

Cruel & Unusual Study Guide

Cruel & Unusual by Patricia Cornwell

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Cruel & Unusual Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue and Chapter 1.....	5
Chapter 2.....	7
Chapters 3-4.....	9
Chapter 5.....	11
Chapters 6-7.....	13
Chapter 8.....	15
Chapter 9.....	17
Chapter 10.....	19
Chapters 11-12.....	21
Chapters 13-14 and Epilogue.....	23
Characters.....	25
Objects/Places.....	29
Themes.....	31
Style.....	34
Quotes.....	36
Topics for Discussion.....	38



Plot Summary

Cruel and Unusual is the fourth in the Kay Scarpetta series of novels by Patricia Cornwell. In this novel, Scarpetta is waiting for a death row inmate to be brought to her morgue for autopsy. Scarpetta performs a normal autopsy, finding no surprises, only to discover a short time later that someone who appears to be her dead convict is committing crimes throughout Richmond. Not only this, but Scarpetta's trusted morgue supervisor is found dead, and all evidence seems to point in Scarpetta's direction. *Cruel and Unusual* is a dear friend in peril, making it Patricia Cornwell at her best.

Scarpetta is not used to planning an autopsy on men who are still alive, but finds herself doing just that on the night Ronnie Joe Waddell is executed. Waddell brutally murdered a young television reporter ten years before and has received the sentence the state of Virginia felt matched the crime. Scarpetta does her job, autopsying the body and filing her report. However, a few days later while investigating the murder of a young boy found in an eerily-similar fashion to Waddell's victim, questions are raised as to the identity of the body Scarpetta autopsied.

At the same time, Scarpetta begins to notice odd behavior in her young morgue supervisor. Susan Story is several months pregnant, and Scarpetta puts her odd behavior down to hormones. However, when Scarpetta learns that Susan did not fingerprint Waddell's body, she begins to question Susan's motives. Susan also begins to have strange accidents, like breaking bottles of formaldehyde. Shortly after this odd accident, Scarpetta discovers that someone broke into her computer files, and she suspects Susan.

A body is found in what was made to look like a suicide. During the investigation, a fingerprint is found that appears to belong to Waddell. Scarpetta begins to wonder if Waddell managed to switch places with another inmate, and if it was this other man who was on her autopsy table the night of the execution. However, a discussion with Benton Wesley suggests that the murder of the young boy that was similar to Waddell's victim could not have been committed by the same person because the second murder was much more organized and showed premeditation; whereas, Waddell's crime was an act of passion.

Scarpetta begins searching for ways to prove that Waddell died in the electric chair as the state of Virginia assumes. Finding someone who can identify the body by sight proves to be difficult, however, because Waddell gained a significant amount of weight on death row and shaved his facial hair. While buried in this investigation, Scarpetta is called out on a Christmas Day murder only to find it is her morgue supervisor. Susan Story was shot in her car while it was parked on a street miles from her home. Within hours Susan's distraught husband turns to the media and points his finger solidly in Scarpetta's direction.

Scarpetta comes under investigation by the police when her fingerprints show up on an envelope in Susan Story's house. Scarpetta is relieved of her duties with the coroner's



office; however, Scarpetta continues to investigate the Waddell case. Scarpetta arranges to search the home of Waddell's victim to see if they can find a fingerprint that is unquestionably Waddell's. Scarpetta finds the fingerprint at the same time her niece is able to prove someone tampered with AFIS, the government fingerprint database that made it appear that Waddell was loose and killing again.

In an attempt to find the identity of the real killer, Scarpetta travels to Florida to retrieve some evidence Waddell left to one of the murder victims. It turns out the evidence is a briefcase Waddell took from his victim's home that belongs to Governor Joe Noring. Now Scapetta has the evidence she needs to prove Noring allowed a criminal to be released from prison in order to find the briefcase and return it to Noring before anyone else could find it. With this evidence, the case comes together and the real killer is identified. At the same time, Scarpetta is able to clear her name before a grand jury and life returns to some semblance of normalcy.



Prologue and Chapter 1

Prologue and Chapter 1 Summary

Cruel and Unusual is the fourth in the Kay Scarpetta series of novels by Patricia Cornwell. In this novel, Scarpetta is waiting for a death row inmate to be brought to her morgue for autopsy. Scarpetta performs a normal autopsy, finding no surprises, only to discover a short time later that someone who appears to be her dead convict is committing crimes throughout Richmond. Not only this, but Scarpetta's trusted morgue supervisor is found dead, and evidence seems to point in Scarpetta's direction. Cruel and Unusual is a dear friend in peril, making it Patricia Cornwell at her best.

Kay Scarpetta waits at home for word that Ronnie Joe Waddell has been executed so she can return to the morgue and perform his autopsy. As she waits, Scarpetta gets a call from a detective asking for her help on a new case. A boy was found behind an abandoned grocery store with two strange wounds that appear as though someone has removed chunks of his skin. The boy is still alive, but the detective would like Scarpetta to look at the wounds and offer her opinion on them. Scarpetta agrees to meet the detective the following morning. After she hangs up the phone, Scarpetta sees a report on the television news describing the scene at the prison where Waddell is to be executed. Scarpetta decides to go in to the morgue because it appears that Waddell will not be getting a stay from the governor. As Scarpetta is preparing for the autopsy, her administrator, Ben Stevens, comes downstairs and lets them know the execution is taking place as planned.

A short time later, an ambulance arrives with Waddell's body. Scarpetta immediately notices a great deal of blood on the body and sheet covering it. Scarpetta is told Waddell had a nose bleed. Scarpetta instructs Susan Story, her morgue supervisor to take Waddell's fingerprints while she begins to inspect the body. Susan finds an envelope in Waddell's back pocket that has the written request that its contents be buried with him. Scarpetta gives the envelope to her deputy chief, Fielding, to be placed with Waddell's personal effects. Detective Marino, Scarpetta's colleague and personal friend arrives to watch the autopsy. Marino witnessed the execution because the Waddell case was one he worked ten years ago. The autopsy proceeds normally with the only interesting findings being several abrasions on Waddell's arms and a tubular stomach suggesting Waddell had not eaten much in several days.

After the autopsy, Marino drives Scarpetta home and they discuss the murder that led to Waddell's execution, the brutal killing of television reporter Robyn Naismith. Marino worked the case with a partner, but saw it through alone because his partner committed suicide before the case was solved. This conversation leads to a discussion of justice and whether Scarpetta would feel any gratification in the deaths of the men who were responsible for the bomb that killed her on again, off again boyfriend, Mark James, earlier that year. This discussion leaves Scarpetta thinking about Mark after Marino has gone home, about the last time they saw each other, and the loneliness that has



become a mainstay in Scarpetta's life. Unable to sleep, Scarpetta goes into her office early and discovers the contents of the envelope Waddell wanted buried with him were food and toll receipts.

Prologue and Chapter 1 Analysis

Kay Scarpetta is introduced in this chapter. Scarpetta is the book's narrator, and everything is seen and heard through her first person point of view. In the opening sentences of the book, Scarpetta is waiting for a man to die so that she can perform his autopsy. The autopsy is for a man condemned to die in the electric chair for the murder of a popular television reporter, Robyn Naismith. Scarpetta is clearly disturbed by the idea of waiting to do an autopsy on a man who is still alive, but approaches it with the professional attitude necessary for her job. This characterizes Scarpetta as a solemn, professional woman who has learned to put her own emotions aside in order to perform her job to the best of her ability.

The autopsy on Ronnie Joe Waddell goes smoothly. Only two findings are noted, one is abrasions on his arms and the other is a tubular stomach that suggests Waddell had not been eating in the days before his death. Scarpetta also finds an envelope on the body with the written request that its contents be buried with the body. Scarpetta gives this envelope to her deputy chief only to find out the next morning that it contained receipts for food and tolls that Waddell should not have had access to. The only other thing of note about the autopsy is Scarpetta's routine request that Susan Story, her morgue supervisor, fingerprint the body. However, the reader never sees Susan perform this task and will recall that omission later in the novel.

Marino arrives during the autopsy and Scarpetta learns he attended the execution. Scarpetta immediately shows concern for Marino, expressing to the reader her affection for Marino and illustrating that theirs is more than a professional relationship. Later Marino takes Scarpetta and expresses anger at Waddell because it was during the hunt for him that Marino's partner killed himself. This conversation leads Marino to ask Scarpetta how she feels about the people responsible for her on again, off again lover, Mark James. Marino's question not only introduces the death of Mark James but shows Scarpetta's antipathy toward the death penalty even in the face of a personal loss. Discussion of Mark's death also causes Scarpetta to dwell on her grief, introducing the theme of loneliness as the reader sees how lonely Scarpetta is in her grief.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Scarpetta meets Detective Joe Trent at Henrico Doctor's Hospital in order to examine assault victim, Eddie Heath. Eddie Heath is a ten-year-old boy who was abducted and mutilated, then left for dead behind an abandoned grocery store. Besides a bullet wound to his head, Eddie has two sections of skin that appear to have been excised, one from his shoulder and the other from his thigh. Scarpetta examines each of the wounds and believes the killer was trying to hide something. At first Scarpetta believes the killer was removing identifying marks from the body, but when she learns the boy had no tattoos or scars, Scarpetta begins to wonder if perhaps the killer was trying to hide something that could identify the killer, such as bite marks. When she returns to her office, Scarpetta asks her computer expert to run a search on cases that include bite marks or cases where skin has been excised from the victim.

