



Postmortem

Patricia Cornwell

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Cornwell's reporter's instincts coupled with an insider's knowledge of a medical examiner's office make this an extraordinary novel of suspense. Meet Dr. Kay Scarpetta, chief medical examiner for a Virginia city. She must find the link between several grisly murders before the serial killer comes for her.

Postmortem Details

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Author : Patricia Cornwell

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Tea Jovanovi? says

Patrišu mi je otkrila krajem 90-ih moja tetka koja živi u Americi i koja je njen vatrene obožavalac... :) Dosta ?italaca je voli ali se to nikad ne bi reklo po prodaji njenih romana... Šteta, moglo bi to i bolje...

Diane says

Loved! gritty and a very entertaining storyline with great characters and also consist of forensic writing/analysis (paperback!)

Edward Lorn says

Kay Scarpetta books, like Alex Cross books and anything V.C. Andrews wrote, are books I grew up seeing around the house but mostly stayed away from. They were/are names I associate with story-over-prose fiction, the type of popular books that are easily consumable but lack any writing prowess whatsoever. In the case of Patricia Cornwell, I was admittedly wrong. I have no problems with her writing, and her story is sound. No complaints there.

Mom always had Cornwell paperbacks strewn about the house. But, nowadays, she can't remember a single storyline or why she even enjoyed the series. My mother has a tremendous memory, especially for books she's read (the woman can tell me the entire Terry Brooks's Shannara storyline in succinct detail, it's one of the reasons I've never read that series), but she can't wrap her head around why she used to love these books as much as she did. And I kinda understand that. While I did like the writing and the story, there's nothing remarkable here. Just an engaging read that is likely to maintain your interest. But will I remember it in a week... a month... a year? Highly unlikely.

Postmortem is an easily-accessible piece of forensic-thriller fiction. Think CSI or any of the lab moments from NCIS and you'll have seen this book coming from across the street. The only parts I stumbled on were some words that were not immediately familiar to me. Several times throughout the book, Cornwell dropped a seventeen-letter- or thirty-two-letter word I had to look up on Google. Your average dictionary does not have these words in it, and Cornwell is inconsistent when explaining what these procedures or pieces of equipment are used for. I cannot image what it was like to read this book back when it first came out. You know, what with the internet and Google not being around. Don't get me wrong, there are more times when Cornwell describes well these processes and the machines that do them than there are times that she doesn't, but a single time where I have to put down my book to research a word is one time too many. And yes, I'm aware that many people are able to gloss right over these words and move the fuck on, but I'm too damn obsessive-compulsive for that shit. However, it does piss me off when I look up a word and find there is an equally-adequate commonly-known word which the author could have used instead of the thesaurus-buckling word with which they chose to stuff their book. That's not the case here, though. Most of the words I didn't know, I didn't know because I don't work in forensic sciences. I can forgive that.

One final note before we wrap this up. Although I cannot remember the kid's name, I really dug the niece

character. I'm a sucker for precocious kids in fiction, and this intelligent little girl fit the bill perfectly. I hope she's featured in future installments. That being said, Pete Marino stole the show. He was equal parts asshole, good guy, red herring, and comic relief. Truly my favorite part of the book. I have no comments on Kay Scarpetta. For me, she was faceless and unremarkable.

In summation: The occasional big technical word aside, this is an easy read. Not sure I'll read every book in the series, but I will continue on. I will probably end up synopsis hopping until I find a storyline that piques my interest. I already have a hardcover of *Body Farm* I scored for a quarter, so I think I'll read that one next. Any reason why I shouldn't skip books? Lemme know in the comments below.

Final Judgment: Not bad, but one good drunk will erase it from your memory.

Laure says

To start with, I was annoyed I had to read about another serial killer. However, the book is much more than that. I think this is why it is somewhat better than average. The political intrigue and uncertainties as well as the characterisation make up for the cliched 'killer chase'. I can see why it became such a huge series.

Florence (Lefty) MacIntosh says

Warning: Gore Alert.

Kudos for writing the 1st CSI crime thriller – I liked that it's a bit of a time capsule with electronic memos as opposed to email & DNA in its infancy. Makes it no less relevant nor does it get in the way of a good story. While the 1st half was pretty dull the second is a roller-coaster ride. Kay Scarpetta is edgy and arrogant, love her or hate her she'll hold your attention. The supporting characters are wonderful, Pete Marino the grubby tough cop who lumps all perps into the category of 'psycho-squirrels' is perfection; punchy dialog and Pete gets all the best lines. It finishes off with a surprise ending, I sure didn't see it coming.
As an aside I've read a few of this series over the years and out of curiosity decided to read the 1st. No problem reading them out of sequence.

