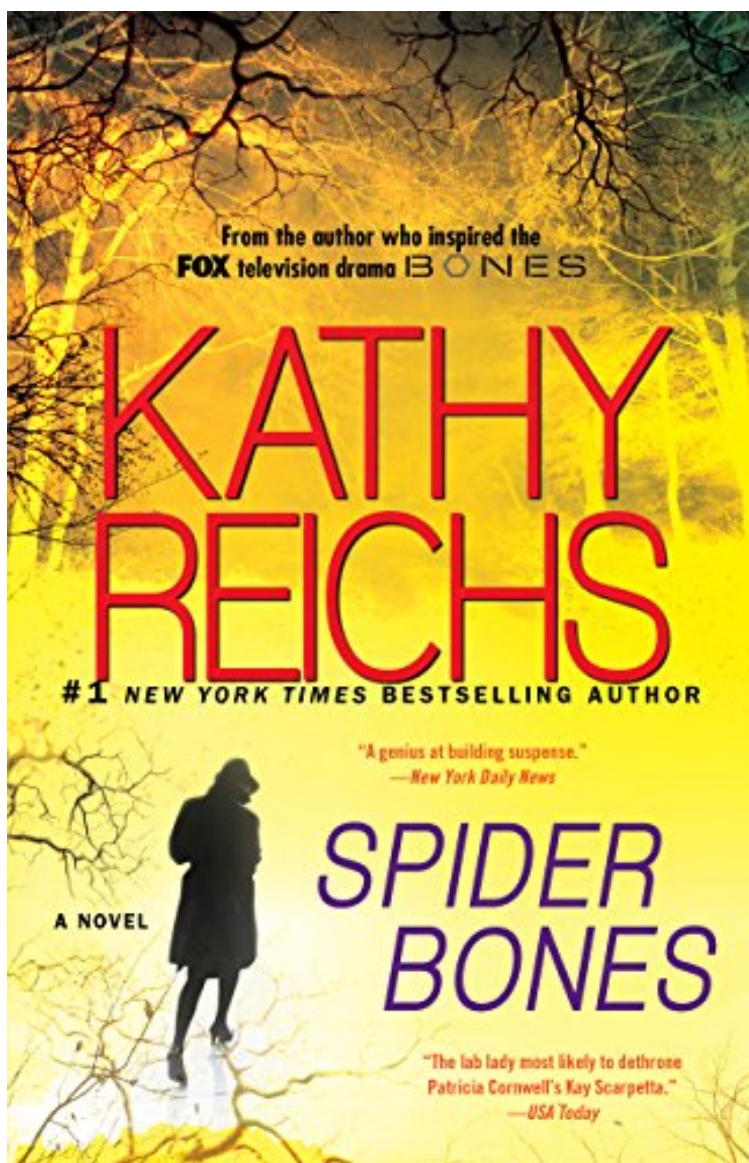


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Spider Bones: A Novel



Par Kathy Reichs
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurKathy Reichs#1 New York Times bestselling author and producer of the FOX television hit Bonesreturns with the thirteenth riveting novel featuring forensic anthropologist Dr. Temperance Brennan. John Lowery was declared dead in 1968the victim of a Huey crash in Vietnam, his body buried long ago in North Carolina. Four decades later, Temperance Brennan is called to the scene of a drowning in Hemmingford, Quebec. The victim appears to have died while in the midst of a bizarre sexual practice. The corpse is later identified as John Lowery. But how could Lowery have died twice, and how did an American soldier end up in Canada? Tempe sets off for the answer, exhuming Lowerys grave in North Carolina and taking the remains to Hawaii for reanalysisisto the headquarters of JPAC, the U.S. militarys Joint