Scarpetta gets a phone call from Waddell's attorney, Nicholas Grueman. Scarpetta dislikes Grueman because he was her professor in law school and was particularly hard on her. Grueman makes Scarpetta feel as though she is still a naïve student every time she speaks to him. Grueman questions Scarpetta's report on Waddell, especially mention of the tubular stomach and the abrasions on his arms. Grueman pushes Scarpetta so hard on the abrasions that she is forced to admit she does not know with certainty what caused the marks. When Scarpetta hangs up, she learns that Eddie Heath has died and his body has just arrived for autopsy. As Scarpetta begins the autopsy, she carefully examines the exterior of Eddie's body. Scarpetta finds what appears to be tape residue on Eddie's wrists, suggesting he was bound with tape at some point during his abduction, most likely after he was shot as suggested by the lack of abrasions on the skin.

As Scarpetta prepares to begin the internal exam, Susan does something she has never done before, breaking several bottles of formaldehyde. Scarpetta quickly cleans Susan up and then sends her to her own office to lay down due to the fact that Susan is pregnant and the fumes have left her light headed. When Susan returns to the morgue an hour later, she requests that Scarpetta not list her as a witness to the autopsy, and Scarpetta quickly agrees. The following Saturday, Scarpetta and Marino go to the state penitentiary where Waddell was executed. Scarpetta is searched by a female guard named Helen before being allowed into the prison body. The prison is nearly empty because a new prison is opening and most of the prisoners have already been transferred. A guard takes Scarpetta and Marino to death row and walks them through the final hours of Waddell's life. Scarpetta learns that Waddell had a visit from his mother and was served a meal he did not eat. Scarpetta then examines the electric chair and is able to conclude that the abrasions on Waddell's arms did come from the restraints on the chair. Scarpetta is also able to establish that the execution was routine and nothing malfunctioned on the chair.



After leaving the prison, Marino takes Scarpetta to the neighborhood where Eddie Heath lived, allowing her to trace Eddie's path on the night he was abducted and mutilated. Marino and Scarpetta end up behind the abandoned grocery store where the boy was found. Marino suggests that the boy was abducted by someone he trusted and that his body was intentionally left lying against the Dumpster, rather than because the murderer could not get him into the Dumpster as suspected by other detectives. Marino believes the killer was trying to say something by leaving the boy the way he did.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Scarpetta views the wounds on Eddie Heath's body and concludes that the killer was trying to remove something, perhaps bite marks. Scarpetta's opinion suggests a killer who is intelligent and is aware of the abilities of forensic science. Scarpetta then orders a computer search on similar crimes, hoping to identify a killer from old cases. Scarpetta's order both shows that she is aware of the power of the computer, but it also suggests to the reader that Scarpetta is not computer literate, or she would have conducted the search herself. Scarpetta's computer knowledge will be a factor in later in the novel and therefore it is important that the reader be aware of her lack of computer skills. When Eddie Heath dies, Scarpetta does the autopsy and finds tape residue on his wrists, but does not find any abrasions on the wrists. The lack of abrasions implies to Scarpetta that Eddie was bound with tape after he was shot and no longer capable of fighting. Tying this in with Marino's theory that someone Eddie trusted abducted him implies that whoever the abductor was, he was able to keep Eddie comfortable long enough to shoot him, therefore reducing the need for restraints.

Two new characters are introduced in this chapter. The first is Nicholas Grueman, Scarpetta's old law school professor. Grueman was once hard on Scarpetta, making her feel like an ignorant child, and still has the power to make Scarpetta feel inadequate. One phone call from Grueman and Scarpetta finds herself going to the penitentiary to view the electric chair just to be sure the abrasions on Waddell's arm were caused by the restraints on the chair. Grueman's power over Scarpetta is fascinating because Scarpetta comes off as the type of person who is never out of control, but with Grueman Scarpetta seems just as human as everyone else. The other new character introduced here is Susan Story, Scarpetta's morgue supervisor. Susan was present at Waddell's autopsy but was not a major player at the time. Now, however, the reader becomes more aware of Susan, seeing her as a young, vulnerable woman expecting her first child and concerned about the world into which she is bringing her child. Susan accidentally breaks several jars of formaldehyde during Eddie's autopsy, something she has never done before, showing the reader the depth of her anguish at the horror in the world. Susan spends an hour in Scarpetta's office recovering from the accident. Susan's presence in Scarpetta's office seems trivial at this point in the novel, but will appear more significant as the plot continues to develop.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

Alone at home that night, with thoughts of Robyn Naismith on her mind, Scarpetta looks through the file of search results her computer administrator sent her. After reading through the file, Scarpetta checks for any memos or other messages that need her attention and finds a file she did not create. The file is small, containing only one sentence. Scarpetta calls her niece in Florida, a computer expert, and asks her how the file could have appeared on Scarpetta's secure directory. Lucy runs Scarpetta through some commands and comes to the conclusion that someone broke into Scarpetta's directory either with her password or using an administrator's password. However, Lucy cannot be sure without running some commands on the computer, and Scarpetta does not know enough about computers to help. Scarpetta suggests that Lucy come to Virginia and stay with her through Christmas. Lucy is thrilled, and it is arranged for her to fly out the following Sunday. Scarpetta is shocked to see how grown up Lucy has become. However, pleasure turns to tension when Lucy begins questioning Scarpetta about Mark's death and Scarpetta's choice to move from her old house to another in a more secure neighborhood.

While Lucy works out at Scarpetta's gym, Scarpetta works on an article she needs to edit. Scarpetta becomes concerned when Lucy stays out longer than expected, calling the gym only to learn Lucy is not there. Before Scarpetta can decide what to do next, she gets a phone call that comes across her caller ID as a number from which she has gotten multiple hang ups over the past few weeks. The call is from Marino. Marino is calling from the home of a suicide victim. Lucy arrives home as Scarpetta hangs up the phone. Scarpetta confesses her concern but does not have time to discuss the situation with Lucy as she rushes to join Marino at the crime scene. The victim, Jennifer Deighton, appears to have committed suicide by sitting in her car and allowing carbon monoxide to accumulate in the closed garage. However, as Scarpetta examines the body she finds a lack of dirt on the bottom of Jennifer's socks, suggesting she did not walk to the car. Inside the house, Scarpetta and Marino discover that Jennifer opened her Christmas gifts before her death. There also seems to be evidence that someone moved a chair from the dining room into the living room at some point and then returned it. They also find a poem in a book beside her bed and a blank piece of paper on her bed. In Jennifer's office, Scarpetta and Marino find artifacts of Jennifer's business, a subscription horoscope operation Jennifer ran over the phone. They also find a fax machine in the office. Scarpetta tells Marino about the hang ups she got from Jennifer's home number.

Scarpetta and Marino visit the neighbor across the street who reported the death. Mrs. Clary tells them that she never really liked Jennifer Deighton because of the nature of her business and the fact that the lights in a nearby church began malfunctioning about the same time Jennifer moved into her home, suggesting she was a witch and was causing some interference with the church. Mrs. Clary is able to pinpoint time of death,



however, informing Scarpetta and Marino that she attempted to visit Jennifer that morning and noticed smoke in the garage windows. This suggests to Marino and Scarpetta that Jennifer died the night before. Scarpetta returns home and finds Lucy working on her computer. Scarpetta is shocked at how easily Lucy discovered her database user name and password. Lucy tells Scarpetta that the strange file on her database was someone's attempt to send a message to another computer on the network. Lucy suggests that Scarpetta check the cables to the computers on the network and see which one is marked with the name on the strange file.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Scarpetta is an intelligent woman, but she once again reveals to the reader that she does not know a lot about computers. Luckily for her, Scarpetta has a niece who is an expert at computers. Scarpetta reaches out to her niece for help and ends up inviting her to spend Christmas with her. Scarpetta's decision to invite her niece to Richmond introduces not only a new character, but Scarpetta's desire to have her loved ones close to her. Although Scarpetta has a sister and mother, her niece is the only relative to whom she feels close. It is Christmas and a time in which people often reach out to loved ones. Scarpetta is still grieving over her deceased boyfriend, so it seems human for her to want to reach out to someone she loves, showing the reader Scarpetta's more sensitive side and perhaps her vulnerability. Unfortunately, Scarpetta's niece, Lucy, has grown up and is not the easygoing child she once was. Scarpetta and Lucy clash from the moment Lucy arrives, adding tension to the plot and revealing Scarpetta's inability to relate to living human beings as well as she does with her autopsy victims.

Scarpetta is called out to the scene of a suicide. The home is linked to a phone number that has been showing up on Scarpetta's caller id list, but the caller hangs up on Scarpetta's answering machine. Scarpetta does not know the victim. These phone calls are suspicious, especially now that the owner of the phone is dead. Scarpetta does her external exam and immediately determines that the evidence points to murder. A search of the house does not turn up anything unusual, except that the victim was an unusual business owner—a subscription horoscope-reading business. Several pieces of evidence are gathered from the house, but no suicide note is discovered, underscoring Scarpetta's belief that the death is not a suicide. The most significant evidence found at the scene are a poem in a book, a blank sheet of paper, and the chair that was moved into the living room and then returned to the dining room. These items will be revisited as the investigation continues and begins to unravel the mystery of Jennifer's death.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Scarpetta goes into work the next morning and discovers most of her employees are forced to stay home due to a large snowfall the night before. Susan is at work, however, having gotten a ride from Ben Stevens. Scarpetta and Susan immediately begin working on Jennifer Deighton's autopsy. When Susan learns that Jennifer gave horoscope readings for a living, she becomes upset. Susan says a self-proclaimed witch cursed her sister just weeks before her sister died in a car accident. Susan does not want to work on the case, so Scarpetta sends her to her office to rest. During the autopsy, Scarpetta discovers that Jennifer was dead when she was placed inside her car, most likely strangled. While trying to reach Marino to give him the news, Scarpetta gets word from Ben Stevens that Susan went home sick and will not be in the following day. Scarpetta also gets a call from someone claiming to be Jennifer's brother but who acts suspiciously. Marino arrives, telling Scarpetta that they were able to lift a few fingerprints at the scene. Scarpetta tells Marino about the autopsy, and they both come to the conclusion that the killer did not mean to kill Jennifer, was most likely attempting to subdue her by putting her in a choke hold, strangling her accidentally and then staged the suicide. Finally, Scarpetta tells Marino about a feather she found and asks him to look for a source.

