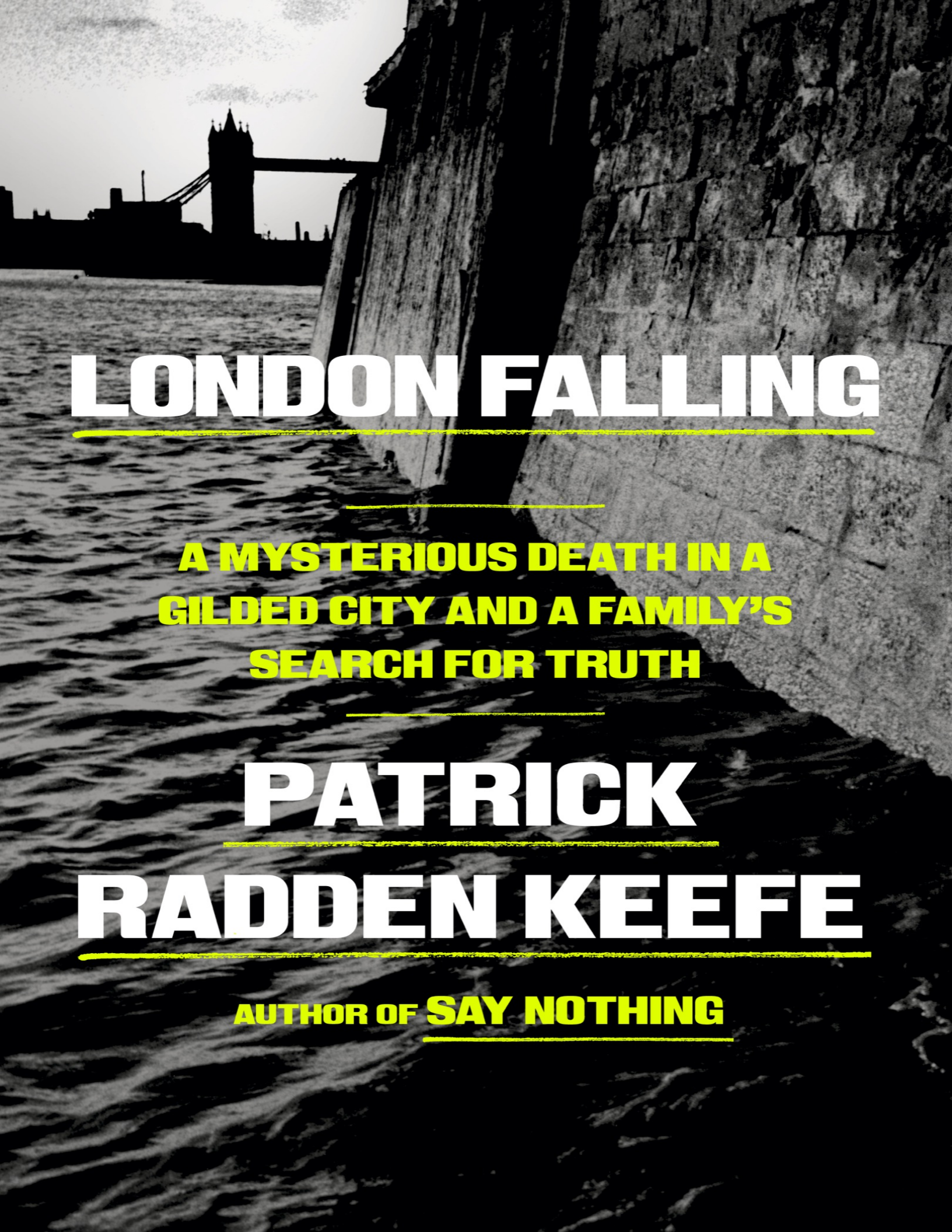




LONDON FALLING

**A MYSTERIOUS DEATH IN A
GILDED CITY AND A FAMILY'S
SEARCH FOR TRUTH**

**PATRICK
RADDEN KEEFE**

AUTHOR OF SAY NOTHING

ALSO BY PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE

Rogues

Empire of Pain

Say Nothing

The Snakehead

Chatter



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DOUBLEDAY | NEW YORK



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Acknowledgments

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About the Author

For Jennifer Radden and Frank Keefe

*the boy shocked to see
what could so easily be himself in the river bent to greet it.*

—Gboyega Odubanjo

London, after all, is a city of tombs.

—Virginia Woolf

What follows is a true story. The book contains lengthy stretches of verbatim dialogue. None of this language is invented or imagined. Longer conversations come directly from transcripts or recordings that were made available to the author. Some shorter snatches are drawn from the recollections of people who took part in a conversation or from their contemporaneous notes. The book also cites numerous text messages and emails, which have been edited only to correct for typos.

PROLOGUE

THE HEADQUARTERS OF BRITAIN'S Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, occupies an imposing edifice of concrete and green glass on the south bank of the River Thames, in London. It was erected in the early 1990s, alongside Vauxhall Bridge, under circumstances of such secrecy that when the architect was commissioned to design the building, he did not know who he was designing it for.

The Thames is a tidal river, its powerful currents ebbing and surging twice each day with salt water from the North Sea. Occasionally a bottlenose whale will veer off course, separated from its pod, and wander downriver, dangerously far from the ocean. When the tide recedes, the Thames shrinks, its level plummeting by as much as twenty feet, exposing a muddy shoreline. Urban beachcombers—"mudlarks," as they're known—have unearthed artifacts of previous civilizations from the silt along the riverbanks: Bronze Age daggers and Iron Age coins.

It was the Thames that first drew the Romans, two thousand years ago, to establish a walled entrepôt, which they gave the name Londinium. By the heyday of the British Empire, London had colonized a quarter of the globe. In 1860, half of all exports from Asia, Africa, and Latin America were sent there; the Thames was the busiest port in the world. Hundreds of ships arrived each week, and towering cranes unloaded tobacco, ivory, spices, wool, rice, tea, and other treasures. The river was teeming, thrumming with commerce, jostling with all manner of vessels and tradesmen and stevedores and mariners from strange lands, hinting at the existence of other civilizations over the horizon.

But the riverbank could be a frightening place as well. In the Victorian era, the waterfront was rife with crime. People had an alarming tendency to