

JAMES PATTERSON

ALEX CROSS

MUST

DIE

A THRILLER





# About the Author

In 1993, James Patterson wrote *Along Came a Spider*, which introduced the world to Alex Cross, a young detective working out of Washington, DC. Idealistic and courageous, Cross's deep love for his family gives him the strength to overcome the many forms of evil he confronts in his life and work. Since then, every Alex Cross thriller has been an international bestseller. *Alex Cross Must Die* is the thirty-first novel in this extraordinary series.

James Patterson is the author of other bestselling series, including the Women's Murder Club, Detective Michael Bennett and Private novels. His books have sold in excess of 400 million copies worldwide. Passionate about encouraging children to read, he also writes a range of books specifically for young readers. James has donated millions in grants to independent bookshops and has been the most borrowed adult author in UK libraries for the past fourteen years in a row. He lives in Florida with his family.

[A list of titles by James Patterson appears at the back of this book](#)

## Why everyone loves James Patterson and Alex Cross

‘It’s no mystery why James Patterson is the world’s most popular thriller writer. Simply put: **nobody does it better.**’

Jeffery Deaver

‘No one gets this big without **amazing natural storytelling** talent – which is what Jim has, in spades. The Alex Cross series proves it.’

Lee Child

‘James Patterson is the **gold standard** by which all others are judged.’

Steve Berry

‘Alex Cross is one of the **best-written heroes** in American fiction.’

Lisa Scottoline

‘Twenty years after the first Alex Cross story, he has become one of the **greatest fictional detectives** of all time, a character for the ages.’ Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child

‘Alex Cross is a **legend.**’

Harlan Coben

‘Patterson boils a scene down to the single, telling detail, the element that **defines a character** or moves a plot along. It’s what fires off the movie projector in the reader’s mind.’ Michael Connelly

‘James Patterson is **The Boss.** End of.’

Ian Rankin

James Patterson

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ALEX CROSS  
MUST DIE



## Contents

<b>Why everyone loves James Patterson and Alex Cross .....</b>	<b>4</b>
James Patterson.....	5
CHAPTER 1 .....	13
CHAPTER 2 .....	16
CHAPTER 3 .....	18
CHAPTER 4 .....	20
CHAPTER 5 .....	21
CHAPTER 6 .....	23
CHAPTER 7 .....	25
CHAPTER 8 .....	26
CHAPTER 9 .....	28
CHAPTER 10 .....	29
CHAPTER 11.....	32
CHAPTER 12 .....	36
CHAPTER 13 .....	39
CHAPTER 14 .....	42
CHAPTER 15 .....	44
CHAPTER 16 .....	47
CHAPTER 17 .....	49
CHAPTER 18 .....	50
CHAPTER 19 .....	52
CHAPTER 20 .....	55
CHAPTER 21 .....	55
CHAPTER 22 .....	59
CHAPTER 23 .....	62
CHAPTER 24 .....	64
CHAPTER 25 .....	66
CHAPTER 26 .....	68
CHAPTER 27 .....	71

CHAPTER 28 .....	74
CHAPTER 29 .....	76
CHAPTER 30 .....	78
CHAPTER 31 .....	79
CHAPTER 32 .....	81
CHAPTER 33 .....	83
CHAPTER 34 .....	85
CHAPTER 35 .....	86
CHAPTER 36 .....	89
CHAPTER 37 .....	90
CHAPTER 38 .....	92
CHAPTER 39 .....	94
CHAPTER 40 .....	96
CHAPTER 41 .....	99
CHAPTER 42 .....	101
CHAPTER 43 .....	102
CHAPTER 44 .....	104
CHAPTER 45 .....	107
CHAPTER 46 .....	109
CHAPTER 47 .....	111
CHAPTER 48 .....	114
CHAPTER 49 .....	117
CHAPTER 50 .....	118
CHAPTER 51 .....	121
CHAPTER 52 .....	123
CHAPTER 53 .....	126
CHAPTER 54 .....	129
CHAPTER 55 .....	132
CHAPTER 56 .....	133
CHAPTER 57 .....	136