After Marino leaves, Scarpetta finds herself alone in the office and takes the opportunity to look at all the computers to see if she can find which computer was the intended recipient of the strange file she found in her own database. Scarpetta cannot find tags on the cables of the computers, so she goes into the administrator's office. Scarpetta unplugs the cable marked with the name of the suspicious file and discovers that the cable belongs to the computer in Stevens' office. Scarpetta concludes that the note intended for Stevens was written from her own computer, proving someone used her office computer to communicate with Stevens. Scarpetta remembers allowing Susan to rest in her office the day she broke the formaldehyde bottles and realizes it must have been Susan who used the computer to attempt to send Stevens the message. Scarpetta is still sitting at her desk contemplating this situation when someone from trace brings her the report on the residue found on Eddie Heath's wrists. It turns out to be covered with debris commonly found at building construction sites, but is not consistent with the debris found at the scene. Trace also found quite a number of feathers in the residue.

Scarpetta goes home only to find that Lucy has rearranged her office without asking. Scarpetta attempts to hide her irritation, but finds it difficult when Lucy complains about her lack of mobility. Scarpetta agrees to allow Lucy access to her car. Later they go to dinner together; however, before the meal is even ordered, Scarpetta gets a call from her fingerprint expert, Vander, requesting a meeting immediately. Scarpetta calls Marino and they meet at Vander's office. Vander has run the fingerprints from Jennifer Deighton's house. A fingerprint from a chair in the dining room has come back as a



match to Ronnie Joe Waddell. Not only this, but no one can find the fingerprints taken from Waddell at autopsy. Susan was supposed to take the prints, but it appears she forgot. Scarpetta theorizes that Waddell was switched with another man during the transfer to the penitentiary two weeks before his death but cannot see a motive. Lucy suggests that perhaps someone switched Waddell's prints in AFIS and suggests that she be allowed to look. Neither Scarpetta nor Marino believes this would be a viable option.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Susan Story, Scarpetta's morgue supervisor, is acting oddly again. Susan does not want to participate in Jennifer Deighton's autopsy because of a fear of witches. Scarpetta puts her behavior down to pregnancy hormones. However, when Scarpetta learns later that Susan apparently forgot to fingerprint Waddell at autopsy, Marino suggests that perhaps there is something more to Susan's behavior than just her pregnancy. This is the third time Susan has done something out of character in the morgue, and when the reader adds to this list the fact that Susan apparently broke into Scarpetta's computer to send Stevens a message, it appears that she is involved in some sort of conspiracy. The nature of the conspiracy is unclear at this point, but the reader is convinced that Scarpetta should watch her back because it appears she is being betrayed by a trusted employee, touching on the theme of the novel.

Jennifer Deighton's death is ruled a homicide and the case is treated as one. Many fingerprints were lifted at the scene and are processed. One on a chair in the dining room, one that possibly was moved into the living room and then returned the night of the crime, comes back in AFIS as belonging to Ronnie Joe Waddell. This is clearly a shock because the reader knows Waddell was executed the week before because Scarpetta performed the autopsy. Because Susan forgot to fingerprint Waddell, Scarpetta does not have access to fingerprints that can prove the fingerprint in AVIS and on the chair do not belong to Waddell. This fact makes it impossible to prove that Waddell was the man who died in the electric chair, creating a situation that is sure to cause a great deal of trouble for Scarpetta as the plot continues to develop. Scarpetta theorizes that Waddell somehow managed to switch places with another man, explaining the receipts found on his body. If that is the case, Scarpetta has to identify the man who died in Waddell's place. Lucy suggests that rather than switch the body, someone switched the fingerprints in AFIS and wants to check it out, but Scarpetta and Marino both question if that is possible.



Chapters 6-7

Chapters 6-7 Summary

A few days later, Vander calls Scarpetta to his office again to show her an image he is able to get off the blank piece of paper found on Jennifer Deighton's bed. The image proves to be a fax sent to Nicholas Grueman expressing Jennifer's willingness to help with something. Scarpetta takes the rest of the day off, stopping on the way home to get a Christmas tree that she decorates with Lucy. Afterward, Scarpetta plans on attending a party, but decides to stop by Susan's on the way to give her a Christmas gift. Susan has not been to the office in several days and told Stevens she intended to quit. Scarpetta is hurt by Susan's failure to confront her directly and wants to speak to her about it; however, Scarpetta finds Susan depressed and hormonal, claiming it is the pregnancy and stress that has led to her frequent mistakes. Susan hopes to escape that stress by leaving her job. Scarpetta gives Susan a scarf she bought her the summer before, then leaves when Susan's husband returns home. Scarpetta then attends a neighborhood party where she runs into the prison warden who supervised Waddell's execution. The warden, Frank Donahue, is overbearing and seems intent on stressing the heinous nature of Waddell's crime.

The next morning is Christmas. Scarpetta and Lucy call Lucy's mother and then open presents. Scarpetta is touched by Lucy's thoughtfulness. Marino comes over and takes Lucy shooting, his gift to Scarpetta. Marino intends to join Scarpetta and Lucy for dinner. Marino tells Scarpetta he has reentered the dating world but is having little luck. Talk eventually turns to work and Scarpetta learns that Jennifer Deighton was apparently fascinated with Scarpetta, having taped a television interview Scarpetta did a few weeks before. They also learn that Jennifer was married in the sixties and was still close to her ex-husband, having just returned from a visit with him. Marino and Scarpetta are interrupted when Marino gets a call to a crime scene. Susan Story has been found murdered in her car. Scarpetta examines the body, noting a strong scent like men's cologne, around her head. Susan was shot twice in the head, but her wallet was untouched suggesting the murder was not motivated by robbery. Scarpetta goes with Marino to inform Susan's family. Scarpetta talks with Susan's father while Marino informs Susan's husband. While talking with Susan's father, Scarpetta learns that Susan said she was visiting a friend, but that friend was out of town.

Scarpetta cannot perform Susan's autopsy so she watches as one of her deputy chief's does. The deputy chief discovers two bullet wounds, one in the temple, the other at the base of the neck. Both are small caliber wounds with tight contact, but the trajectory is inconsistent with how the body was found, suggesting the body was repositioned after death. Marino informs Scarpetta that they found another feather on the passenger side car door, suggesting a possible link between Susan and Jennifer Deighton. Scarpetta suggests they contact Benton Wesley and arrange a meeting with a bird expert at the FBI.



Chapters 6-7 Analysis

Nicholas Grueman, Waddell's lawyer, reenters the narration. Grueman, as the reader will recall, was Scarpetta's professor in law school and one of only a few people who intimidates Scarpetta. Now Scarpetta discovers he is connected to Jennifer Deighton, a murder victim. A piece of paper was found at the scene off of which Vander was able to lift the impression of a fax. This fax was sent to Grueman and pronounced Jennifer's willingness to help him with something, but Scarpetta does not know what at this point. Perhaps this fax connects Jennifer to Waddell, drawing the two cases together. This theory seems likely when the reader recalls that Waddell's fingerprint was found at Jennifer's house.

On Christmas Eve, Scarpetta visits Susan, her morgue supervisor, at her home in order to give her a Christmas gift. This takes place after Scarpetta is informed that Susan intends to quit her job. Scarpetta is concerned about Susan because she believed them to be friends and because Susan has been acting oddly. Susan explains it all away by saying she has been under a great deal of stress but that quitting her job should fix the problem. Scarpetta regrets losing one of her best employees but does not try to convince Susan to stay. Instead, Scarpetta gives Susan a Christmas gift. The entire visit is significant because it will be the last time Scarpetta will see Susan alive. The following day, Scarpetta learns that Susan is dead. Scarpetta goes to the scene, goes with Marino to notify Susan's family, but cannot do the autopsy because of her relationship with Susan. Susan was shot and her head was re-positioned at some point after she died. Scarpetta also smells cologne on Susan, giving her a clue to go on when she begins searching for the killer. Susan's death is significant to the reader because it seems to underscore the idea that Susan was involved in some sort of conspiracy; however, the reader is still unclear what this conspiracy might involve.

