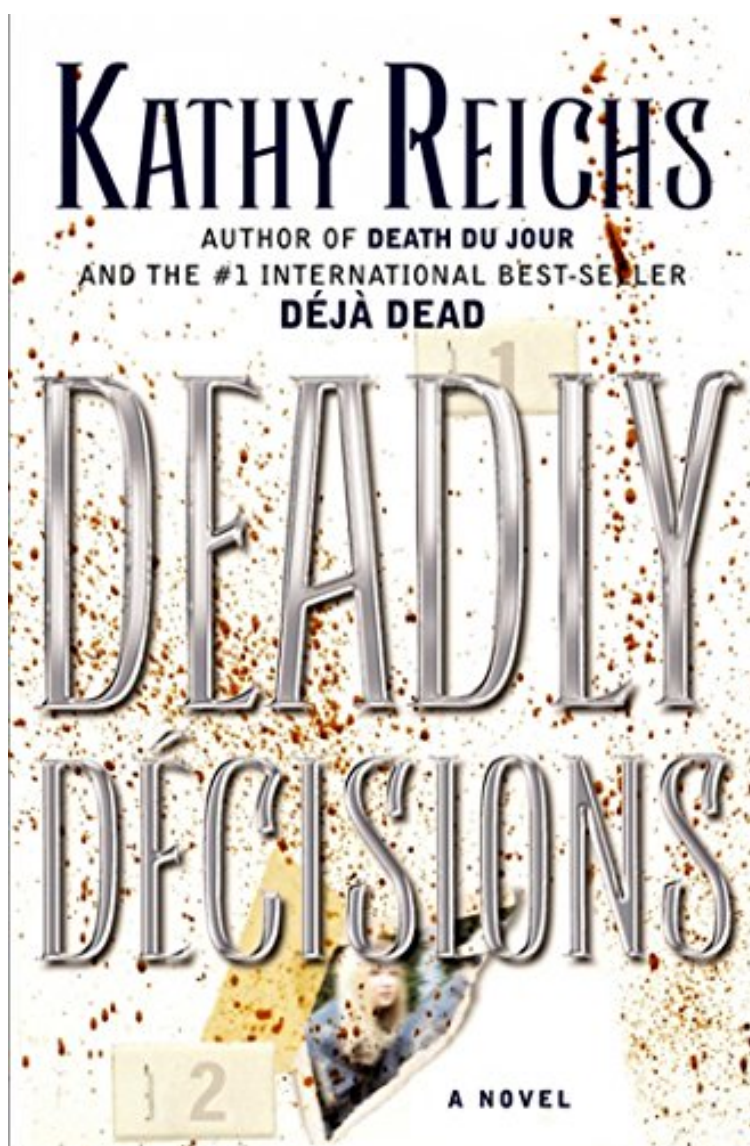


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Deadly Decisions: A Novel



Par Kathy Reichs

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom the New York Times bestselling author of Speaking in BonesFans of TV's CSI: Crime Scene Investigation should be in heaven (People) stepping into the world of forensic anthropologist Dr. Temperance Brennan, star of Kathy Reichs electrifyingly authentic bestsellers.Nine-year-old Emily Anne Toussaint is fatally shot on a Montreal street. A North Carolina teenager disappears from her home, and parts of her skeleton are found hundreds of miles away. The shocking deaths propel Tempe Brennan from north to south, and deep into a shattering investigation inside the bizarre culture of outlaw motorcycle gangswhere one misstep could bring disaster for herself or someone she loves..comTemperance Brennan is a forensic anthropologist with one of the longest commutes in fiction--from North Carolina to Montreal. She works in both places, and in this third outing (after Dj Dead and Death du Jour) she manages to make a