CHAPTER 58 .....	138
CHAPTER 59 .....	140
CHAPTER 60 .....	142
CHAPTER 61 .....	144
CHAPTER 62 .....	146
CHAPTER 63 .....	148
CHAPTER 64 .....	149
CHAPTER 65 .....	151
CHAPTER 66 .....	153
CHAPTER 67 .....	155
CHAPTER 68 .....	157
CHAPTER 69 .....	160
CHAPTER 70 .....	161
CHAPTER 71 .....	165
CHAPTER 72 .....	167
CHAPTER 73 .....	171
CHAPTER 74 .....	173
CHAPTER 75 .....	175
CHAPTER 76 .....	178
CHAPTER 77 .....	179
CHAPTER 78 .....	182
CHAPTER 79 .....	184
CHAPTER 80 .....	187
CHAPTER 81 .....	189
CHAPTER 82 .....	191
CHAPTER 83 .....	195
CHAPTER 84 .....	198
CHAPTER 85 .....	199
CHAPTER 86 .....	201
CHAPTER 87 .....	204



CHAPTER 88 .....	207
CHAPTER 89 .....	209
CHAPTER 90 .....	211
CHAPTER 91 .....	214
CHAPTER 92 .....	216
CHAPTER 93 .....	218
CHAPTER 94 .....	220
CHAPTER 95 .....	220
CHAPTER 96 .....	223
CHAPTER 97 .....	226
CHAPTER 98 .....	227
CHAPTER 99 .....	229
CHAPTER 100 .....	232
CHAPTER 101 .....	234
CHAPTER 102 .....	234
CHAPTER 103 .....	236
CHAPTER 104 .....	239
CHAPTER 1 .....	244
CHAPTER 2 .....	246
CHAPTER 3 .....	249
Also By James Patterson .....	250

# WHO IS ALEX CROSS?

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Alex Cross is 6 foot 3 inches (190cm), and weighs 196 lbs (89 kg).  
He is African American, with an athletic build.

RECORDED - 105

INDEXED - 105

## FAMILY HISTORY:

Cross was raised by his grandmother, Regina Cross Hope - known as Nana Mama - following the death of his mother and his father's subsequent descent into alcoholism. He moved to D.C. from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to live with Nana Mama when he was ten.

## RELATIONSHIP HISTORY:

Cross was previously married to Maria, mother to his children Damon and Janelle, however she was tragically killed in a drive-by shooting. Cross has another son, Alex Jr., with Christine Johnson.

## EDUCATION:

Cross has a PhD in psychology from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, with a special concentration in the field of abnormal psychology and forensic psychology.

## EMPLOYMENT:

Cross works as a psychologist in a private practice, based in his home. He also consults for the Major Case Squad of the Metro Police Department, where he previously worked as a psychologist for the Homicide and Major Crimes team.

DR  
Graham  
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JB

## PROFILE

A loving father, Cross is never happier than when spending time with his family. He is also a dedicated member of his community and often volunteers at his local parish and soup kitchen. When not working in the practice or consulting for MPD, he enjoys playing classical music on the piano, reading, and teaching his children how to box.

- 5 - Bureau
- 3 - New Haven
- 2 - New York

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## CHAPTER 1

### *South Camp Springs, Maryland*

ON THAT MID-NOVEMBER MONDAY morning, after nearly three years of careful planning, the forty-eight-year-old man donned latex gloves and scanned the rental-car agreement one last time.

His eyes paused on the flowing signature *Marion Davis* before he stuffed the agreement into an aluminum clipboard storage box, the kind construction estimators use. He set it on plastic sheeting on the credenza in a dingy motel room not far from Joint Base Andrews.

Davis had been there the past three days; he'd told the young woman at the front desk that he was holing up to finish his first movie script. His claim seemed to impress her enough that she agreed to keep housekeeping away, which was good, because how could he have explained the thin plastic sheeting covering every bit of furniture and taped over the floors and walls? Or, even harder to explain, the four large plastic storage bins he'd bought at Walmart and filled with bleach, hydrogen peroxide, and distilled water?

The acrid chemical scent irritated Davis's eyes and nose, but he didn't dare open the windows for ventilation. Instead, he'd kept the air conditioner going nonstop and wore goggles and a KN95 mask. He left the room only in the dead of night, when it was safe to ferry supplies. Now Davis crouched by the closest storage bin, reached with gloved hands into the chemical solution, and pulled out a long belt of .50-caliber bullets bought two years before on the blackest of black markets, this one at a remote ranch in northern Colorado.

He knew from training and experience that a soldier could adjust his aim at a moving target by using this ammunition belt. Every fourth cartridge fired a tracer round that glowed hot orange as it sped through the air.

