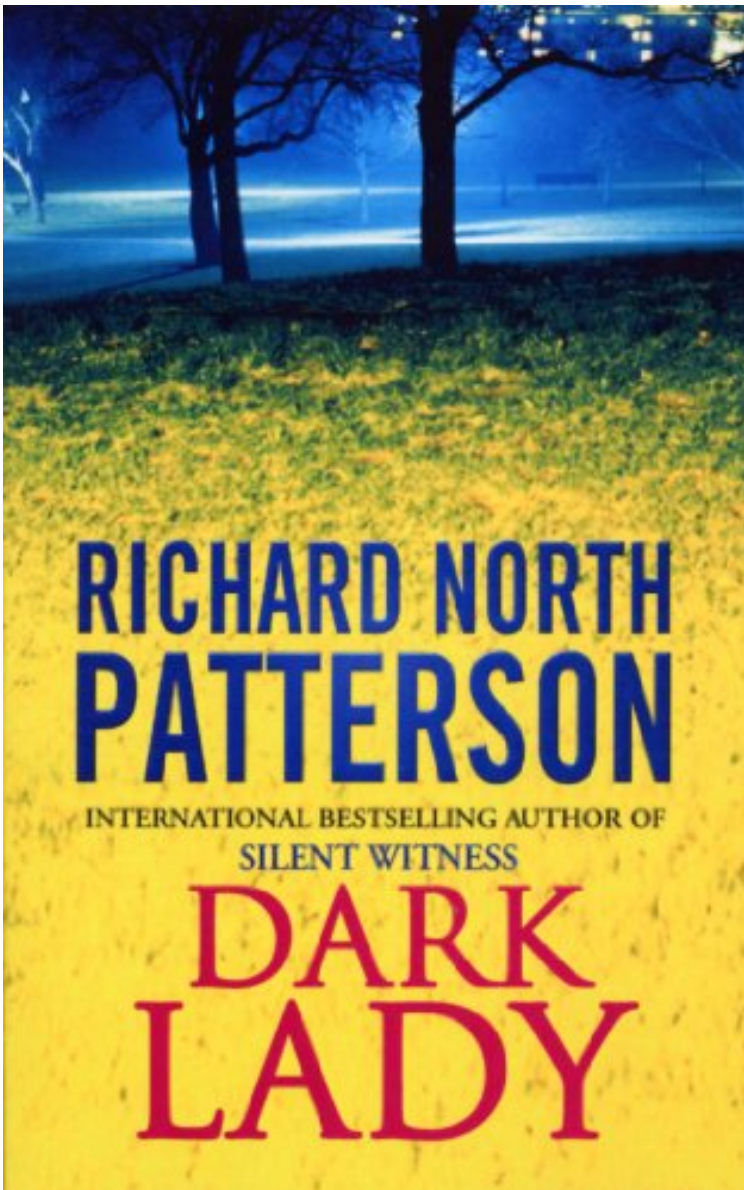


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Dark Lady



*Par Richard North Patterson
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe setting is Steelton, a struggling Midwestern town trying to save its decaying inner city by building a major league baseball stadium. Dark Lady introduces Assistant County Prosecutor Stella Marz, who has escaped her alcoholic father and working class background to become head of the Prosecutor's homicide unit. Her ambition is to become County Prosecutor. But this ambition, indeed her very survival, is threatened when her ex-lover Jack Kovak, a drug lawyer, is murdered, and Stella leads the investigation. There are more deaths and revelations about Jack Kovak's dealings with the city's crime lord, and a trail of wrong-doing, that implicates officers in law enforcement, possibly within her own office. As

her inquiry draws her into a re-examination of her own complex past, her certainty that she is being watched and followed, leads her to fear for her own future. Extrait