riveting (if a bit too coincidental) connection between a skull in Montreal and the partial skeleton of a teenager--dead since 1984--in North Carolina. Linking them is a 9-year-old girl shot on a Montreal street, the victim of a war among members of an outlaw motorcycle gang in eastern Canada. Another piece of the puzzle is provided by Tempe's visiting nephew, who is fascinated by the biker culture and is drawn into the mystery Tempe's trying to solve: "Know anything about Slick?" asked Kit. "He doesn't look like the pick of the litter." "Yeah, even from that motley litter." He flipped the picture. "Heck, this guy croaked when I was 3 years old." There were two more photos of Slick's funeral, both taken from a distance, one at the cemetery, the other on the church steps. Many of the mourners wore caps riding their eyebrows, and bandannas stretched to cover their mouths. "The one you've got must be from a private collection." I handed Kit the other pictures. "I think these two are police surveillance photos. Seems the bereaved weren't anxious to show their faces." The science is as accurate as the author can make it. Kathy Reichs's own background--as forensic anthropologist for the chief medical officer of North Carolina and director of forensic anthropology for the province of Quebec--ensures verisimilitude of place and procedure and creates a believable milieu.

Fans of Patricia Cornwall will enjoy this solidly written suspense thriller, while those of a less scientific bent, who don't mind a somewhat lagging pace, will skip the details and concentrate on Reichs's fluid writing. All readers will enjoy the way Tempe puts the pieces of the puzzle, as well as the bodies, together. -- Jane Adams

Extrait Chapter One

Her name was Emily Anne. She was nine years old, with black ringlets, long lashes, and caramel-colored skin. Her ears were pierced with tiny gold loops. Her forehead was pierced by two slugs from a Cobra 9-mm semiautomatic. It was a Saturday, and I was working by special request of my boss, Pierre LaManche. I'd been at the lab for four hours, sorting badly mangled tissue, when the door to the large autopsy room opened and Sergeant-Detective Luc Claudel came striding in. Claudel and I had worked together in the past, and though he'd come to tolerate, perhaps even appreciate me, one would not infer that from his brusque manner. "Where's LaManche?" he demanded, glancing at the gurney in front of me, then quickly away. I said nothing. When Claudel was in one of his moods, I ignored him. "Has Dr. LaManche arrived?" The detective avoided looking at my greasy gloves. "It's Saturday, Monsieur Claudel. He doesn't work --" At that moment Michel Charbonneau stuck his head into the room. Through the opening I could hear the whir and clank of the electric door at the back of the building. "Le cadavre est arriv," Charbonneau told his partner. What cadaver? Why were two homicide detectives at the morgue on a Saturday afternoon? Charbonneau greeted me in English. He was a large man, with spiky hair that resembled a hedgehog's. "Hey, Doc." "What's going on?" I asked, pulling off my gloves and lowering my mask. Claudel answered, his face tense, his eyes cheerless in the harsh fluorescent light. "Dr. LaManche will be here shortly. He can explain." Already sweat glistened on his forehead, and his mouth was compressed into a thin, tight line. Claudel detested autopsies and avoided the morgue as much as possible. Without another word he pulled the door wide and brushed past his partner. Charbonneau watched him walk down the corridor, then turned back to me. "This is hard for him. He has kids." "Kids?" I felt something cold in my chest. "The Heathens struck this morning. Ever hear of Richard Marcotte?" The name was vaguely familiar. "Maybe you know him as Araigne. Spider." He curled his fingers like a child doing the waterspout rhyme. "Great guy. And an elected official in the outlaw biker set. Spider is the Vipers sergeant at arms, but he had a real bad day today. When he set out for the gym around eight this morning the Heathens blasted him in a drive-by while his ole lady dove for cover in a lilac bush." Charbonneau ran a hand backward through his hair, swallowed. I waited. "In the process they also killed a child." "Oh, God." My fingers tightened around the gloves. "A little girl. They took her to the Montreal Children's Hospital, but she didn't make it. They're bringing her here now. Marcotte was DOA. He's out back." "LaManche is coming in?" Charbonneau nodded. The five pathologists at the lab take turns being on call. Rarely does it happen, but if an off-hours autopsy or visit to a death scene is deemed necessary, someone is always available. Today that was LaManche. A child. I could feel the familiar surge of emotions and needed to get away. My watch said twelve-forty. I tore off my plastic apron, balled it together with the mask and latex gloves, and threw everything into a biological waste container. Then I washed my hands and rode the elevator to the twelfth floor. I don't know how long I sat in my office, staring at the St. Lawrence and ignoring my carton of yogurt. At one point I thought I heard LaManche's door, then the swish of the glass security doors that separate portions of our wing. Being a forensic anthropologist, I've developed some immunity to violent death. Since the medical examiner turns to me to derive information from the bones of the mutilated, burned, or decomposed, I've seen the worst. My workplaces are the morgue and autopsy room, so I know how a corpse looks and smells, how it feels when handled or cut with a scalpel. I'm accustomed to bloody clothing drying on racks, to the