However, the tracers also revealed the position of the shooter. Davis left in the first four tracer rounds but removed the remaining ones and replaced them with live rounds from a second bleached ammunition belt.

When he was done, he sank the first belt back in the chemicals and went into the bathroom. There, Davis stripped off his clothes and put them in a plastic garbage bag that he closed and sealed with duct tape.

Next, he stepped into the shower stall — all but the drain covered in plastic sheeting — turned on the hot water, picked up a razor, and shaved

every inch of skin he could reach, from his already shaved head to the insteps of his feet.

He poured two cups of bleach down the drain when he was finished shaving, turned off the water, and retrieved a large tube of Airassi hair remover. Davis used a sponge on a long handle to smear the stuff on the skin he'd just shaved and all over his back. His eyebrows, eyelids, and ear canals were also dabbed. The cream burned, especially on his testicles, but he waited nearly fifteen minutes before rinsing it off. It was worth the pain to ensure that no FBI crime scene tech would find his hair anywhere.

Davis stepped out of the shower, stood and waited for his body to dry, then applied copious amounts of CeraVe moisturizer, again head to toe, to keep flecks of his skin from shedding. Only then did he step into a white disposable hazmat suit. He pulled the hood over his head and zipped it to his neck.

With the goggles and respirator on, Davis lugged the storage bins into the bathroom and drained them, leaving the various components of his weapon and custom tripod in them. He used two blow-dryers to remove the rest of the moisture and lubricated the parts with oil and graphite.

When he was satisfied, Davis put lids on the bins, tore down the plastic sheeting, gathered everything he had used in the past seventy-two hours, and stuffed it all into four lawn-and-leaf bags. These he sealed with duct tape and put next to the motel room's door.

He pushed back the curtains and saw the rear of the tan utility van. No one else was in the parking lot. But why would anyone be? It was a weekday morning. The kids who lived at the motel were all in school, and their mothers were working or sleeping it off.

Davis opened another bag, retrieved a new Baltimore Ravens hoodie, and put it on over the hazmat suit. A new brown cover-all with the logo of the National Park Service went on next. He finished with a pair of glasses with heavy black frames and clear lenses. He added a respirator to cover his face, checked his look, then tugged the mask down around his neck.

All of this had taken several hours. Davis had a great deal of confidence in his preparation, but his heart still raced when he finally opened the motel room door. He quickly moved the storage bins and bulging plastic bags into the rear of the van, near a mountain bike and two blue fifty-fivegallon drums, one strapped to each wall. A laptop computer, purchased the year before from a pawnshop in Kentucky, went in the front seat.

Davis left the key to the spotless room on a chair by the door and drove out of the parking lot a few minutes after two p.m. He felt fully in control of his fate and pleased about the impact he was about to have.

Davis allowed himself a smile, thinking: *Isn't that the way you want to be when you're about to commit mass murder for a righteous cause?*

## CHAPTER 2

**FOR THE NEXT THREE** hours, Davis drove around greater Washington, DC, tossing the trash bags in separate dumpsters. When he was done with that, he went to Thrifton Hill Park, off Interstate 66 in Woodmont, Virginia.

He kept the vehicle running and the air-conditioning blasting when he got out with two magnetic signs reading ground crew below the emblem of the National Park Service system. They were exact replicas of ones he had seen and photographed on a trip to the Shenandoah Valley earlier in the year.

Davis stuck them on the sides of his van, climbed into the rear between the fifty-five-gallon drums, and began assembling a relic left over from Vietnam War days, a Browning M2 .50-caliber machine gun. He'd bought it at the same remote Colorado ranch where he'd bought the bullets.

When he was done putting the Browning together, he fitted a thermal scope on it, then screwed the tripod panhead into the front stock of the machine gun. He bolted the three legs of the tripod to a rotating steel plate mounted on the van's floor and checked the thin hydraulic connection to the tripod's neck.

Earlier, he had screwed a solid steel cylinder, four inches long and a quarter of an inch in diameter, into the rear bottom of the machine gun's stock. That stout nub fit into the receiver of a hydraulic unit that was smaller than a card deck and mounted on a track between two strips of steel that curved from one side of the van to the other. The tracks were screwed tightly into the floor.

The machine gun now stood on its own, fully controlled, barrel cocked slightly upward, the muzzle less than an inch from where the two back doors met.