POW/ MIA Accounting Command, which strives to recover Americans who have died in past conflicts. In Hawaii, Tempe is joined by her colleague and ex-lover Detective Andrew Ryan (how ex is he?) and by her daughter, who is recovering from her own tragic loss. Soon another set of remains is located, with Lowerys dog tags tangled among them. Three bodies all identified as Lowery. And then Tempe is contacted by Hadley Perry, Honolulu flamboyant medical examiner, who needs help identifying the remains of an adolescent boy found offshore. Was he the victim of a shark attack? Or something much more sinister? A complex and riveting tale of deceit and murder unfolds in this, the thirteenth thrilling novel in Reichs cleverly plotted and expertly maintained series (The New York Times Book). With the smash hit Bones now in its fifth season and in full syndication and her most recent novel, 206 Bones, an instant New York Times bestseller Kathy Reichs is at the top of her game. Extrait Spider Bones 1 THE AIR SMELLED OF SUN-WARMED BARK AND apple buds raring to blossom and get on with life. Overhead, a million baby leaves danced in the breeze. Fields spread outward from the orchard in which I stood, their newly turned soil rich and black. The Adirondacks crawled the horizon, gaudy bronze and green in the glorious sunlight. A day made of diamonds. The words winged at me from a war drama I watched on the classic-film channel. Van Johnson? No matter. The phrase was perfect for the early May afternoon. I'm a Carolina girl, no fan of polar climes. Jonquils in February. Azaleas, dogwoods, Easter at the beach. Though I've worked years in the North, after each long, dark, tedious winter the beauty of Quebec spring still takes me by surprise. The world was sparkling like a nine-carat rock. A relentless buzzing dragged my gaze back to the corpse at my feet. According to SQ Agent Andr Bandau, now maintaining as much distance as possible, the body came ashore around noon. News telegraphs quickly. Though it was now barely three, flies crawled and swarmed in a frenzy of feeding. Or breeding. I was never sure which. To my right, a tech was taking pictures. To my left, another was running yellow crime-scene tape around the stretch of shoreline on which the body lay. The jackets of both said Service de l'identit judiciaire, Division des scnes de crime. Quebecs version of CSI. Ryan sat in a squad car behind me, talking to a man in a trucker cap. Lieutenant-detective Andrew Ryan, Section des crimes contre la personne, Sret du Qubec. Sounds fancy. Its not. In la Belle Province, crime is handled by local forces in major cities, by the provincial police out in the boonies. Ryan is a homicide detective with the latter, the SQ.

The body was spotted in a pond near the town of Hemmingford, forty-five miles south of Montreal. Hemmingford. Boonies. SQ. You get it. But why Ryan, a homicide dick working out of the SQs Montreal unit? Since the deceased was plastic-wrapped and wearing a rock for a flipper, the local SQ post suspected foul play. Thus the bounce to Ryan. And to me. Temperance Brennan, forensic anthropologist. Working out of the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de mdicine lgale in Montreal, I do the decomposed, mummified, mutilated, dismembered, and skeletal for the province, helping the coroner with identification, cause of death, and postmortem interval. Immersion leaves a corpse in less than pristine condition, so when Ryan caught the call about a floater, he enlisted me. Through the windshield I saw Ryans passenger gesture with agitated hands. The man was probably fifty, with gray stubble and features that suggested a fondness for drink. Black and red letters on his cap declared I Love Canada. A maple leaf replaced the traditional heart icon. Ryan nodded. Wrote something in what I knew was a small notebook. Refocusing on the corpse, I continued jotting in my own spiral pad. The body lay supine, encased in clear plastic, with only the left lower leg outside and exposed. Duct tape sealed the plastic under the chin and around the left calf. The exposed left foot wore a heavy biker boot. Above its rim, a two-inch strip of flesh was the color of oatmeal. A length of yellow polypropylene rope looped the boot roughly halfway up its laces. The ropes other end was attached to a rock via an elaborate network of knots. The victims head was wrapped separately, in what looked like a plastic grocery bag. A black tube protruded from one side of the bag, held in place with more duct tape. The whole arrangement was secured by tape circling the neck and the tubes point of exit. What the flip? When I dropped to a squat, the whining went mongo. Shiny green missiles bounced off my face and hair. Up close, the smell of putrefaction was unmistakable. That was wrong, given the vics packaging. Waving off Diptera, I repositioned for a better view of the bodys far side. A dark mass pulsated in what I calculated was the right-thigh region. I shooed the swarm with one gloved hand. And felt a wave of irritation. The right lower was visible through a fresh cut in the plastic. Flies elbowed for position on the wrist and moved upward out of sight. Sonofabitch. Suppressing my annoyance, I shifted to the head. Algae spread among the folds and creases of the bag covering the top and back of the skull. More slimed one side of the odd little tube. I could discern murky features beneath the translucent shroud. A chin. The rim of an orbit. A nose, bent to one side. Bloating and discoloration suggested that visual identification would not be an option. Rising, I swept my gaze toward the pond. Nosed to the shore was a tiny aluminum skiff with a

