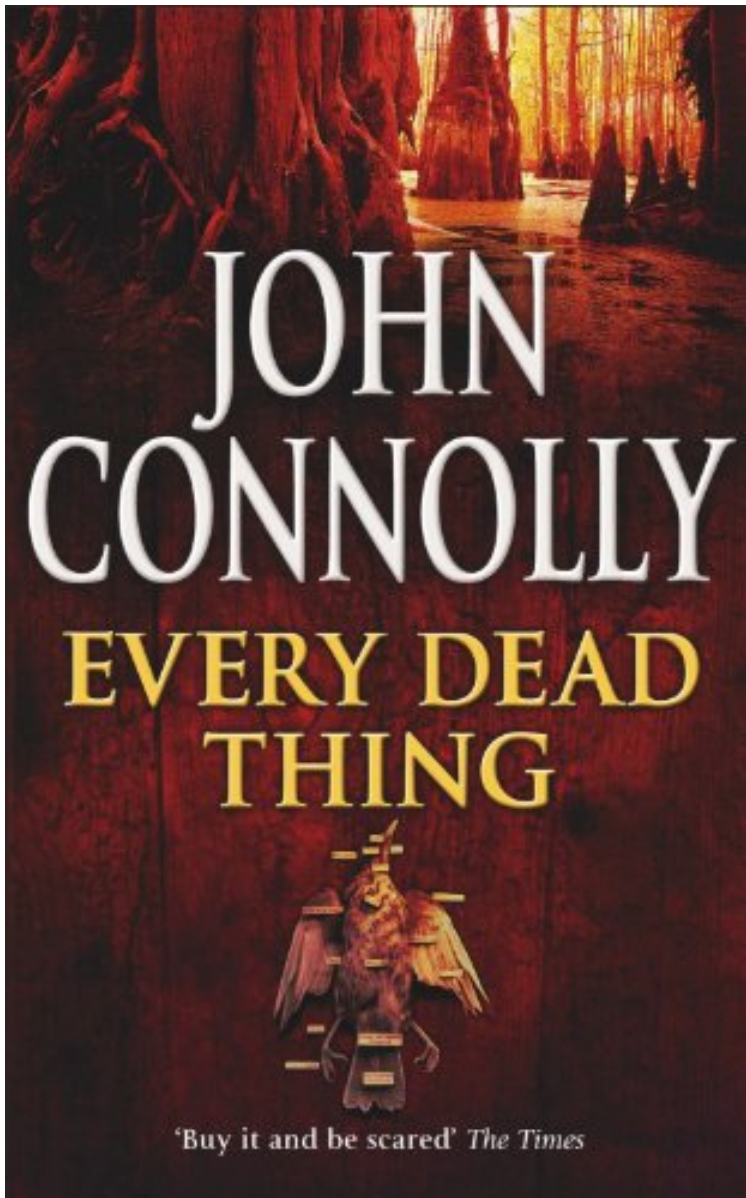


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Every Dead Thing: A Charlie Parker Thriller: 1



Par John Connolly
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Description : Description du produit Have faith. I will find you. Former NYPD detective Charlie "Bird" Parker is on the verge of madness. Tortured by the unsolved slayings of his wife and young daughter, he is a man consumed by guilt, regret, and the desire for revenge. When his former partner asks him to track down a missing girl, Parker finds himself drawn into a world beyond his imagining -- one where thirty year old killings remain shrouded in fear and lies, a world where the ghosts of the dead torment the living, a world haunted by the murderer responsible for the deaths in his family, a serial killer unlike any other, a monster who uses the human body to create works of art and takes faces as his prize. But the search awakens buried

instincts in Parker: instincts for survival, for compassion, for love, and, ultimately, for killing. Aided by a beautiful young psychologist and a pair of career criminals, he becomes the bait in a trap set in the humid bayous of Louisiana, a trap that threatens the lives of everyone in its reach. Driven by visions of the dead and the voice of an old black psychic who met a terrible end, Parker must seek a final, brutal confrontation with a murderer who has moved beyond all notions of humanity, who has set out to create a hell on earth: the serial killer known only as the Travelling Man. In the tradition of classic American detective fiction, Every Dead Thing is a tense, richly-plotted thriller, filled with memorable characters and gripping action. It is also a profoundly moving novel, concerned with the nature of loyalty, of love, and of forgiveness. Lyrical and terrifying, it is an ambitious debut, triumphantly realized.