To finish, Davis attached a small pneumatic vise around the trigger and connected it and the other hydraulic lines and pumps to a palm-size digital control. Davis used the laptop to activate the thermal sight, connected by Bluetooth to the computer, and was soon looking at the scope's reticle and the rear door of the van.

He triggered one of the hydraulic lines and saw the barrel rise as the tripod's neck lifted and extended.

He gave another order. The rear of the gun swept smoothly left and right; he tested the trigger vise and heard the firing pin click. Satisfied, Davis retrieved the ammunition belt and fed it into the receiver, making sure to lay the belt out so it would not bunch or bind and jam the weapon.



Dusk gathered as he put the van in gear and headed east on I-66, then picked up the southbound George Washington Memorial Parkway. Davis turned on his headlights as he passed beneath the Fourteenth Street Bridge and took the exit to Gravelly Point Park, hard by the Potomac River.

He pulled into the nearly empty parking lot and found the stall he wanted. As darkness descended, the last visitors got in their cars and left. Davis called up a public link on the laptop.

Air traffic controllers began chattering to pilots.

Just then a roaring sound came from behind the van. From the north, a United Airlines jet crossed above the Fourteenth Street Bridge, Gravelly Point Park, Davis's van, and a backwater of the Potomac and touched down at Ronald Reagan National Airport.

Davis thrilled at the vibration the passing jet's engines sent through the van and his body. It had been less than two hundred feet above him! He knew this because he had been to the park multiple times over the past three years, purposely going months between visits to study landing patterns and approaches until he felt as if he could put a jet down on that runway himself.

The air traffic control chatter directed the next three planes to approach the airport at the same specific speeds and angles of descent. The wind, they said, was due south, barely eight knots, which made for smooth landings.

The next plane and the one after that came in on the same vectors. Davis fed this information into the laptop just before a police cruiser turned into the parking lot.

He'd anticipated a visit. A cruiser showed up every evening to make sure the parking lot was empty and gated off from vehicles. Davis leaned over and retrieved a sprayer from the floor of the passenger side. He tugged his respirator up so it covered the lower part of his face and got out with a headlamp on his head. The cruiser pulled up. The window rolled down.

"Late night?" the female officer asked.

"On overtime, Officer," Davis said, lowering the mask a little. "They want this place sprayed with insecticide when no one is around." "You're lucky it's fairly warm and not raining."

"I was kind of wishing for rain so I could go home and see my kids," he said. He unzipped his coverall enough to show the Ravens logo on his hoodie. "Watch the game."

"That's right, Baltimore's playing tonight. You have the key to the gate?"

Davis nodded. "I'll shut and lock it when I leave."

"Thanks," the officer said. She rolled up the window and pulled away.

Davis made a show of leaving the parking lot and trudging down the bike path. The cruiser's taillights disappeared. After a bicyclist passed him heading north, he buttonhooked back to the van, got in, and set the chemical

sprayer on the floor. He listened to the next plane land on the same vectors and trajectories and checked to make sure his cell phone was connected to the laptop. Then he sent the computer a command from the phone. Behind him, he heard the gun swivel and adjust for elevation and windage based on the information he'd gleaned from the air traffic controllers.

"Delta nine-four-four, you are clear for landing," a female controller on the laptop connection said. "American eight-three-nine, begin your approach."

"Roger that, National," both pilots said.

Davis got out fast, went around the back of the van, and opened the rear doors. Careful not to bump the barrel of the gun, he eased out the mountain bike, got on it, and pedaled away. By the time the Delta flight landed, Davis was out along the Potomac, listening to the air traffic controllers over his phone and earbuds.

He caught sight of the American jet's landing lights far upriver and stopped the bike south of the Fourteenth Street Bridge. He could barely see the van back in the parking lot.

It didn't matter, and neither did the men, women, and children on the plane. Davis thumbed the screen of his phone to see the feed from the scope.

American 839, arriving from Palm Beach International, was above and behind him over the bridge. The heat signature of the jet was just showing on the gun sight's thermal feed.

Davis activated the firing program and waited for the mayhem to commence.

## CHAPTER 3

**FIFTEEN MINUTES EARLIER, DURING** a long, slow banked turn from west to north to east, American Airlines captain Harry Carpenter, a week from retirement, was talking barbecue, his third favorite subject after fly-fishing and college football.

"I'm telling you, the best I ever had was in Chicago," he said to his new copilot, Emma Waters.