three-horsepower outboard engine. On the floor in back were a beer cooler, a tackle box, and a fishing rod.

Beside the skiff was a red canoe, beached and lying on its starboard side. Navigator was lettered in white below the port gunwale. Polypropylene rope ran from a knot on the canoes midship thwart to a rock on the ground. I noted that the knots on the rock resembled the one securing the victims ankle weight. Inside the canoe, a paddle lay lengthwise against the starboard hull. A canvas duffel was wedged below the stern seat. A knife and a roll of duct tape were snugged beside the duffel. An engine hum joined the buzz of flies and the bustle and click of techs moving around me. I ignored it. Five yards up the shoreline, a rusted red moped sat beneath a precociously flowering tree. The license plate was unreadable from where I stood. At least with my eyes. Dual rearview mirrors. Kickstand. Raised trunk behind the seat. The thing reminded me of my freshman undergrad wheels. I loved that scooter. Walking the area between the skiff and the moped, I saw a set of tire treads consistent with the pickup parked by the road, and one tread line consistent with the moped itself. No foot or boot prints. No cigarette butts, aluminum cans, condoms, or candy wrappers. No litter of any kind. Moving back along the water, I continued recording observations. The engine sounds grew louder. Mud-rimmed pond, shallow, no tides or chop. Apple trees within five feet of the bank. Ten yards to a gravel road accessing Highway 219. Tires crunched. The engine sounds cut out. Car doors opened, slammed. Male voices spoke French. Satisfied I'd learn nothing further from the scene, and wanting a word with the industrious Agent Bandau, I turned and walked toward the vehicles lining the road. A black van had joined Ryans Jeep, the blue crime-scene truck, the fishermans pickup, and Bandaus SQ cruiser. Yellow letters on the van said Bureau du coroner. I recognized the vans driver, an autopsy tech named Gilles Pomerleau. Riding shotgun was my new assistant, Roch Lauzon. Exchanging bonjours, I assured Pomerleau and Lauzon the wait wouldnt be long. They crossed to view the corpse. Ryan remained in the cruiser with the unfortunate angler. I approached Bandau, a gangly twentysomething with a wheat blond mustache and skin that looked like it really hated sun. Though it was hidden by his agents cap, I envisioned pale hair going south at a rate that alarmed its young owner. Whats with the plastic wrap? Bandau asked in French, looking past me toward the corpse. Good question. I had no explanation. Male or female? Yes, I said. Bandaus face came around, winking my reflection off his aviator shades. My expression was not a happy one. I understand you were the first responder. Bandau nodded, eyes unreadable behind the dark lenses. Howd that go? Bandau cocked his chin toward his cruiser. Local named Gripper found the vic. Claims he was fishing when he saw the canoe. He motored over to investigate, something snagged his propeller. Says he paddled in, saw his catch was a corpse, dialed nine-one-one on his cell. While waiting, he dragged the body ashore then retrieved the canoe. Thorough guy. Guess you could say that. Is he believable? I asked. Bandau shrugged. Who knows? What are his creds? Lives on avenue Margaret with his wife. Works maintenance at the wildlife park. Hemmingford is located in the Montrgie region, a hair from the Canada-U.S. border. The Montrgie is noted for apples, maple syrup, and Parc Safari, a combination drive-through nature preserve and amusement park. When I first started commuting to Quebec, the media were following the story of a group of rhesus monkey escapees from the park. I had visions of the band belly-crawling south through the night to avoid border patrol, risking all for a green card and a better life. Twenty years later, the image still amuses me. Go on, I said. I caught the call around noon, drove out, secured the area. And printed the body. Chilly. Sensing my disapproval, Bandau spread his feet and thumb-hooked his belt. I thought it might speed the ID. You cut the plastic. I wore gloves. Defensive. Look, I had the new camera, so I shot close-ups and transmitted the file electronically. You compromised the scene. What scene? The guy was bobbing in a pond. The flies will chip in to buy you a beer. Especially the ladies. Theyre ovipositing with glee as we speak. I was trying to help. You broke protocol. Bandaus lips tightened. What happened with the prints? I got ridge patterning on all five digits. Someone at the post sent the file to CPIC. From there it went into both NCIC and the New York State system. CPIC is the Canadian Police Information Centre, a computerized index of criminal justice information. NCIC is the U.S. equivalent, the FBI's National Crime Information Center. Why send the prints south? Being on the border, we get a lot of Americans coming through. And the scooter has a New York plate. Not bad, Bandau. Hearing a car door slam, we both turned. Ryan was walking toward us. Released for the moment, Gripper was leaning on his pickup, looking uneasy. Ryan nodded to Bandau, spoke to me. What do you think? Guys dead. Guy? Based solely on size. How long? Tough to say. Given this weeks warm temperatures, and the shrink-wrap, I'd guess a day or two. Theres some decomp, but not much. I cast a meaningful glance at Bandau. That'll change now that the bugs have been issued a gate pass. I told Ryan what Bandau had done. What kind of rookie move was that? Bandaus cheeks went raspberry. Thats no way to make it up the chain, son. Ryan turned back to me. Twenty-four to forty-eight