Scarpetta also meets the warden from the state penitentiary and finds him to be determined to talk about Waddell's heinous crime and dark personality. The reader, as well as Scarpetta, is left wondering why it is so important to the warden that Scarpetta believe Waddell was an evil person. Finally, Scarpetta learns that Jennifer Deighton appeared interested in Scarpetta, perhaps explaining the phone calls Scarpetta got from her in the weeks before Jennifer died.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Scarpetta calls Benton Wesley and arranges to meet him at a ski lodge where he is vacationing with his wife. Scarpetta takes Lucy with her and arranges for her to learn to ski. Scarpetta joins Benton on the slopes. Afterward, Scarpetta returns a call from Marino and learns that the bullets in both the Eddie Heath case and Susan's match. It also turns out that no one can find Waddell's prints anywhere and all his personal effects have been destroyed. With the body cremated, it seems there is no way to verify Waddell's prints. Over dinner, Scarpetta and Benton discuss the cases. Benton wants to know what Scarpetta could have had in computer that the killer might have wanted which would explain why Susan broke in to Scarpetta's computer. Scarpetta cannot think of anything, except for Waddell's autopsy report. They discuss the possibility that Waddell was switched with another man before the execution and that the receipts found on Waddell's body could be proof of that, but it seems unlikely. Benton reviews Waddell's original crime with Scarpetta, explaining that no one knows for sure what was stolen from Robyn Naismith's home because she lived alone. There was evidence of a lover found, although none of Robyn's friends seemed aware of her lover's identity. Pictures of the crime scene, specifically those of Robyn propped up against the television, bring to mind pictures of Eddie Heath's body propped up against the Dumpster, causing Scarpetta to wonder if there is a connection there as well.

The next morning it is reported in the papers that Scarpetta created a hostile work environment for Susan Story with quotes from Susan's husband, Jason, claiming that Scarpetta was harassing Susan at home. It also is reported that Susan came into a great deal of money before her death and suggested that Scarpetta was paying her off for some reason. To Benton, it appears that someone was paying Susan to betray Scarpetta and this explains Susan's odd behavior shortly before her death. The payoff may also explain why Susan intentionally did not fingerprint Waddell. Benton does not believe Waddell is capable of these murders because they are too organized as compared to the crime that led Waddell to the electric chair. Benton believes there may be another killer on the loose, giving credence to Lucy's theory that someone broke into AFIS and changed Waddell's prints. Benton asks Lucy if she could find evidence of tampering if given access to AFIS records. Lucy is eager to give it a try.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Scarpetta turns to Benton Wesley for help with her cases, aware that Benton can often be objective, giving Scarpetta someone to bounce off theories. Benton gives Scarpetta more information on the murder of Robyn Naismith, helping her learn more about Ronnie Joe Waddell through his crime. Significant about this case is the chaos of it, the rage, and the remorse Waddell shows afterward. This case is not like any of the recent ones, suggesting to Benton that Waddell did not commit these new crimes. Waddell's



crime took place while he was high on drugs and desperate to get more drugs. Waddell committed his crime in a drug-induced rage. The new crimes all appear to be well planned out. There is little to no rage evident in these crimes. Also significant is the fact that Waddell's crime was one of opportunity. Waddell was in Robyn Naismith's home to rob it, not to commit murder. What Waddell might have stolen, however, is unclear except for the obvious money and jewelry because Robyn lived alone. The police found evidence at the time that Robyn had a lover, but no one ever came forward. The secrecy surrounding the lover seems to suggest to the reader a married man, or someone with something to hide.

Susan's murder is beginning to look like a conspiracy gone wrong. Benton points out that Susan's behavior changed after she failed to get Waddell's fingerprints during the autopsy. Benton believes that Susan was paid to forget the fingerprinting and afterward she was so filled with remorse for betraying Scarpetta, a theme of the novel, that she began to make mistakes. It is revealed in the paper that Susan came into a great deal of money before her death, which gives support to Benton's theory. However, the papers seem to believe that Scarpetta gave this money to Susan. Scarpetta is being dragged through the mud in the newspapers, mostly because all of Jason Story's angry grief is focused on Scarpetta. This turn of events seems dangerous for Scarpetta, but at this point is all just gossip. Finally, Marino has evidence that Susan and Eddie Heath were shot with the same weapon, connecting these two cases. This adds credence to the theory that Susan was killed by her co-conspirators when the reader takes into account that Susan was paid to forget to fingerprint Waddell and her killer most likely is the same one who killed Eddie and left him in the same position in which Waddell's victim was found. However, it is still unclear if that person is Waddell or another person someone wants the police to believe is Waddell.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Back in Richmond, Scarpetta encounters Marino. Over lunch, Marino awkwardly expresses his concern about the gossip that Jason Story is perpetrating in the papers despite the fact that Marino has learned it was because of her husband that Susan needed money in the first place. Marino warns Scarpetta that she does not have too many friends because of her tendency to be abrasive, so she might want to watch her back. Afterward, Scarpetta goes to the morgue and searches Susan's office, trying to find some memos she sent to Susan expressing her appreciation of Susan's hard work. Scarpetta cannot find any. Back in her own office, Scarpetta looks for her copies of the same memos, but cannot find them either. Scarpetta goes to Ben Stevens' office, trying to see if he took the files, discovering only a toiletry kit that contains a cologne that smells familiar to Scarpetta. The cologne is the same as the one Scarpetta smelled on Susan after her death. Ben Stevens walks into the room and catches Scarpetta. Scarpetta accuses Ben of taking her files and of paying Susan to forget to fingerprint Waddell. Scarpetta also suggests that Ben sent Susan to meet her killer and that he found her body, but left without reporting it. Finally, Scarpetta accuses Ben of having an affair with Susan. Ben denies all these allegations.

Scarpetta visits a bird expert at the FBI with samples from Eddie Heath, Jennifer Deighton, and Susan Story's crime scenes. The expert examines the feathers found at each scene and positively identifies them as eider down, a very expensive feather used in high end items, such as comforters and winter jackets. Scarpetta assumes by this that her killer has stolen the item, perhaps a winter jacket, and is using it during the killings. After this meeting, Scarpetta decides to visit Grueman hoping he can give her something that will prove the man she autopsied was Waddell. Scarpetta is not looking forward to this meeting, however, because she is still intimidated by Grueman.

Grueman is polite, even going so far as explaining to Scarpetta that he was so hard on her during law school because he knew she had the potential to be great and he did not want to see her throw that potential away. Grueman also tells Scarpetta that Jennifer Deighton, who Scarpetta now knows was writing to Waddell in prison, wanted to help with Waddell's appeals, but Grueman never had a chance to speak to her because Waddell refused to continue the appeals in the final month before his execution. Waddell had given up despite Grueman's attempts to keep him out of the electric chair. Grueman also says that Waddell left his belongings, something he left at his parent's farm, to Jennifer. Finally, Scarpetta learns that Waddell wanted Governor Norring to attend his execution.



Chapter 9 Analysis

Marino warns Scarpetta that she has few friends to support her with all the bad press she is getting because of Susan's death. Marino is clearly concerned that the gossip in the news will lead to real trouble for Scarpetta. However, Scarpetta is so determined to be an independent, self-reliant person that she refuses to heed Marino's advice. The entire discussion goes to Scarpetta's character, showing her as independent as she wants to be seen, but also revealing the isolation that has led to her loneliness, a theme of the novel.

From here, Scarpetta goes to her office to find some memos that will prove the things Jason Story is saying about her are untrue. Over the time Susan worked at the morgue, Scarpetta often sent her memos praising her work. However, these memos are nowhere to be found, suggesting someone wants Scarpetta to be accused of the things Jason Story is saying about her in the press. Scarpetta suspects Ben Stevens because he was close to Susan and he seems to be the only other person with knowledge of those memos. When Scarpetta goes into Stevens' office, she finds cologne that smells like the scent she smelled on Susan's body at the scene of her death. With this, Scarpetta puts together a theory about what happened to Susan. Scarpetta believes Susan and Stevens were having an affair and Stevens talked her into forgetting to fingerprint Waddell. Scarpetta also believes that Stevens sent Susan to meet with her killer and then found her body afterward. This all makes sense, but the reader still does not know who put Stevens up to this conspiracy.

Finally, Scarpetta goes to Washington and learns that the feathers that keep coming up at crime scenes is eider down, which means the object leaking these feathers is most likely a very expensive jacket. Scarpetta then visits with Grueman. On a personal level, this is a difficult meeting for Scarpetta because Grueman was hard on her in law school. However, the meeting turns out to be cathartic because Grueman explains his behavior toward her in such a way that Scarpetta is left feeling somewhat grateful for Grueman's interest in her. Finally, Scarpetta learns several things during this meeting, including the connection between Waddell and Jennifer Deighton. Waddell and Jennifer were pen pals. In fact, Waddell thought so much of Jennifer that he left her his belongings after his death. These belongings will become an issue later in the novel when Scarpetta realizes this might be the item Jennifer Deighton's assailant was looking for the night he killed her. Lastly, Scarpetta learns that Waddell gave up on his appeal and asked that the governor attend his execution. This seems odd to both Scarpetta and Grueman because most death row inmates fight to the last minute, aware that the governor can order a stay as late as the moment of execution. It is as though Waddell knew he would not get the stay, but the reader is not sure how he could know this.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

On the way back to Richmond, Scarpetta learns that Frank Donahue, the prison warden, has been found dead. Not only this, but Scarpetta's fingerprints have been found on an envelope in Susan's house that contained several hundred dollars in cash. Marino meets Scarpetta at her home and tells her that he has been ordered to examine her financial records, but Scarpetta refuses until she can contact a lawyer. When Scarpetta explains her fingerprints on the envelope, explaining that the envelope was the package that her Christmas gift to Susan came in, Marino wants her to prove she bought the scarf, but Scarpetta cannot. After Marino leaves, Benton Wesley arrives with Lucy. Benton tells Scarpetta the warden was killed with the same weapon as Susan and Eddie Heath. Benton recommends that Scarpetta hire Grueman to represent her. Benton is concerned that Scarpetta is in danger since it appears that all the victims have something in common with Waddell. Scarpetta insists she needs to clear her name and asks Benton to have an article put in the paper about the thefts of expensive, eider down filled jackets.

