

COME, LET US PREY

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

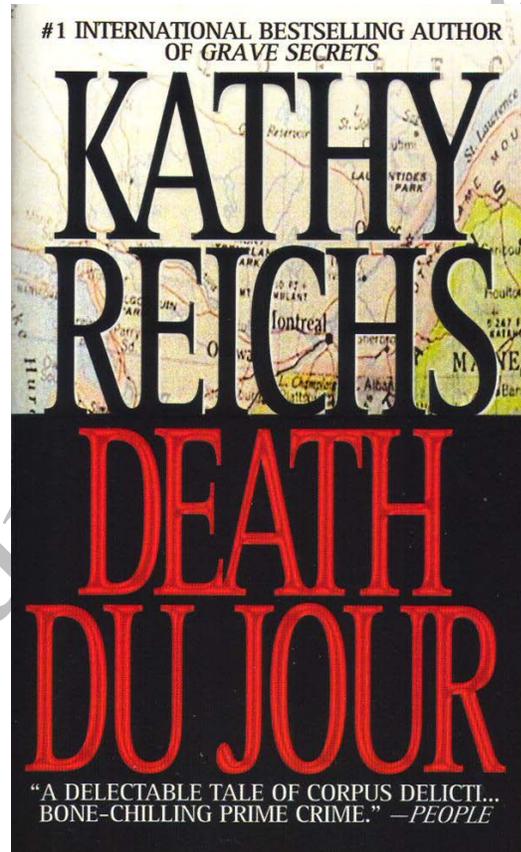
In most cultures, death and religion are closely connected: we look to our religious beliefs and institutions to assuage the grief and uncertainty we feel when our life is in turmoil, or someone near to us dies, to provide direction in our own lives and reassurance about our own fate. Ritual plays a central role in these processes, providing our feelings and actions with a framework in which we can find meaning, whether these rituals revolve around the lighting of a candle, the reciting of a text, or the burial of someone's earthly remains.

But religion – or rather religious belief – has a dark side as well. At the hands of a charismatic leader it can be used to prey upon the vulnerable, drawing them into a complex web of symbols and rituals designed to erase their reason and subject them to the designs of others. In this most personal area of our lives, the line between belief and brainwashing, between genuine religions and mind-destroying cults, is a very fine one, and as this week's novel makes clear, when that line is crossed the consequences can be deadly.

Kathy Reichs

Many readers will be familiar with Kathy Reich's work through her current TV series, *Bones*, which along with *Cold Case Files* and *CSI*, has captured the public's interest in the technical side of crime detection. Reichs brings impressive credentials to this subject. She was born in the U.S., where she

spends half her time working as a



forensic anthropologist for the State of North Carolina; when she's not there, however, she works in Montreal doing the same thing for the Province of Quebec. In between times she is a professor of anthropology at the University of North Carolina, and has traveled to Rwanda, Guatemala, and Ground Zero in New York to help identify human remains. In her spare time she teaches FBI agents at their training base in Quantico, Virginia. With all that she somehow finds the time to write mystery

novels and produce her television series. To date, other books in the Temperance Brennan series include *Déjà Dead* (which won the 1997 Ellis Award for Best First Novel), *Deadly Decisions*, *Fatal Voyage*, *Grave Secrets*, *Bare Bones*, *Monday Mourning*, and *Cross Bones*. Some people have way too much energy....

Death du Jour
(Pocket Books, 1999)

This story is largely set in Montreal and the Eastern Townships, shortly before and during the Quebec Ice Storm of 1998. Like her creator, Temperance Brennan is a forensic anthropologist working for the province of Quebec. She often finds herself working with Andrew Ryan, a taciturn Montreal homicide detective with whom she maintains an intimate but ambivalent relationship. Together they are drawn into a web of events that reaches into Europe and the U.S., and find their very lives, and the lives of those close to them, in deadly peril.

Called to a Montreal gravesite to unearth the remains of a nun, Sister Elizabeth Nicolet, who died in 1888 — a necessary step in considering her for beatification — Tempe is awakened a few hours after returning home to attend a deadly house fire in St. Jovite. Three bodies are initially discovered, but before long investigators uncover two more adults and

two infants in an outbuilding. They didn't die from the fire.

Tempe's pursuit of the arson-and-homicide case takes her to Charlotte, North Carolina and into the scary world of religious cults and communes. While Tempe grapples with the remains of Sister Elizabeth, whose remains suggest she was not entirely what she seemed, the reader is treated to events unfolding on Crescent Street in Montreal and on Nun's Island, with the climax taking place in the Eastern Townships during the Ice Storm of 98! What's not to like for a Townships reader?

The many faces of homicide

Because of its contemporary (and familiar) setting, this is a gripping novel, one that will keep readers on the edge of their chairs. An old writer's adage says "Go with what you know," and Reich's considerable forensic experience stands her in good stead, painting for the reader a vivid and convincing picture of the many faces of homicide. At the same time, it is a revealing portrait of a religious zealot and the dark world of cults, which those who remember Waco and Jonestown will find both disturbing and compelling. It is also an especially well-crafted story about an important facet of human experience: the will to believe.

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