hours tracks with the wits account. Gripper says he comes out here on his days off, usually Tuesdays and Thursdays. Swears day before yesterday the pond was canoe and corpse free. Algae patterning suggests the body was floating with the head just at or below the waterline, I said. Ryan nodded. According to Gripper, the body was hanging head up in the water, with the booted foot attached to a rock lying on the bottom. He guesses the ponds about eight feet deep where he found the guy. Where was the canoe? Beside the vic. Gripper says that's how the rope got tangled in his outboard. Ryan spoke to Bandau. Check for feedback on those prints. Yes, sir. Ryan and I watched Bandau lope toward his cruiser. Probably DVRs cop shows, Ryan said. Not the right ones, I said. Ryan glanced toward the body, back to me. What do you think? Weird one, I said. Suicide? Accident? Murder? I spread my palms in a who knows gesture. Ryan smiled. That's why I bring you along. The vic probably kept the canoe at the pond and drove the moped back and forth. Back and forth from where? Beats me. Yep. Can't do without you. A wood thrush trilled overhead. Another answered.

The cheerful exchange was in stark contrast to the grim conversation below. As I glanced up, hurried footsteps startled the birds into flight. Got him. Bandau's aviators were now hanging by one bow from his pocket. Cold hit in the States. Thirteen-point match. Ryan's brows may have shot higher than mine. John Charles Lowery. Date of birth March twenty-first, nineteen fifty. Not bad, Bandau. This time I said it aloud. There's one problem. Bandau's already deep frown lines deepened. John Charles Lowery died in nineteen sixty-eight. *Revue de presse* "You'll want to keep turning the pages long after lights out to find out what happens next Reich's real-life expertise gives her novels an authenticity that most other crime novelists would kill for" (Daily Express) "Reich's seamless blending of fascinating science and dead-on psychological portrayals, not to mention a whirlwind of a plot, make [her novels] a must read" (Jeffery Deaver) "With Kathy Reichs the reader knows they're in the hands of an expert" (Sunday Express) "Brennan is a winner, and so is Reichs" (Daily News) "A truly impressive writer" (We Love This Book)