Presentation de l'auteurThe gripping first Charlie Parker novel from bestselling author John Connolly - perfect for fans of Stephen King and Jeffery Deaver. Tormented and racked with guilt over the brutal slaying of his wife and daughter, Charlie Parker, ex-cop with the NYPD, agrees to track down a missing girl. It is a search that will lead him into an abyss of evil. At the same time, he is warned by an old black woman in Louisiana that 'The Travelling Man' is about to strike again. Multiple strands converge with a horrific confrontation in which hunter and hunted are intimately connected by guilt..comIt's a good idea to avoid reading John Connolly's debut novel on a full stomach. His descriptions of mutilated murder victims give him honorary membership in the gore wars club. Every Dead Thing is a fast-paced piece of fiction from an author whose regular stomping ground is as a journalist for the Irish Times. NYPD detective Charlie "Bird" Parker was busy boozing at Tom's Oak Tavern when his wife Susan, and young daughter Jennifer were mutilated by a killer called the Traveling Man. Consumed by guilt and alcoholism, Charlie soon lost his job, and almost his sanity. Several months on he is sober and ready to get his life back in order. Charlie takes up private investigating. One of his first cases involves the disappearance of a woman called Catherine Demeter. At first this puzzle seems unrelated to the Traveling Man--but Charlie has a gut feeling that the slayer is pulling the strings. "I dreamed of Catherine Demeter surrounded by darkness and flames and the bones of dead children. And I knew then that some terrible blackness had descended upon her." The search for Catherine takes Charlie on a whirlwind tour of the South. First to the small Virginian town of Haven, where, some 30 years before, Catherine's sister Amy was murdered, along with other local children. But the trail turns cold--until a tip from a psychic leads Charlie to the swamplands of Louisiana. The subplots of Catherine's disappearance, age-old child murders, and the slaying of the Parker family finally unite in the hot, humid terrain. A showdown with the Traveling Man is inevitable. Every Dead Thing is classic American crime fiction, and it's hard to believe that John Connolly was born and raised on the Emerald Isle. --Naomi Gesinger

ExtraitEvery Dead Thing CHAPTER I The waitress was in her fifties, dressed in a tight black miniskirt, white blouse, and black high heels. Parts of her spilled out of every item of clothing she wore, making her look like she had swollen mysteriously sometime between dressing and arriving for work. She called me darlin each time she filled my coffee cup. She didnt say anything else, which was fine by me. I had been sitting at the window for over ninety minutes now, watching the brownstone across the street, and the waitress must have been wondering exactly how long I was planning to stay and if I was ever going to pay the check. Outside, the streets of Astoria buzzed with bargain hunters. I had even read the New York Times from start to finish without nodding off in between as I passed the time waiting for Fat Ollie Watts to emerge from hiding. My patience was wearing thin. In moments of weakness, I sometimes considered ditching the New York Times on weekdays and limiting my purchase to the Sunday edition, when I could at least justify buying it on the grounds of bulk. The other option was to begin reading the Post, although then I'd have to start clipping coupons and walking to the store in my bedroom slippers. Maybe in reacting so badly to the Times that morning I was simply killing the messenger. It had been announced that Hansel McGee, a state Supreme Court judge and, according to some, one of the worst judges in New York, was retiring in December and might be nominated to the board of the city's Health and Hospitals Corporation. Even seeing McGee's name in print made me ill. In the 1980s, he had presided over the case of a woman who had been raped when she was nine years old by a fifty-four-year-old man named James Johnson, an attendant in Pelham Bay Park who had convictions for robbery, assault, and rape. McGee overturned a jury award to the woman of \$3.5 million with the following words: An innocent child was heinously raped for no reason at all; yet that is one of the risks of living in a modern society. At the time, his judgment had seemed callous and an absurd justification for overturning the ruling. Now, seeing his name before me again after what had happened to my family, his views seemed so much more abhorrent, a symptom of the collapse of