sound of a Stryker saw cutting through bone, to the sight of organs floating in numbered specimen jars. But I have always been unsettled by the sight of dead children. The shaken baby, the battered toddler, the emaciated child of religious zealots, the preteen victim of a violent pedophile. The violation of young innocents has never failed to agitate and distress me. Not long ago I had worked a case involving infants, twin boys killed and mutilated. It had been one of the most difficult encounters of my career, and I didn't want to reboard that emotional merry-go-round. Then again that case had been a source of satisfaction. When the fanatic responsible was locked up and could order no more executions, I felt a genuine sense of having accomplished something good. I peeled back the cover and stirred the yogurt. Images of those babies hovered in my mind. I remembered my feelings in the morgue that day, the flashbacks to my infant daughter. Dear God, why such insanity? The mutilated men I had left downstairs had also died as a result of the current biker war. Don't get despondent, Brennan. Get angry. Get coldly, resolutely angry. Then apply your science to help nail the bastards. "Yep," I agreed with myself aloud. I finished the yogurt, drained my drink, and headed downstairs. Charbonneau was in the anteroom of one of the small autopsy suites, flipping pages in a spiral notebook. His large frame overflowed a vinyl chair opposite the desk. Claudel was nowhere to be seen. "What's her name?" I asked. "Emily Anne Toussaint. She was on her way to dance class." "Where?" "Verdun." He tipped his head toward the adjoining room. "LaManche has begun the post." I slipped past the detective into the autopsy room. A photographer was taking pictures while the pathologist made notes and shot Polaroid backups. I watched LaManche grasp a camera by its side handles, then raise and lower it above the body. As the lens moved in and out of focus a small dot blurred then condensed over one of the wounds in the child's forehead. When the perimeter of the dot grew sharp, LaManche depressed the shutter release. A white square slid out and he pulled it free and added it to a collection on the side counter. Emily Anne's body bore evidence of the intensive effort to save her life. Her head was partly bandaged, but I could see a clear tube protruding from her scalp, inserted to monitor intracranial pressure. An endotracheal tube ran down her throat and into her trachea and esophagus, placed in order to oxygenate the lungs and to block regurgitation from the stomach. Catheters for IV infusion remained in her subclavian, inguinal, and femoral vessels, and the circular white patches for EKG electrodes were still pasted to her chest. Such a frantic intervention, almost like an assault. I closed my eyes and felt tears burn the backs of my lids. I dragged my eyes back to the small body. Emily Anne wore nothing but a plastic hospital bracelet. Next to her lay a pale green hospital gown, bundled clothing, a pink backpack, and a pair of high-top red sneakers. The harsh fluorescent light. The shining steel and tile. The cold, sterile surgical instruments. A little girl did not belong here. When I looked up, LaManche's sad eyes met mine. Though neither of us made reference to what lay on the stainless steel, I knew his thoughts. Another child. Another autopsy in this same room. Putting a choke hold on my emotions, I described the progress I was making with my own cases, reassembling the corpses of two bikers who'd been blown apart by their own folly, and asked when antemortem medical records would be available. LaManche told me that the files had been requested and should arrive on Monday. I thanked him and went to resume my own grim task. As I sorted tissue, I remembered my previous day's conversation with LaManche, and wished I were still in the Virginia woods. Was it only yesterday LaManche had called me there? Emily Anne was alive then. So much can change in twenty-four hours. Copyright 2000 by Temperance Brennan, L.P.