Lucy has begun searching through AFIS records to try to find out if Waddell's fingerprint records were tampered with. As she does this, Scarpetta tries to follow her normal routine. The next morning Marino tells her he needs to see her guns to rule them out, even though they are not the same caliber as the murder weapon. Scarpetta is then called to visit the governor. The press seems to have learned about this meeting before Scarpetta because they are waiting when she arrives. The governor accuses Scarpetta of not cooperating with the investigation. Scarpetta denies this but continues to refuse to hand over her personal financial records until she contacts a lawyer. The governor informs Scarpetta that she is to be relieved of her duties until she has cleared her name.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Donahue has died in the same fashion as Susan Story, making it appear that someone is targeting people associated with Waddell and his possible escape from prison. Benton is concerned that Scarpetta might be next on that list and recommends that she hire a lawyer and lay low, but Scarpetta is determined to clear her name. At this time, it seems that the press is accusing Scarpetta of murder because her fingerprints were found on an envelope in Susan's house containing money. The envelope is the same one in which Scarpetta packaged a scarf for Christmas, but Scarpetta cannot prove that she bought a scarf or gave it to Susan. The reader is aware that Scarpetta did this; therefore, the reader is clear that Scarpetta's prints have a reasonable explanation for being in Susan's house, but no one else knows this or seems willing to believe it. Marino's prediction in the previous chapter appears to be coming true regarding his speculation that Scarpetta would not have many friends should the press coverage get worse.



Scarpetta does have friends, however. Benton is determined to help Scarpetta and has agreed to put an article in the newspaper about the eider down jackets with the hope that someone will come forward regarding a theft that they might be able to trace back to their killer. It seems Benton is Scarpetta's only friend. Marino is investigating her for murder, and Lucy is wrapped up in her computers to the exclusion of all else. The governor has suspended Scarpetta for the appearance of refusing to cooperate with the police. Scarpetta's future looks bleak as she is forced to fight popular opinion without the support of her closest friends and her boss.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

Lucy discovers that someone changed Waddell's fingerprints in AFIS and then deleted someone else's records, implying that the other person's fingerprints are now the fingerprints identified as Waddell in AFIS. It appears that whoever did this was aware that Waddell's file would be deleted after his execution. However, there was a power failure and Waddell's file was not deleted as intended. Scarpetta decides they need to get a sample of Waddell's fingerprints from a source that could not be questioned. Scarpetta suggests they search Robyn Naismith's house for Waddell's fingerprints. Robyn Naismith's house was purchased by a university and rented to a professor. Most of the furniture is still in the house. Scarpetta, Vander, and Benton go to the house and rearrange the furniture according to the pictures of the crime scene and then cover the windows with paper in order to block out the light. Scarpetta sprays luminol while Vander videotapes the blood that appears under the black light. They find a great amount of blood, including clear prints on the wall behind the toilet. Vander uses these prints to obtain the fingerprint they need. The print from Robyn's house does not match Waddell's prints in AFIS, proving Scarpetta's suspicions.

While studying the crime scene photos of Robyn Naismith's house, Scarpetta also notices something about the positioning of Robyn's body as compared to Eddie Heath's. Eddie Heath's body is a mirror image, suggesting that whoever committed the crime had access to photos of Robyn Naismith's body, but not to the files or the crime scene. This rules out Waddell as Eddie Heath's killer and suggests a copycat by someone with access to the photos only. A few days later, an article is run in the paper about the eider down jacket thefts. A man by the name of Hilton Sullivan calls in to the police to complain that his jacket was stolen when his condo was robbed while he was on vacation, but the police had done nothing about it. Benton tells Scarpetta that Sullivan was rude to the police, causing them to be curt in their investigation. Benton theorizes that Donahue released an inmate in the days before Waddell's execution to do some dirty work he needed done, and this inmate robbed Sullivan's condo. Benton believes Donahue swapped the inmates fingerprints with Waddell's to keep him from getting caught and implicating Donahue. However, this theory implies that someone knew the governor would not give Waddell a stay of execution, something no one could have known until the moment of execution.

Working under the assumption that someone associated with the prison helped Donahue pay off Susan and Stevens, Scarpetta tracks down the female guard she met at the prison, Helen Grimes. After some lies and quick talking, Scarpetta manages to get Grimes' address. Scarpetta arrives on her doorstep and asks her if Mrs. Waddell brought anything unusual for her son the day of the execution. Grimes tells her that Mrs. Waddell brought her son a religious card. While Scarpetta is talking to Grimes, someone calls out to her from inside, someone Scarpetta believes to be a woman. Scarpetta tells Benton about her meeting with Grimes and theorizes that Waddell wanted the religious



card buried with him but that Donahue had the envelopes switched so he could see what was in it, only whoever did the switch mistakenly put the wrong envelope in Waddell's pocket. As they are discussing this possibility, Grueman, whom she has hired as her attorney, calls and demands to know why Scarpetta withdrew a large amount of money from her bank account right before Thanksgiving.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Lucy has discovered that someone has tampered with Waddell's AFIS file. Scarpetta finds a fingerprint from Robyn Naismith's killer in her house and discovers it does not match Waddell's prints in AFIS. These two facts together seem to prove that someone has exchanged Waddell's prints with another inmate's in order to hide the other inmate's identity. Benton theorizes that prison warden Donahue released an inmate to do some work for him, changing his AFIS records in order to allow him to work without fear of capture or that his capture would lead to Donahue's scheme being exposed. The theft of the jacket from Mr. Sullivan's condo also seems to play into this scenario, suggesting that the inmate robbed the condo the day he was released, perhaps to outfit himself before the crimes, or perhaps to have a free place to live for a few days. Either way, all the evidence points to Waddell having died in the electric chair and another killer on the loose. It also seems to clear Scarpetta of Susan's murder, of which the reader was always sure she was until Grueman called about some irregularities in her personal finances. The reader wonders if Scarpetta could be involved, but cannot see any motive or benefit to her, therefore believes there must be some other explanation for the missing money. Scarpetta is not the type to team up with so many people to commit a crime when it would be simpler for her to work alone to get what she wants, if she were the criminal type to begin with.

Two other things of import happen in these chapters. First, Scarpetta goes to visit Helen Grimes, fishing for more information regarding Donahue and his scheme to release an inmate. Scarpetta learns that Waddell's mother brought him a religious card the day of his execution and suspects this is most likely what Waddell wanted buried with him. The receipts, it seems, were an accident and most likely explain what Susan was searching for in Scarpetta's office the day she attempted to send a message to Stevens that accidentally left a file on Scarpetta's directory. While visiting Grimes, Scarpetta sees someone in her home. Due to Grimes' attempts to keep Scarpetta out of the house, the reader can only assume this person is someone about whom Grimes does not want Scarpetta to know. The reader wonders then if this person could be the killer. Second, Scarpetta notices that Eddie Heath's body is a mirror image to Robyn Naismith's in the crime scene photos. This suggests to Scarpetta that the killer was reenacting the Naismith killing; therefore, the killer could not be Waddell, further suggesting that Waddell is not the killer on the loose. This also suggests that the killer is committing crimes on his own, that he is an unstable psychopath with homicidal. Eddie Heath's death suggests a killer who is escalating, but controlled, predicting more murders in the future if the killer is not caught.



Chapters 13-14 and Epilogue

Chapters 13-14 and Epilogue Summary

The prosecutor asks Scarpetta to come to his office for questioning. On advice from Grueman, Scarpetta refuses. At the end of January, Scarpetta is called to testify before a grand jury regarding the deaths of Susan Story and Frank Donahue. In the days prior to her grand jury appearance, Scarpetta is warned by Marino that the prosecutor's evidence is circumstantial, but compelling. Scarpetta is not concerned; however, Scarpetta is still curious what the killer was after when he killed Jennifer Deighton. Scarpetta calls Jennifer's ex-husband and is told that he will not speak to her unless she comes to Florida where he can see her face to face. Scarpetta agrees, flying to Miami first to take Lucy home and then on to Mr. Travers in Fort Meyers Beach. Travers is a charming older man who likes Scarpetta from their first words. Travers gives Scarpetta a briefcase that Jennifer gave to him to hold. The briefcase turns out to belong to Joe Norring, the governor of Virginia. Scarpetta suspects Waddell took the briefcase from Robyn Naismith's house, that Norring was her secret lover, and that it was the briefcase the killer was released from prison to locate.

When Scarpetta arrives at the courthouse for her grand jury appearance, she finds not only Grueman and Benton Wesley there, but also Charlie Hale. Hale is Grueman's surprise witness in her case. Scarpetta goes before the jury, befriending them before the proceedings by answering their questions openly and honestly. When asked about the envelope in Susan's house, Scarpetta again insists that the envelope contained a scarf Scarpetta gave Susan. When asked about money Scarpetta removed from her bank account before Thanksgiving, Scarpetta tells the jury how Mark lay dying after the bomb went off and a man came to his aid, attempting to comfort him. Scarpetta learned this man and his wife wanted to have children, so she gave them the money for infertility treatments. The man is Charlie Hale, her surprise witness. Scarpetta is not indicted. However, while testifying, it occurs to Scarpetta that their killer might not have robbed Sullivan's condo, but may be Sullivan. Scarpetta thinks Sullivan might have reported the burglary to keep the police from connecting the gun to him. Scarpetta tracks down Marino and together they go to Sullivan's condo. When Sullivan opens the door, Scarpetta recognizes him as the person who was visiting Helen Grimes the day she went to see her. The man runs off, escaping. However, Scarpetta and Marino are able to find enough evidence in the condo to connect Sullivan, whose real name is Gault, to the murders. They also find Grimes dead in her house. Scarpetta spends the spring in Miami with her family and receives a call from Benton Wesley. Wesley tells Scarpetta while they could not prove the governor did anything wrong, a conversation between him and Wesley encouraged the governor to resign. Wesley had a similar discussion with Ben Stevens, encouraging him to find a new job. Wesley then asks Scarpetta to join his team at the Behavioral Science Unit as a consultant.