In the moments before the brutal murder of Jack Novak ended what she later thought of as her time of innocence, Assistant County Prosecutor Stella Marz gazed down at the waterfront of her native city, Steelton. At thirty-eight, Stella would not have called herself an innocent. Nor was the view from her corner office one that lightened her heart. The afternoon sky was a close, sunless cobalt, typical of Steelton in winter. The sludge-gray Onandaga River divided the city as it met Lake Erie beneath a steel bridge: the valley carved by the river was a treeless expanse of railroad tracks, boxcars, refineries, cranes, chemical plants, and, looming over all of this, the smokestacks of the steel mills--squat, black, and enormous--on which Steelton's existence had once depended. From early childhood, Stella could remember the stench of mill smoke, the stain left on the white blouse of her school uniform drying on her mother's clothesline; from her time in night law school, she recalled the evening that the river had exploded in a stunning instant of spontaneous combustion caused by chemical waste and petroleum derivatives, the flames which climbed five stories high against the darkness. Between these two moments--the apogee of the mills and the explosion of the river--lay the story of a city and its decline. By heritage, Stella herself was part of this story. The mills had boomed after the Civil War, manned by the earliest wave of immigrants--Germans and British, Welsh and Irish--who, in the early 1870s, had worked fourteen hours a day, six days a week. Their weekly pay was \$11.50; in 1874, years of seething resentment ignited a strike, with angry workers demanding twenty-five cents more a week. The leading owner, Amasa Hall, shut down his mills, informing the strikers that, upon reopening, he would give jobs only to those who agreed to a fifty-cent cut. When the strikers refused, Hall boarded his yacht and embarked on a cruise around the world. Hall stopped at Danzig, then a Polish seaport on the Baltic. He advertised extensively for young workers, offering the kingly wage of \$7.25 a week and free transport to America. The resulting wave of Polish strikebreakers--poor, hardworking, Roman Catholic, and largely illiterate--had included Stella's great-grandfather, Carol Marzewski. It was on their backs that Amasa Hall had, quite systematically, undercut and eventually wiped out the other steel producers in the area, acquiring their mills and near-total sway over the region's steel industry. And it was the slow, inexorable decline of those same mills into sputtering obsolescence which had left Stella's father, Armin Marz, unemployed and bitter. Recalling the flames which had leaped from the Onandaga, a brilliant orange-blue against the night sky, had reminded Stella of another memory from childhood, the East Side riots. Just as the West Side of Steelton was home to European immigrants--the first wave had been joined by Italians, Russians, Poles, Slovaks, and Austro-Hungarians--so the city's industry had drawn a later influx of migrants from the American South, the descendants of former slaves, to the eastern side of the Onandaga. But these newcomers were less welcomed, by employers or the heretofore all-white labor force. Stella could not remember a time in her old neighborhood, Warszawa, when the black interlopers were not viewed with suspicion and contempt; the fiery explosion of the East Side into riots in the sixties--three days of arson and shootouts with police--had helped convert this into fear and hatred. A last trickle of nonwhites--Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Koreans, Haitians, Chinese, and Vietnamese--felt welcome, if at all, only on the impoverished East Side. And so the split symbolized by the Onandaga hardened, and racial politics became as natural to Steelton as breathing polluted air. This divide, too, shadowed Stella's thoughts. In the last six years, she had won every case but one--a hung jury following the murder trial of a high school coach who had made one of his students pregnant and who, devastated by Stella's particularly ruthless cross-examination, had thereafter committed suicide. It was this which had led a courtroom deputy to give Stella a nickname which now enjoyed wide currency among the criminal defense bar: the Dark Lady. But only recently had they become aware of her ambition, long nurtured, to become the first woman elected Prosecutor of Erie County.

Revue de presse "ENGROSSING . . . TRUE SUSPENSE."--San Francisco Chronicle "[A] COMPLEX TALE OF PERSONAL, POLITICAL, AND CRIMINAL BETRAYALS . . . Dark Lady not only keeps you in suspense; it gives you plenty of social and moral questions to ponder."--The Wall Street Journal "EXCELLENT . . . ONCE AGAIN PATTERSON REVEALS HIMSELF TO BE A MASTER OF CRAFTING MEMORABLE CHARACTERS. AND THE LONELY, LOVELY STELLA MARZ . . . IS ONE OF HIS BEST."--USA Today