goodness in the face of evil. Erasing McGee from my mind, I folded the newspaper neatly, tapped a number on my cell phone, and turned my eyes to an upper window of the slightly run-down apartment building opposite. The phone was picked up after three rings and a womans voice whispered a cautious hello. It had the sound of cigarettes and booze to it, like a bar door scraping across a dusty floor. Tell your fat asshole boyfriend that Im on my way to pick him up and hed better not make me chase him, I told her. Im real tired and I dont plan on running around in this heat. Succinct, that was me. I hung up, left five dollars on the table, and stepped out onto the street to wait for Fat Ollie Watts to panic. The city was in the middle of a hot, humid summer spell, which was due to end the following day with the arrival of thunderstorms and rain. Currently, it was hot enough to allow for T-shirts, chinos, and overpriced sunglasses, or, if you were unlucky enough to be holding down a responsible job, hot enough to make you sweat like a pig under your suit as soon as you left the a/c behind. There wasnt even a gust of wind to rearrange the heat. Two days earlier, a solitary desk fan had struggled to make an impact on the sluggish warmth in the Brooklyn Heights office of Benny Low. Through an open window I could hear Arabic being spoken on Atlantic Avenue and I could smell the cooking scents coming from the Moroccan Star, half a block away. Benny was a minor-league bail bondsman who had banked on Fat Ollie staying put until his trial. The fact that he had misjudged Fat Ollies faith in the justice system was one reason why Benny continued to remain a minor-league bondsman. The money being offered on Fat Ollie Watts was reasonable, and there were things living on the bottom of ponds that were smarter than most bail jumpers. There was a fifty-thousand-dollar bond on Fat Ollie, the result of a misunderstanding between Ollie and the forces of law and order over the precise ownership of a 1993 Chevy Beretta, a 1990 Mercedes 300 SE, and a number of well-appointed sport utility vehicles, all of which had come into Ollies possession by illegal means. Fat Ollies day started to go downhill when an eagle-eyed patrolman familiar with Ollies reputation as something less than a shining light in the darkness of a lawless world spotted the Chevy under a tarpaulin and called for a check on the plates. They were false and Ollie was raided, arrested, and questioned. He kept his mouth shut but packed a bag and headed for the hills as soon as he made bail, in an effort to avoid further questions about who had placed the cars in his care. That source was reputed to be Salvatore Sonny Ferrera, the son of a prominent capo. There had been rumors lately that relations between father and son had deteriorated in recent weeks, but nobody was saying why. Fuckin goomba stuff, as Benny Low had put it that day in his office. Anything to do with Fat Ollie? Fuck do I know? You want to call Ferrera and ask? I looked at Benny Low. He was completely bald and had been since his early twenties, as far as I knew. His glabrous skull glistened with tiny beads of perspiration. His cheeks were ruddy and flesh hung from his chin and jowls like melted wax. His tiny office, located above a halal store, smelled of sweat and mold. I wasnt even sure why I had said I would take the job. I had moneyinsurance money, money from the sale of the house, money from what had once been a shared account, even some cash from my retirement fundand Benny Lows money wasnt going to make me any happier. Maybe Fat Ollie was just something to do. Benny Low swallowed once, loudly. What? Why are you lookin at me like that? You know me, Benny, dont you? Fuck does that mean? Course I know you. You want a reference? What? He laughed halfheartedly, spreading his pudgy hands wide as if in supplication. What? he said again. His voice faltered, and for the first time, he actually looked scared. I knew that people had been talking about me in the months since the deaths, talking about things I had done, things I might have done. The look in Benny Lows eyes told me that he had heard about them too and believed that they could be true. Something about Fat Ollies flight just didnt sit right. It wouldnt be the first time that Ollie had faced a judge on a stolen vehicles rap, although the suspected connection to the Ferreras had forced the bond up on this occasion. Ollie had a good lawyer to rely on; otherwise his only connection to the automobile industry would have come from making license plates on Rikers Island. There was no particular reason for Ollie to run, and no reason why he would risk his life by fingering Sonny over something like this. Nothing, Benny. Its nothing. You hear anything else, you tell me. Sure, sure, said Benny, relaxing again. Youll be the first to know. As I left his office, I heard him mutter under his breath. I couldnt be sure what he said but I knew what it sounded like. It sounded like Benny Low had just called me a killer like my father. It had taken me most of the next day to locate Ollies current squeeze through some judicious questioning, and another fifty minutes that morning to determine if Ollie was with her through the simple expedient of calling the local Thai food joints and asking them if they had made any deliveries to the address in the last week. Ollie was a Thai food freak and, like most skips, stuck to his habits even while on the run. People dont change very much, which usually makes the dumb ones easy to find. They take out subscriptions to the same magazines, eat in the same places, drink the same beers, call the same women, sleep with the same men.