Chapters 13-14 and Epilogue Analysis

Marino is clearly worried about Scarpetta, telling the reader that there is a real danger Scarpetta will be indicted for the murders of Susan Story and Frank Donahue. However, Scarpetta does not appear worried. Scarpetta is just as calm and collected as ever before, showing the reader how strong her personality really is. Rather than worry about the case, Scarpetta goes into action. Scarpetta goes to Florida and finds the item Waddell left to Jennifer Deighton in the possession of Jennifer's ex-husband. It turns out Waddell took a briefcase belonging to Joe Noring, the district attorney then and governor now, from Robyn Naismith's house. This is clearly the item that the killer was trying to find at Jennifer Deighton's house. Clearly the governor was involved in the plot to release this killer and switch his fingerprints with Waddell's, explaining how AFIS could be tampered with as well as why Frank Donahue was killed. With Donahue dead, no one alive can identify the killer except Helen Grimes and she is found dead as well. The killer now is free to do as he likes because any crime he commits will come back to Waddell, who is dead.

Scarpetta testifies for the grand jury as calmly and openly as she has always done in the past, following Grueman's instructions to the letter. When Scarpetta is questioned about her financial history, Scarpetta explains that she took a large sum of money from one of her accounts to fund fertility treatments for Charlie Hale and his wife. Hale helped Mark James the day the bomb went off, comforting him until he died. Scarpetta's confession reveals a softer side to her personality that the reader might not have suspected before. Scarpetta has been grieving for James throughout the novel, so it really should not be a surprise that this money had to do with his death. However, it is a surprise because Scarpetta does not appear to be the kind of person who would indulge in random acts of kindness often, but in this case she did, repaying a debt to someone who helped the man she loved when she could not.

Finally, Scarpetta figures out who the killer is because of something the prosecutor said to her during her testimony. Scarpetta realizes that reporting a gun stolen is the best way from keeping the police from tracing it back to you after it is used in a crime. This leads Scarpetta to believe that Hilton Sullivan, the man whose condo was broken into, is the killer and that his eiderdown vest was never really stolen. Scarpetta and Marino arrive at the condo, but the killer is able to get away. However, evidence at the condo proves Hilton Sullivan is the killer.



Characters

Dr. Kay Scarpetta

Dr. Kay Scarpetta is the chief medical examiner of Virginia. Besides her medical degree, Scarpetta also has a law degree making her unusually qualified for her job. Scarpetta performs autopsies on victims of crimes and often assists her good friend Detective Pete Marino in solving these crimes. Scarpetta is deeply devoted to her job to the exclusion of all else, allowing her life to revolve around death and crimes.

Scarpetta had a lover for a long time who worked with the FBI. Months before this novel begins, Scarpetta's lover, Mark James, was killed when a bomb that had been placed in a trash can exploded as he walked past. Scarpetta is still grieving the death of her lover and it colors each minute of each day. Scarpetta even sold her house and moved in order to run away from the memories of Mark, but the move only left her feeling out of place and lonely. Scarpetta has three relatives, a mother, a sister, and a niece, but is only close to the niece. However, Lucy, Scarpetta's niece, is an angry seventeen year old who is also grieving for Mark. Scarpetta and Lucy's relationship is volatile, serving to only increase the tension in Scarpetta's life.

In this novel, Scarpetta is accused of bribing and murdering her morgue supervisor. Scarpetta has discovered several mistakes her supervisor made, pointing her toward a conspiracy to make it appear as though a death row inmate did not die in the electric chair as Scarpetta's autopsy of the remains was supposed to prove. Scarpetta works with Marino and FBI Agent Benton Wesley to prove someone broke into AFIS and changed the criminal's prints in order to hide the identity of another criminal who was allowed to escape jail in order to find incriminating evidence against the Virginia governor. Scarpetta is able to clear her name, but at a deep personal cost.

Detective Pete Marino

Detective Pete Marino is a tough New York homicide detective who settled in Virginia many years before but who still harbors a distrust for humanity. Marino just recently went through a divorce with his wife of more than thirty years and is adjusting to single life. Marino has also recently learned that his blood pressure is dangerously high, but finds it impossible to stop smoking, drinking, and eating junk food. Scarpetta is constantly reminding Marino to take care of himself, but Marino refuses, determined to hold on to the few things in his life that give him pleasure.

Marino works with Scarpetta on the murder cases that appear to be the work of murderer Ronnie Joe Waddell, although Waddell was put to death in the electric chair the night the murders begin. Marino is a good detective, but he cannot argue with the evidence found at the crime scenes, specifically fingerprints that appear to be Waddell's that were found at the home of a woman murdered a week after Waddell died. When



Scarpetta's morgue supervisor is found dead on Christmas Day, it is only natural for Marino to call Scarpetta. However, within days it begins to appear that Scarpetta committed the murder and Marino is forced to investigate his own friend. With Scarpetta's help, however, Marino will find the real killer.

Ronnie Joe Waddell

Ronnie Joe Waddell is a small town boy who grew up on a farm. Waddell moves to the city as a young adult and discovers the freedoms he never knew as a child. Waddell becomes addicted to illegal drugs, including PCP. One afternoon Waddell is desperate to find the cash he needs to buy more drugs. While robbing the home of a young television reporter, Waddell is surprised when the young woman walks in while he is still searching her home. Waddell, confused by the drugs, attacks the woman and kills her in a brutal fashion. Afterward, Waddell regrets his actions and attempts to clean up his mess. When he finds this to be an impossible task, Waddell takes his loot and leaves. Once safe, Waddell looks through a briefcase he found in the house and discovers it belongs to the man who was then district attorney for Virginia. Waddell is convicted of the crime and sent to death row. While on death row, the district attorney is elected governor. Waddell knows he will never receive a pardon or a reprieve from this governor and gives up his appeals. Upon his death, Waddell arranges for a friend outside of prison to have the briefcase. This gift causes the death of the friend and helps Scarpetta figure out who changed Waddell's AFIS file and made it appear as though Waddell somehow escaped death row and sent someone else to the chair in his place.

Robyn Naismith

Robyn Naismith is a television reporter. Ten years before the novel begins, Robyn is sick and decides to stay home from work. Robyn goes to the store to stock up on cold remedies only to return home to find a man burglarizing her. Robyn is attacked and viciously murdered. Afterward, a friend of Robyn's comes to check on her and finds her body propped up against her television. Robyn's killer is convicted of the crime and sentenced to death. However, in the weeks after his death, it appears that the killer somehow escaped death row and began killing again. It later turns out that Robyn was having an affair with then district attorney Joe Norring, although he was a married man. Norring went on to become governor of Virginia and used his influence to have a man released from jail, his fingerprints changed to appear to be Waddell's, and set loose to kill in order to find the briefcase Norring left in Robyn's house and destroy it before anyone could learn the truth.

Temple Brooks Gault

Temple Brooks Gault is the son of a plantation owner and is therefore a wealthy young man. Temple was arrested and jailed for assault, but is released without the knowledge of the legal system in order to work as a personal assassin for the governor of Virginia.



Gault is told to find a briefcase that Waddell took from the home of Robyn Naismith that belongs to the governor. In the process of doing this, Gault kills the only person who knows the location of the briefcase. Gault also kills the only person who can identify him as well as a young man he killed out of a desire to recreate the murder of Robyn Naismith. Gault is a mentally-deranged individual who was set free by the governor, given a free pass when his prints were exchanged with those of a dead inmate, and allowed to kill at will. Gault escapes at the end of the novel, allowed to roam free throughout the world.

Jennifer Deighton

Jennifer Deighton is a small business owner who tells horoscopes over the phone to her many subscribers. Jennifer lived a quiet, unassuming life. Jennifer befriended Waddell shortly after he began serving his time in prison and believes herself to be in love with him. As Waddell's date of execution comes closer, Waddell begins to lose hope that he will be granted a stay of execution and begins to make arrangements for the personal possessions he will leave behind. Waddell arranges for Jennifer to take possession of a briefcase that the governor of Virginia would very much like to have. Jennifer contacts Waddell's attorney and attempts to contact Scarpetta in hopes of getting support regarding this evidence. However, Jennifer is murdered when Gault breaks into her house and accidentally strangles her while trying to get her to tell him where the briefcase is. Gault attempts to make Jennifer's murder look like a suicide, but Scarpetta uses the evidence to find the truth.

Nicholas Grueman

Nicholas Grueman is a lawyer who has devoted that last few years of his life to helping death row inmates on their appeals. Before this, Grueman was a professor at Georgetown Law School. Scarpetta was one of his students and felt that Grueman was unjustly tough on her. Scarpetta tenses every time she is forced to speak to Grueman. However, when Scarpetta goes to visit Grueman in an attempt to gather more information on Waddell, she discovers that he was hard on her simply because he wanted to help her become the best lawyer she could be. Scarpetta softens on Grueman. When Scarpetta is to appear before a grand jury for the murder of Susan Story, she asks Grueman to represent her. Grueman gives Scarpetta good advice, gathers evidence on her behalf, and helps her clear her name.

