, Nellie was timid. Careful. Not likely to go with a stranger. We all believed the perp was local. Someone she knew. I guess we got channeled on that.

"Last year I figured what the hell. Think outside the box. I tried VICAP."

Rodas was referring to the FBI's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, a national database maintained to collect and analyze information about homicides, sexual assaults, missing persons, and other violent crimes. The repository contains approximately 150,000 open and closed investigations submitted by some 3,800 state and local agencies, and includes cold cases dating as far back as the 1950s.

"I entered what we had, MO, signature aspects, crime scene descriptors and photos, victim details. Took weeks to get a response. Then damned if our profile didn't match an unsolved here in Charlotte."

"The Nance kid." Slidell spoke through barely parted lips.

"Never got a collar on that one." Tinker's first words since telling Slidell he was posted locally.

Slidell opened his mouth to reply. Apparently reconsidered and closed it.

I glanced at the tub. 090417091201. Lizzie Nance. Skinny's own gut-eating failure.

On April 17, 2009, Elizabeth Ellen "Lizzie" Nance left a ballet class, heading for her mother's apartment three blocks away. She never made it home. Media coverage was massive. Hundreds turned out to answer tip lines, post flyers, and search the woods and ponds near Lizzie's complex. To no avail.

Two weeks after Lizzie's disappearance, a decomposed body was found at a nature preserve northwest of Charlotte. The corpse lay supine with feet together, arms tucked to its sides. A black leotard, tights, and pink cotton underwear still wrapped the putrefied flesh. Bright blue Crocs still covered the feet. Residue found under a thumbnail was identified later as common facial tissue.

Slidell led the homicide investigation. I analyzed the bones.

Though I spent days bending over a scope, I spotted not a single nick, cut, or fracture anywhere on the skeleton. Tim Larabee, the Mecklenburg County medical examiner, was unable to establish definitively whether sexual assault had occurred. Manner of death went down as homicide, cause as unknown.

Lizzie Nance died when she was eleven years old.

"Fortunately, Honor had also entered his unsolved. The system picked up the similarities." Rodas raised both hands. "So here I am."

A moment of silence filled the room. Tinker broke it. "That's it? Two girls roughly the same age? Still wearing their clothes?"

No one responded.

"Wasn't the Nance kid too far gone to exclude rape?"

Palming the table, Slidell leaned toward Tinker. I cut him off.

“The autopsy report noted complicating factors. But the child’s clothing was in place, and Dr. Larabee was confident in concluding there’d been no rape.”

Tinker shrugged, not realizing or not caring that his cavalier attitude was offending everyone. “Seems weak.”

“It’s not just the VICAP profile that brings me to Charlotte,” Rodas continued. “By the time we found Nellie, her body had been rained on for a day and a half. Her clothes were saturated with a mixture of water and decomp runoff. Though not optimistic, I submitted everything to our forensics lab up in Waterbury for testing. To my surprise, some DNA had survived.”

“All hers,” Slidell guessed.

“Yes.” Rodas placed his forearms on the table and leaned in. “Eighteen months ago, I went over the file yet again. This time I caught something I thought could be a break. The residue from Nellie’s hand hadn’t been submitted with her clothing. I phoned the ME; she found the scrapings taken at autopsy by her predecessor. Knowing it was a long shot, I had her send them up to Waterbury.”

Rodas looked straight at me.

I looked straight back.

“The material contained DNA not belonging to Nellie.”

“You sent the profile through the system?” Tinker asked the unnecessary question.

Rodas chin-cocked the report in my hands. “Take a look at the section marked ‘Updated DNA Results,’ Dr. Brennan.”

Curious why I’d been singled out, I did as instructed.

Read a name.

Felt the flutter of adrenaline hitting my gut.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Willie Hodges:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite guide and reading a book. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the publication entitled *Bones Never Lie*. Try to face the book *Bones Never Lie* as your buddy. It means that it can to be your friend when you feel alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So , we need to make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

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