"The dead have never bothered me. It's the living that I fear."

Karin Slaughter says

This is a really terrific book. I think people forget how things started when they talk about current books by Patricia Cornwell. Back in the beginning, she was doing something no other woman was doing, and she did it really well. So well that she inspired folks like me. I figured if she could get away with writing the kinds of books I like to read, then I could do it, too. I love me some Sue Grafton and Sara Paretsky, but they weren't into the hard stuff. Cornwell really forged a new trail.

Luca Ambrosino says

English (Postmortem) / Italiano

«It was raining in Richmond on Friday, June 6»

The first case of *Kay Scarpetta*, the coroner who made the fortune of the American writer Patricia Cornwell, starts in the rain. The population of Richmond is upset about the presence of a serial killer who first rapes his victims, and then he strangles them in their bedrooms. The coroner *Scarpetta*, who examined the bodies of the killed women, awaits powerless the next victim.

A few weeks ago I picked from my bookshelf an old copy of this novel, that I read in 2000 (I had the reading date on the inside cover). The cover is bright yellow, I remember liking it. Yes, let's read it again.

Straightforward narrative, 320 pages of honest and concrete thriller, with a nice suspense. There are no striking twists and turns, but in my opinion the strength of this novel from 1990 is keeping a grip on reality, without flights of fancy that are scarcely digestible if carried out too far to improbable situations. Sometimes the imaginative final revelations typical of modern thrillers badly astonish me. After all... *degustibus non est disputandum*.

In any case, Patricia Cornwell has the virtue of starting the forensic medicine genre. Great opening narrative.

Vote: 8

«Venerdì 6 giugno a Richmond pioveva»

Inizia sotto la pioggia il primo caso di *Kay Scarpetta*, il medico legale che ha fatto la fortuna dell'americana Patricia Cornwell. La popolazione di Richmond è sconvolta per la presenza di un killer seriale che dapprima violenta e poi strangola le proprie vittime, all'interno della loro camera da letto. Il medico legale *Kay Scarpetta*, che ha analizzato i corpi delle donne uccise, attende impotente la prossima vittima.

Qualche settimana fa ho pescato dalla mia libreria una vecchia copia di questo romanzo, che lessi nel 2000 (avevo segnato a matita in seconda di copertina la data in cui lo lessi). La copertina è di un giallo sgargiante, ricordo che mi era piaciuto. Ma sì, rileggiamolo. Trama lineare, 320 pagine di thriller onesto, concreto e con buona suspense. Non ci sono colpi di scena eclatanti, ma il punto di forza di questo romanzo datato 1990 secondo me è proprio il suo restare ancorato alla realtà, senza quei voli pindarici che risultano poco digeribili se esasperati a soluzioni improbabili. A volte lo "spiegone" finale che eccede in fantasia tipico dei moderni thriller mi lascia basito. *De gustibus*.

In ogni caso, la Cornwell ha il pregio di lanciare il filone del giallo medico-forense. Ottimo esordio.

Voto: 8

Emily says

This was the first Patricia Cornwell novel I read, and I expected it to be good because she's an author you see around a lot. However I was disappointed with this book.

The book felt long. It was extremely detailed when it came to describe the technology used. I skimmed over most of those parts because the technology was extremely dated and it was hard to follow what she was saying. Also it described red-tape procedures in her lab that just put me to sleep.

Suspects were brought up and never really dismissed as suspects; rather, they'd just find a new suspect and forget the one before. It felt like a wild goose chase.

Granted there were moments in the book that had me enraptured, but these were few and far between. I only really remember one of these moments, which was at the very end of the book.

Word to the wise, the ending is not worth the 300+ pages you have to read to get there. The whole book was resolved very quickly with no real connection to the rest of the book. The preceding 300 pages were a waste of Kay Scarpetta's time.

CAM ? says

Before anything else, I extend my utmost gratitude to one of the best people I've befriended here on Goodreads, Itchy, for recommending this awesome series!

Heart-pulsing plot! It took me a long while to finish, because of running errands here and there, but I enjoyed every bit of it! This book is filled with suspense and interesting characters that you may either love or hate... damn you, Amburgey! Anyways, the plot is nicely paced and even if the technology mentioned in this book isn't as highly-upgraded as ours today, it still intrigues its readers in knowing how forensic investigation was done back in the day.

What I think about Cornwell? Although I'm new to her work, I find myself drawn to her writing style. She has this way with details that you can perfectly envision the characters and scenes, but when it comes to the medical and technology jargon, they become so detailed that it can be a little difficult to follow or it gets a bit boring. Good thing is she didn't make the characters wholly good or bad; they were more complex than I imagined making them more interesting. I will still read more of her books, all things considered.