Susan and Jason Story

Susan Story is Scarpetta's morgue supervisor. Susan's job is to help prepare the morgue for autopsies, keep the morgue stocked with supplies, and assist Scarpetta with autopsies. Susan is pregnant and has become moody in the past few months. Scarpetta becomes concerned with Susan when she begins making mistakes, such as breaking bottles of formaldehyde. When it is discovered that fingerprints were not taken during



Waddell's autopsy, Scarpetta knows immediately that the mistake was Susan's, but cannot reach her to ask what happened. When Scarpetta finally sees Susan again Scarpetta finds her very agitated as though something is bothering her. On Christmas Day, Susan is found murdered in her car.

Susan's husband, Jason, begins talking to the press immediately after the death of his wife. Jason points his finger at Scarpetta, claiming that Scarpetta ran the morgue in such a way that it created a hostile working environment for his wife. Jason also claims that Scarpetta harassed his wife over the phone and even came to their home to continue harassing his wife. Jason's public outrage toward Scarpetta gets the attention of the district attorney and leads to Scarpetta being investigated for Susan's death.

Governor Joe Norring

Governor Joe Norring is the current governor of Virginia. When Jason Story begins making public accusations against Scarpetta, Norring calls Scarpetta to his office and asks her to explain herself. When Scarpetta refuses to allow Norring to force her to hand over her financial records to the police, Norring relieves her of her duties until she can clear her name. Later Scarpetta comes into possession of evidence that proves that Norring was having an affair with Robyn Naismith in the months before her death and that he allowed a criminal to be freed from prison and his fingerprints changed in AFIS in order to allow this criminal to find the evidence against Norring. Norring's role in these crimes is never made public, but Norring does resign from office after a discussion with FBI Agent Benton Wesley.

Benton Wesley

Benton Wesley is an FBI agent who works with the Behavioral Science Unit. Wesley spends a great deal of his time talking with and studying serial killers in order to create profiles based on their backgrounds, personalities, and crimes. Wesley was a good friend of Mark James and is Marino's partner in a joint task force, making him a close associate of Scarpetta. Wesley helps Scarpetta with the Waddell case. More importantly, Wesley helps Scarpetta aid the family of a man who attempted to help Mark after the bombing in London. Wesley is a good cop, but he is also a great friend to Scarpetta, standing by her in her hour of need. At the end of the novel, Wesley invites Scarpetta to join him as a consultant for the Behavioral Science Unit, suggesting they will become even closer friends and colleagues in the following books.



Objects/Places

Briefcase

Waddell stole a briefcase from Robyn Naismith's house the day he killed her and later discovered it belonged to Joe Norring, then the district attorney and now the governor of Virginia. Scarpetta believes Norring orchestrated the release of Gault in order to find the briefcase in the aftermath of Waddell's death to protect his career and reputation.

Electric Chair

Ronnie Joe Waddell is executed in the electric chair for the murder of Robyn Naismith. Later Dr. Scarpetta is required to see the chair in order to verify that abrasions on Waddell's arms were made by the chair.

Robyn Naismith's Television

Robyn Naismith's body is found propped against her television after her murder.

Dumpster

The body of Eddie Heath is found posed against a Dumpster in a mirror image of Robyn Naismith's body when it was found against her television.

Robyn Naismith's House

Robyn Naismith was killed in her own home when she walked in on a burglary. Scarpetta, Vander, and Wesley revisit the crime scene to find a fingerprint from Waddell.

Men's Cologne

Scarpetta smells cologne on the body of her morgue supervisor, helping her to identify the supervisor's lover and to recreate the final moments of her life.

Computers

Scarpetta's niece, Lucy, is an expert at computers even though she is only seventeen. Lucy comes to Richmond to help Scarpetta with computer trouble.



Envelope to be Buried with Waddell

When Waddell's body comes into the morgue, there is an envelope in his pocket marked with a request that he be buried with it. Inside, Scarpetta's team finds receipts as though for an expense account of some employee. Later Scarpetta determines the item Waddell wanted buried with him was taken by a prison guard and mistakenly replaced with an envelope containing the receipts.

Envelope in Susan's House

Money is found in a unique envelope in Susan Story's house and Scarpetta's fingerprints are found on the envelope, suggesting Scarpetta gave the money to Susan as some sort of payoff. However, it turns out the envelope was one that had contained a scarf Scarpetta gave Susan for Christmas.

Bomb

A bomb in a trash can kills Scarpetta's on-again, off-again lover in London. Scarpetta gives money to the man who attempted to help Mark only to have the prosecutor use it against her when he attempts to indict her for the murder of Susan Story.

AFIS

AFIS is the government data base of fingerprints that law officials use to identify suspects. Scarpetta discovers that someone has tampered with Waddell's file to make it appear that Waddell did not die in the electric chair.

Luminol

Scarpetta and her team use luminol to find Waddell's fingerprint in Robyn Naismith's home ten years after her murder.

Richmond, Virginia

Scarpetta lives and works in Richmond, Virginia.



Themes

Mistaken Identity

Someone goes to a lot of trouble to make it appear as though Ronnie Joe Waddell escaped the electric chair and is on the loose killing again. No one took Waddell's fingerprints during autopsy even though it is a routine procedure. All of Waddell's personal effects are destroyed after his death. Nothing remains that appears to have a verifiable fingerprint from Waddell on it. When Jennifer Deighton is murdered and a fingerprint is found that comes back as Waddell in AFIS, it seems that Waddell somehow escaped prison before arriving on death row several weeks before. This situation makes Scarpetta look unprofessional and reflects poorly on law enforcement in general. Scarpetta sets out to prove Waddell died in the electric chair but finds resistance everywhere she turns.

Scarpetta's morgue supervisor has been acting strangely for weeks. When Scarpetta realizes that the supervisor, Susan, failed to get Waddell's fingerprints, Scarpetta begins calling Susan at home, only to be ignored. Scarpetta visits Susan at home and finds a frightened woman who seems emotional overwrought. Within hours of the visit, Susan is found dead. Scarpetta becomes the main suspect. Now it is more important than ever for Scarpetta to prove Waddell died in the electric chair and some other crazed killer is on the loose. Scarpetta gathers her closest colleagues, including Benton Wesley, and begins searching for a way to prove her innocence.

Lucy, Scarpetta's niece, is a computer wiz and is able to prove that someone got into AFIS, the government fingerprint database, and changed Waddell's fingerprints with someone else's and then deleted the other person's file. This explains how Waddell's fingerprints showed up at a new crime scene days after Waddell died. However, to prove this theory, Scarpetta has to prove that Waddell's fingerprint is not the same as the one in his AFIS file. Scarpetta, Wesley, and Scarpetta's fingerprint expert return to the scene of Waddell's grisly crime and find a fingerprint still recoverable in the victim's blood. Scarpetta finally can prove that Waddell died in the electric chair.

Betrayal

Susan Story is a trusted employee. Scarpetta has always enjoyed an easy relationship with her morgue supervisor and never had any problems with Susan's performance on the job. In fact, Scarpetta has frequently sent Susan memos thanking her for her good work; therefore, when Susan begins making mistakes, Scarpetta is concerned. Susan is pregnant and under a great deal of stress in her marriage, something that Scarpetta believes explains her odd behavior. However, when Susan is found murdered on Christmas Day, Scarpetta begins to sense something deeper has been happening right under her nose.



Susan failed to take Waddell's fingerprints during his autopsy. This is a routine procedure and something Susan has done hundreds of times, so Scarpetta never thought to check if it was done until it is too late. Later, Susan knocks over several bottles of formaldehyde at the beginning of an autopsy, causing Scarpetta to send her out of the morgue and leading to a discussion regarding Susan's right to be listed as a witness on the autopsy. These things might seem like careless mistakes, but Scarpetta soon begins to realize that it adds up to betrayal.

Upon Susan's death, the police discover that she recently came into a large amount of money. The remainder of the money is found in an envelope with Scarpetta's fingerprints on it. It appears that Scarpetta paid Susan off to overlook mistakes in the morgue and then killed her when she threatened to come forward. In reality, Susan was working with another of Scarpetta's employees to protect a killer. By choosing to go behind Scarpetta's back and commit these apparent mistakes, Susan betrayed Scarpetta. Scarpetta's trust is severely tested by her employees throughout this case and leaves her less trusting than ever before.

Loneliness

Loneliness is a theme of this novel because it is a factor in the lives of three of the major characters. First is Scarpetta. Scarpetta is a divorced woman who has been involved off and on with an FBI agent for many years. Unfortunately, this FBI agent died several months before the beginning of this novel when a bomb exploded near him in London. Scarpetta has no children and no close family except for her beloved niece Lucy; however, Scarpetta's relationship with Lucy is volatile and causes Scarpetta more pain than peace. Scarpetta throws herself into her work to avoid the loneliness that fills her life. When not working, Scarpetta surrounds herself with friends, but these friends are her co-workers, Pete Marino and Benton Wesley; therefore, work is never far away.

Lucy is a child of divorce who lives with a mother who is too busy jumping from boyfriend to boyfriend to give her daughter the attention she deserves. Lucy spends a great deal of her time working on her computers. Lucy finds computers more reliable than human beings, including her aunt Kay. Scarpetta adores Lucy, but Lucy feels as though Scarpetta allows her work to come between them too often. Lucy is often left alone when she visits Scarpetta, a situation that only fuels Lucy's sense of loneliness. Lucy reaches out to Pete Marino in this novel and discovers a connection that surprises everyone, especially Marino.

