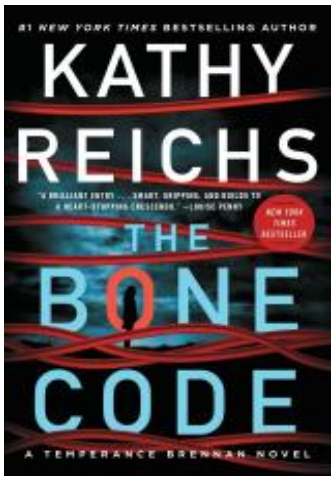
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The Bone Code: A Temperance Brennan Novel

by Kathy Reichs



About the Book

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Kathy Reichs returns with her 20th gripping novel featuring forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan, whose examinations, 15 years apart, of unidentified bodies ignite a terrifying series of events.

On the way to hurricane-ravaged Isle of Palms, a barrier island off the South Carolina coast, Tempe receives a call from the Charleston coroner. The storm has tossed ashore a medical waste container. Inside are two decomposed bodies wrapped in plastic sheeting and bound with electrical wire. Tempe recognizes many of the details as identical to those of an unsolved case she handled in Quebec years earlier. With a growing sense of foreboding, she travels to Montreal to gather evidence.

Meanwhile, health authorities in South Carolina become increasingly alarmed as a human flesh-eating contagion spreads. So focused is Tempe on identifying the container victims that, initially, she doesn?t register how their murders and the pestilence may be related. But she does recognize one unsettling fact. Someone is protecting a dark secret --- and willing to do anything to keep it hidden.

An absorbing look at the sinister uses to which genetics can be put, and featuring a cascade of ever-more-shocking revelations, THE BONE CODE is Temperance Brennan?s most astonishing case yet --- one that gives new meaning to today?s headlines.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the novel present the relationship between science and ethics? Did reading the novel raise any questions or concerns for you about genetic testing and the companies that provide genetic services?

2. This novel begins with Temperance preparing to shelter from a hurricane. What foreshadowing or metaphorical connections does the image of a hurricane have in relation to Temperance?s case?

3. This book was written and published amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and deals with topics quite relevant to the book?s historical context. How has your experience with vaccines and the recent pandemic affected your understanding of the story? Did reading this inform your understanding of how vaccines are created? Did the novel make you less likely, or more likely, to want to be vaccinated in the future?

4. Temperance suggests that they must ?follow the money? to determine what is going on. How does money impact scientific development and ethics? To what extent did a desire for profit drive the characters in the novel?

5. In one scene, Detective Vislosky is working crowd control at a near riot over the capnocytophaga outbreak. How did news and advertising affect the crowd? Are news outlets and reporters at all responsible for the actions of their frequent listeners?

6. How does the death mask figure into the book?s larger narrative?

7. Genetics play a large role in the action of this novel. Several characters are revealed to have familial connections. What role does the family play in the novel, and what is the significance of the genetic relationships between characters? What is the role of genetic relationships for us today?

8. All four victims in this case were never reported missing --- nobody ever looked for them. What were the special circumstances that allowed their disappearance to go unnoticed? In a totally wired world, how do people just disappear?

9. Technical and scientific language appears frequently throughout THE BONE CODE. Tempe is investigating a case about genetics and vaccine development, and we?re introduced to a world of unfamiliar acronyms and terms, including ?CRISPR,? ?neuraminidase? and ?M2 ion channel,? among others. How does the frequent use of these concepts shape your experience as a reader?

10. The novel takes place in two primary locations: Montreal, Canada, and Charleston, North Carolina. How do these two settings influence the novel?s plot? What cultural and geographic characteristics do the cities share, and in what ways do they differ? Does either of them offer a true home to Tempe?

11. Tempe?s longtime friend, Anne Turnip, plays a supporting role in this novel. What is their relationship? How do they communicate with each other? How does Tempe respond to Anne?s house being damaged by the hurricane? Would you want to be friends with Temperance Brennan? What kind of friend do you think she is?

12. When Temperance first meets Detective Tonia Vislosky, they don?t have a warm or collaborative relationship. By the end of the novel, they?re sharing Thanksgiving dinner. What changed over the course of the novel to transform their relationship? In what ways are these women similar, and how do they regard each other? Compare Tempe?s relationship with Vislosky to hers with Detective Claudel in Montreal.

13. The victims in this case are young women and mothers. How does Tempe?s relationship with her daughter potentially influence her response to this case?

14. Patience and waiting are themes throughout the novel. Temperance is often waiting for results or further information. Her job seems to require patience. How does her personality conflict or coincide with her working life? How does her patience, or lack thereof, change her interpersonal relationships as well?

15. What are Dr. Aubrey ?Sullie? Sullivan Huger?s motivations? How does your understanding of his motivations change throughout the novel? Can we justify Sullie?s actions, or he is clearly a villain through and through?

Author Bio

Kathy Reichs? first novel DÉJÀ DEAD, published in 1997, won the Ellis Award for Best First Novel and was an international bestseller. FIRE AND BONES is Reichs? 23rd novel featuring forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan. Reichs was also a producer of Fox Television?s longest running scripted drama, "Bones," which was based on her work and her novels. One of very few forensic anthropologists certified by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology, Reichs divides her time between Charlotte, North Carolina, and Charleston, South Carolina.

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