"Chicago?" she said. "What about Kansas City or Memphis or Dallas? I always thought those were the hotbeds of the good stuff."

Carpenter chuckled. "Well, the real hotbeds were and are folks' backyards down in the Carolinas somewhere and at cinder-block roadside joints in Mississippi and Alabama, the kind of place that serves you food on a paper

plate with a cold can of beer or a Dr Pepper while you sit under the blades of a creaky old fan.”

Waters laughed. “Sounds like you’ve been there.”

“Many times,” he said. “My old man was a freak for good barbecue, used to drive us all over on the mere rumor of a great rib joint.”

“And you found it in Chicago?”

“I did,” the captain said and smacked his lips in satisfaction. “Or, rather, Daddy did when he was up there for a convention back in the eighties.”

The air traffic controller broke into their conversation. “American eightthree-nine, turn southeast fifteen degrees. Descend to two thousand.” “Looking for that river,” Carpenter said.

“Affirmative.”

He fed the instruction into the onboard computer and watched gauges as the aircraft followed his commands. “God, I love this. When I started flying this route, you had to come in manual to make sure you didn’t hit the Fourteenth Street Bridge. It freaked you out. Now you couldn’t hit it if you tried.”

As the captain caught sight of the river and lowered the landing gear, Waters said, “You going to make a pilgrimage to this Chicago rib mecca soon?”

Carpenter groaned. “Would that I could, but the great Leon’s is no more. My favorite was his rib tips. He’d smoke them and then chop them up into two-inch chunks with a cleaver and dump them in a paper bucket with his sauce, fries, and two pieces of Bunny Bread right there in front of you. Best ribs ever.”

“Leon die or give up?”

“Heart attack, I think. It’s why now I just sample good ribs occasionally. Otherwise, you end up like Leon, and my old man and I have too much fun to look forward to for that.”

“Fun in Boise?” Emma said skeptically.

“I’m telling you, Idaho’s a beautiful place. You should see it sometime.”

The lights of Washington, DC, and Northern Virginia were brilliant as the plane descended. He could see the bridge and the runway five miles away.

“You deserve it, Harry,” his copilot said. “How many years you put in?” “Twenty-six in the saddle, eight in the air force before that,” he said. “Honestly, Emma, I kind of hate flying now. Can’t wait to get in my Chevy Trail Boss with Terri and the dogs and light out for Idaho and a better life.”

They crossed over the bridge, their landing lights illuminating the north end of the park. As Carpenter was scanning readouts and looking at the runway, he caught the impression of a vehicle at the far end of the empty parking lot. Something hot, orange, and pulsing came ripping out of the vehicle right at them.

Carpenter had flown combat missions in Kuwait. He knew they were machine-gun tracers even before the heavy .50-caliber bullets began to rake the jet.

“Sorry, Terri,” he said to his wife before the cockpit wind-shield blew out.  
CHAPTER 4

DAVIS WATCHED THE FIRST tracers and bullets find and chew up the jet’s left wing and engine and then saw a rain of 180 .50-caliber armor-piercing bullets smash into the nose, the cockpit, and the forward landing gear.

The plane stuttered in the air, still under computer control and still in full descent as it passed over the parking lot, the van, and the now empty machine gun. The jet wobbled and drifted right, crossing the backwater of the Potomac. The rear gear touched down, and for an instant Davis thought he’d failed, that the jet would land and that he’d had zero impact.

But then the right wing dipped wildly. Sparks flew like thousands of Roman candles when the wing smashed down onto the tarmac, causing the jet’s back end to skid violently. The wing broke off entirely, and the fuselage and other wing went tomahawking down the runway.

On the next big impact, the second wing came off. A forward section of the fuselage, including the cockpit, broke away and flew off the runway.

On the third impact, the remaining jet fuel exploded, shredding what was left of American Airlines Flight 839. The wreckage finally came to a stop far down the runway. Flames belched into the night sky.

Davis felt zero regret for murdering however many people he had just killed.

*God, I hate Floridians,* he thought as he thumbed his phone’s screen again. *Old fat-ass do-nothings in wheelchairs. Serves them right that they were the first ones to get what they all deserve. Every single one of them.*

When Davis heard sirens and saw the red flash of fire trucks speeding onto the runway toward the burning mass, he calmly gave his phone and the laptop a final order. Seven hundred yards away, the van blew apart.