After I threatened to call the health inspectors, an Oriental roach motel called the Bangkok Sun House confirmed deliveries to one Monica Mulrane at an address in Astoria, leading to coffee, the New York Times, and a phone call to wake Ollie up. True to form and dim as a ten-watt bulb, Ollie opened the door of 2317 about four minutes after my call, stuck his head out, and then commenced an awkward, shambling run down the steps toward the sidewalk. He was an absurd figure, strands of hair slicked across his bald pate, the elasticated waistband of his tan pants stretched across a stomach of awesome size. Monica Mulrane must have loved him a whole lot to stay with him, because he didnt have money and he sure as hell didnt have looks. It was strange, but I kind of liked Fat Ollie Watts. He had just set foot on the sidewalk when a jogger wearing a gray sweat suit with the hood pulled up appeared at the corner, ran up to Ollie, and pumped three shots into him from a silenced pistol. Ollies white shirt was suddenly polka-dotted with red and he folded to the ground. The jogger, left-handed, stood over him and shot him once more in the head. Someone screamed and I saw a brunette, presumably the by now recently bereaved Monica Mulrane, pause at the door of her apartment block before she ran to the sidewalk to kneel beside Ollie, passing her hands over his bald, bloodied head and crying. The jogger was already backing off, bouncing on the balls of his feet like a fighter waiting for the bell. Then he stopped, returned, and fired a single shot into the top of the womans head. She folded over the body of Ollie Watts, her back shielding his head. Bystanders were already running for cover behind cars, into stores, and the cars on the street ground to a halt. I was almost across the street, my Smith Wesson in my hand, when the jogger ran. He kept his head down and moved fast, the gun still held in his left hand. Even though he wore black gloves, he hadnt dropped the gun at the scene. Either the gun was distinctive or the shooter was dumb. I was banking on the second option. I was gaining on him when a black Chevy Caprice with tinted windows screeched out from a side street and stood waiting for him. If I didnt shoot, he was going to get away. If I did shoot, there would be hell to pay with the cops. I made my choice. He had almost reached the Chevy when I squeezed off two shots, one hitting the door of the car and the second tearing a bloody hole in the right arm of the joggers top. He spun, firing two wild shots in my direction as he did so, and I could see his eyes were wide and ultra-bright. The killer was wired. As he turned toward the Chevy it sped away, the driver spooked by my shots, leaving Fat Ollies killer stranded. He fired off another shot, which shattered the window of the car to my left. I could hear people screaming and, in the distance, the wail of approaching sirens. The jogger sprinted toward an alley, glancing over his shoulder at the sound of my shoes hammering on the road behind him. As I made the corner a bullet whined off the wall above me, peppering me with pieces of concrete. I looked up to see the jogger moving beyond the midpoint of the alley, staying close to the wall. If he got around the corner at the end, I would lose him in the crowds. The gap at the end of the alley was, briefly, clear of people. I decided to risk the shot. The sun was behind me as I straightened, firing twice in quick succession. I was vaguely aware of people at either side of me scattering like pigeons from a stone as the joggers right shoulder arched back with the impact of one of my shots. I shouted at him to drop the piece but he turned awkwardly, his left hand bringing the gun up. Slightly off balance, I fired two more shots from around twenty feet. His left knee exploded as one of the hollow points connected, and he collapsed against the wall of the alley, his pistol skidding harmlessly away toward some trash cans and black bags. As I closed on him I could see he was ashen faced, his mouth twisted in pain and his left hand gripping the air around his shattered knee without actually touching the wound. Yet his eyes were still bright and I thought I heard him giggle as he pushed himself from the wall and tried to hop away on his good leg. I was maybe fifteen feet from him when his giggles were drowned by the sound of brakes squealing in front of him. I looked up to see the black Chevy blocking the end of the alley, the window on its passenger side down, and then the darkness within was broken by a single muzzle flash. Fat Ollies killer bucked and fell forward on the ground. He spasmed once and I could see a red stain spreading across the back of his top. There was a second shot, the back of his head blew a geyser of blood in the air and his face banged once on the filthy concrete of the alley. I was already making for the cover of the trash cans when a bullet whacked into the brickwork above my head, showering me with dust and literally boring a hole through the wall. Then the window of the Chevy rolled up and the car shot off to the east. I ran to where the jogger lay. Blood flowed from the wounds in his body, creating a dark red shadow on the ground. The sirens were close now and I could see onlookers gathered in the sunlight, watching me as I stood over the body. The patrol car pulled up minutes later. I already had my hands in the air and my gun on the ground before me, my permit beside it. Fat Ollies killer was lying at my feet, blood now pooled around his head and linked to the red tide that was congealing slowly in the alleys central gutter. One patrolman kept me covered while his partner patted me down, with more force than was strictly necessary, against the

