

A Newcomer

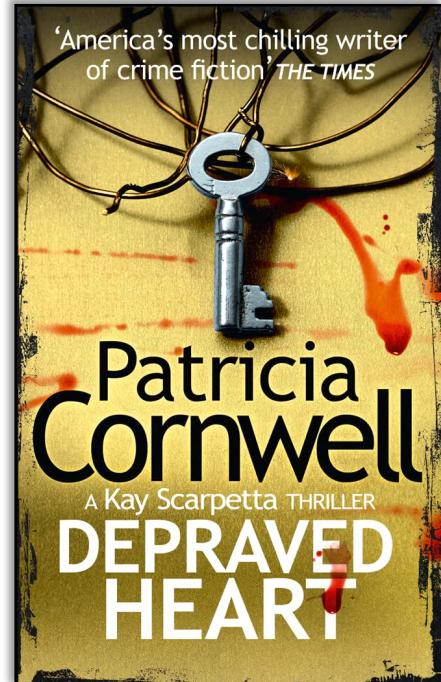
I was the chief medical examiner of Virginia, first woman to hold that position. I've become Lucy's caretaker after my selfish sister Dorothy decided to unload her on me. 5 forever and the timing for when it all began couldn't have been worse.

My first summer in Richmond and it was under siege as a serial killers strangled women in their own homes, in their own beds. The murders were escalating and becoming 10 increasingly sadistic. We couldn't catch him. We didn't have a clue. I was new. The press and politicians thundered down on me like an avalanche. I was a misfit. I was chilly and aloof¹. I was peculiar. What kind of woman would dissect dead bodies in a morgue? [...]

The exhilaration of being one of the first female chiefs in the United States quickly lost its thrill (...). The former chief medical examiner was a misogynistic bigoted alcoholic who died suddenly 15 and left a disastrous legacy. No seasoned² board-certified forensic pathologist with a decent reputation wanted to take his place. So a bright idea occurred to the men in charge. What about a woman?

Women are good at cleaning up messes. Why not find a female forensic expert? It doesn't matter if she's young and missing the requisite experience to head a statewide system. As long as she's a 20 qualified expert in court and minds her manners she can grow into the position. How about an overeducated detail-addicted work-obsessed perfectionist to Italian woman who grew up dirt poor, has everything to prove, is turbo-driven and divorced with no kids?

Patricia Cornwell, *Depraved Heart*, 2015



¹ distant

² experienced