Pete Marino is a police detective from New York who has recently gone through a divorce. Marino is new to loneliness. Marino was married for more than twenty years just to watch his wife run off with another man. Marino has begun dating, but it is a new and difficult game for him. Marino spends a great deal of his time with Scarpetta, but their discussions inevitably focus on work. When not discussing work, they talk about Marino's health, which is poor due to his smoking habit. However, there is clearly a strong connection between Marino and Scarpetta, almost like the companionship that

builds between a couple who have been married many years. Perhaps this friendship helps alleviate some of the loneliness that tends to define their lives.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is first person. Kay Scarpetta is the narrating character. At times Scarpetta is an unreliable narrator because she can only relate to the reader information she knows, and at times she is incorrect. Scarpetta is also unreliable when she is accused of murder and she fails to defend herself to the reader when it is discovered that she made a large cash withdrawal that is consistent with money found to have been given to Susan Story. Even though it turns out that Scarpetta is innocent, her narration allows the reader to wonder if Scarpetta might have committed the crime, or is hiding some other crime that she committed.

The point of view of this novel works well because it establishes a tight connection between the reader and main character from the first sentence of the first chapter. There is no more intimate point of view than the first person point of view. With this point of view, there is never any doubt as to who the main character is or what her thoughts might be. The reader has constant access to the main character with this point of view and is allowed to watch the story unfold as the narrator does. Due to the nature of this novel, this point of view works well, building tension while it makes an intimate connection with the reader.

Setting

The novel is set in Richmond, Virginia, where the main character, Kay Scarpetta, is Virginia's chief medical examiner. Virginia is a beautiful state where it often snows during the Christmas season, which is the time of year during which this novel takes place. Throughout the story, Scarpetta deals with the weather, suffering the cold of outdoor crime scenes and the tragedy of a Christmas Day murder. The setting in this novel is a backdrop against which the plot unfolds, not a character unto itself, but a contrast to the darkness of murder that allows the story to stand out to the reader in a way that a sunny Miami Christmas might not have accomplished.

The setting in this novel works for several reasons. First, the cold and snow of the Christmas season sets an ironic backdrop against the murder and mayhem that is an everyday event in the life of Kay Scarpetta. Christmas is supposed to be a happy time, but the reader is reminded that murder can take place at any time of the year in this novel. Second, the setting is familiar to those who have read other books in the Kay Scarpetta series and therefore is like coming home for those readers. Richmond is a beautiful city that Scarpetta has come to love and the reader feels the same sentiment each time they return to a new Scarpetta novel.



Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple English that includes many technical terms related to law enforcement and forensic science. The novel is about a woman who works as a medical examiner on cases that more often than not include some sort of homicidal act. Scarpetta autopsies the bodies and then helps her friends, Detective Pete Marino and FBI Agent Benton Wesley, find the killer. To do this work, Scarpetta has a medical degree as well as a law degree. Due to her high level of education, Scarpetta has an extensive vocabulary and uses words that the average reader might not recognize, but that she often explains for the benefit of her friend Marino, a less educated, but not less intelligent, police detective.

The language of this novel works because it balances the simple English of a best selling novel and the technical language of a medical examiner's world. Scarpetta uses items and tests that the average person might not know about and as a result she often introduces unusual words or phrases to the reader. Each of these unknown words is often explained within the text, teaching the reader while entertaining them. The language of this novel is appropriate to its plot and crafted in such a way that even the youngest reader can understand the author's intention, making the language work well for its purpose.

Structure

The novel is divided into fourteen chapters, a prologue and an epilogue. The chapters are quite long, most longer than twenty pages. The chapters tell a linear story using exposition and dialogue. There is a great deal of internal dialogue in this novel because it is written in the first person point of view with the narrator being an independent woman who does a lot of thinking about her situation and the cases on which she is working. Scarpetta is highly intelligent and spends much time inside her head. The reader spends time there as well, listening as Scarpetta worries the facts of the cases she is working on until she finally comes up with a solution to whatever aspect of the case is bothering her.

The novel has one main story line and several subplots. The main story line follows the death of a deathrow inmate who appears to have not died as expected, but instead sent someone else to the chair in his place. Scarpetta investigates the murders attributed to this criminal, finally finding it possible to prove that there is a new killer on the loose, not the criminal who died in the electric chair. The subplots are many, including the lives of the people who died because of this new criminal masquerading as the death row inmate. Other subplots revolve around Scarpetta, especially the story of Scarpetta's niece who has come to visit to help Scarpetta with a computer problem.



Quotes

"I can't use the john, blow my nose, or smoke without guards taking notes. There's no clock. I never know the weather. I open my eyes and see a blank wall going on forever. What's a man supposed to feel when he's about to be gone?" Prologue, pg. 1

"The Monday I carried Ronnie Joe Waddell's meditation in my pocketbook, I never saw the sun. It was dark when I drove to work that morning. It was dark again when I drove home."
Chapter 1, pg. 3

"I got up and did my thing again as I thought about the injustices and losses that had gone into the making of Marino. He had survived a loveless, impoverished childhood in the wrong part of New Jersey, and nursed an abiding distrust of anyone whose lot had been better. Not long ago his wife of thirty years had left him, and he had a son nobody seemed to know anything about. Regardless of his loyalty to law and order and his record of excellent police work, it was not in his genetic code to get along with the brass. It seemed his life's journey had placed him on a hard road." Chapter 1, pg. 17

"They had the bewildered look of innocent, simple people who have been told the world is about to end, and when they glanced at us with exhausted eyes I wished there was something I could say that would make it not so or at least a little better. Words of comfort died in my throat as the couple slowly walked off." Chapter 2, pg. 26

"The boy looked smaller on the cold steel table than he had seemed in the bright sheets of his hospital bed. There were no rainbows in this room, no walls or windows decorated with dinosaurs or color to cheer the heart of a child. Eddie Heath had come in naked with IV needles, catheter, and dressings still in place. They seemed sad remnants of what had held him to this world and then disconnected him from it, like string trailing a balloon blowing forlornly through empty air." Chapter 2, pg. 35

"I was looking for a pudgy teenager with long, dark red hair and braces when a striking young woman met my eyes and grinned." Chapter 3, pg. 69

"Jennifer Deighton did not want to come out of the car, death resisting the hands of life."
Chapter 4, pg. 85

"Slipping inside her bedroom, I found her sleeping on her side in a tangle of sheets, the duvet half on the floor. It touched me that she was wearing a sweat suit that she had gotten out of one of my drawers. I had never had another human being wish to sleep in



anything of mine, and I straightened the covers, careful not to wake her." Chapter 5, pg. 103

"As his fingers wrapped firmly around mine, I could not help but think of Susan's obvious disregard for her father and distrust for what he represented. Fundamentalists frightened me too." Chapter 7, pg. 168

"When Wesley alluded to the Bundys and Son of Sams in the world, he did so theoretically, impersonally, as if his analyzes and theories were formulated from secondary sources. He did not brag. He did not name drop or assume the role of one who knew these criminals personally. His demeanor, therefore, was deliberately misleading.

He had, in fact, spent long, intimate hours with the likes of Theodore Bundy, David Berkowitz, Sirhan Sirhan, Richard Speck, and Charles Manson, in addition to the lesser-known black holes who had sucked light from the planet Earth." Chapter 8, pgs. 192-193

"The lead news item the rest of the day and the following morning was that the governor had temporarily relieved me of my duties until I could clear my name. An editorial conjectured that Norring had shown himself to be a gentleman, and if I were a lady I would offer to step down." Chapter 10, pg. 268

"Waddell discovered he had savaged a local celebrity whose love, Joe Norring, was then the attorney general of Virginia." Chapter 13, pg. 328



Topics for Discussion

Who is Kay Scarpetta? What is her occupation? What is unusual about this occupation? How is Scarpetta an unusual person for this line of work? How many years of schooling did it require for Scarpetta to reach her current occupation? Why did Scarpetta choose to get both a medical and law degree? How do these degrees aid Scarpetta in her work?

Discuss Ronnie Joe Waddell. Who is he? Why did he die in the electric chair? Did he die in the electric chair? Why are there questions about his death? Could Waddell have escaped death? Why does Waddell stop fighting his execution in his final months? Why was Waddell sure he would not get a reprieve from the governor?

Discuss Joe Norring. Who is Joe Norring? How did Waddell get his briefcase? Why does Norring want it back? What is Norring trying to hide? Did Norring allow a man to be let out of prison to find the briefcase? What was Norring hoping to achieve? Was what Norring did illegal? Did Norring set up Scarpetta?

Why is Scarpetta put before the grand jury? What does the prosecutor think Scarpetta did? Is he right? Why would Scarpetta commit a crime? Could Scarpetta get away with a crime such as this? How? Why is Scarpetta reluctant to show the police her financial records? What might they find there?

Who is Mark James? Who was he to Scarpetta? Why does his death have an impact on Scarpetta? How does his death impact Scarpetta's criminal case? Who is Charlie Hale? What does Charlie Hale have to do with Scarpetta's criminal case? Why did Scarpetta give Charlie Hale money?

Discuss Lucy. Who is Lucy? Why is Lucy so angry? What did Lucy's mother do to her to make her so angry? Why does Lucy believe men are more important than she is to her mother? How does this assumption impact Lucy's life? Why is Lucy so good with computers? What does this say about Lucy? What does it say about Scarpetta?

Discuss Pete Marino. Who is he? Why is Scarpetta so concerned with his health? What is the nature of their relationship? Will it ever be more than friendship? How does Marino feel about Scarpetta? Does he admire Scarpetta? If so, why? Is Marino intelligent? How does he show his intelligence?