wall. The cop patting me down was young, perhaps no more than twenty-three or twenty-four, and cocky as hell. Shit, we got Wyatt Earp here, Sam, he said. Shootin it out like it was High Noon. Wyatt Earp wasnt in

High Noon, I corrected him, as his partner checked my ID. The cop punched me hard in the kidneys in response and I fell to my knees. I heard more sirens nearby, including the telltale whine of an ambulance.

Youre a funny guy, hotshot, said the young cop. Whyd you shoot him? You werent around, I replied, my teeth gritted in pain. If youd been here Id have shot you instead. He was just about to cuff me when a voice I recognized said: Put it away, Harley. I looked over my shoulder at his partner, Sam Rees. I recognized him from my days on the force and he recognized me. I dont think he liked what he saw. He used to be a cop.

Leave him be. And then the three of us waited in silence until the others joined us. Two more blue-and-whites arrived before a mud brown Nova dumped a figure in plain clothes on the curb. I looked up to see

Walter Cole walking toward me. I hadnt seen him in almost six months, not since his promotion to lieutenant. He was wearing a long brown leather coat, incongruous in the heat. Ollie Watts? he said, indicating the shooter with an inclination of his head. I nodded. He left me alone for a time as he spoke with uniformed cops and detectives from the local precinct. I noticed that he was sweating heavily in his coat.

You can come in my car, he said when he eventually returned, eyeing the cop called Harley with ill-concealed distaste. He motioned some more detectives toward him and made some final comments in quiet, measured tones before waving me toward the Nova. Nice coat, I said appreciatively as we walked to his car. How many girls you got in your stable? Walters eyes glinted briefly. Lee gave me this coat for my birthday. Why do you think Im wearing it in this goddamned heat? You fire any shots? A couple. You do know that there are laws against discharging firearms in public places, dont you? I know that but Im not sure about the guy dead on the ground back there. Im not sure that the guy who shot him knows either. Maybe you could try a poster campaign. Very funny. Now get in the car. I did as he said and we pulled away from the curb, the onlookers gaping curiously at us as we headed off through the crowded streets.