Quotable Quotes

"Many of us have the same feelings, the same emptiness, the same loneliness. But we don't have the tools to verbalize them. So we carry on, we struggle."

"Some people feel things more deeply than others, and some people feel things the rest of us don't."

"Survival was my only hope, success my only revenge."

"People often say they don't dream, when it's more accurate to say that they don't remember their dreams. It gets under our skin, Kay. All of it does. We just manage to cage in most of the emotions so they don't devour us."

"The public is blaming the city officials, who in turn have to find someone else to blame. It's the nature of the beast. If the police, the politicians, can pass the buck on down the line, they will."

Patricia says

Mysteries have long been recreational reading for me. About every fourth or fifth book, I read is a mystery sandwiched in between literary best sellers and stellar non-fiction. I've been meaning to get around to Patricia Cornwall and had picked up a few of her books at yard sales, but I was waiting until I found the first book in her Kay Scarpetta series before I dove in. *Postmortem* won numerous awards when it came out in 1990 including the Edgar and the Anthony awards.

For the first 100 or so pages, I was not overly impressed. As a fan of Kathy Reichs, I felt that Cornwall was not as good but then I realized that Reichs' first book came out 10 years after Cornwall's first Scarpetta book. Put in that historical perspective, I understood that she was the antecedent who set the stage for writers like Reichs. There are other historical aspects of this book that make it fun. For instance there are no cell phones AND the use of the computer was infantile compared to now and Cornwall does a terrific job of employing computers as part of the mystery with a degree of sophistication that was likely unprecedented at the time.

Postmortem is definitely a page turner that kept me up late two nights reading. I'll be reading more of Cornwall in part to see her influence on later mystery writers.

Marcie says

Recommended by my local librarian friend...she wouldn't let me just checkout "Scarpetta," the latest in this series, no-o-o-o, she makes me start at the very beginning, with this first, published in 1990. Well, and I did have to get up one night and make sure all my doors and windows were locked as I was reading the book at midnight.

And I kept making concessions for the year, like yeah, I bet this DNA stuff was pretty impressive for 1990, and I can kinda understand why she's explaining all this basic PC computer crap...when your story is that tied to technology, of course the effort is going to feel dated at a later time. I worked some time for a computer forensics company, and I kept wondering about the time frame for technology in that field...how easy now to see who accessed what, when, from where, and exactly what they did with it.

The other thing that was dated...thriller story-telling techniques. The main character (Kay Scarpetta, Chief Medical Examiner) often blanks out, absorbed with her own thoughts, and only catches snatches of the conversation directed at her, in snippets. This mimics the brain's stilted way of processing during "shock" or fear. She begins to re-examine everyone around her as the potential serial killer or guilty of other crimes i.e. hacking into her database or leaking sensitive info to the press or planting evidence or framing her as incompetently tainting evidence...

This was about as satisfying as an episode of Law and Order on television. Not amazing. Not terrible.

Flannery says

I loved the 1990s. There was great television, Pogs, scrunchies, and the Pittsburgh Penguins were amazing at hockey. (obviously Jaromir Jagr's mullet contributed a significant amount to this last part) And although I totally loved playing Seventh Guest, Oregon Trail, Carmen Sandiego, and the like on our old Macs, I'm happy with the advancements in technology. Okay, moving on, I also love crime novels. When they are set in ye oldey times, I get caught up in the story, seeing how Sherlock could deduce his way to victory. Or when they are set in the future, I like seeing Eve Dallas use new-fangled technology to find her man. (Or woman. Or robot!) Even when books are set in current times, or in the past few years, it's great! BUT Postmortem lies in the bottom of awkward valley for me at the moment. I read over and over and over about how "maybe" someone should change their words-only password on a networked computer and how "secure" the network was. Every time I read about dialing in from home to a network that was left in answer mode, I could hear the dial up noise in my head...and how grating is that? (Side note: do kids today even know what a dial-up noise is? I feel old.) I'm sure, nay, positive that I will enjoy the Scarpetta books further down the line as technology catches up but I was frustrated throughout this novel. There was many a dramatic eye roll and "Oh, brother" muttered. The printer paper still had those holey side parts and DNA evidence was new. They spend at least half of the book talking about some glittery substance and I couldn't figure out why they didn't just test it to figure out what it was. (Did I miss something here? Why couldn't they do chemical testing?)

In terms of the plot, I was entertained throughout. I wasn't sure whodunit until the big reveal and I suspected, as I'm supposed to, several side characters along the way. Cornwell definitely knows the building blocks to a successful medical crime thriller. It is easy to tell that she comes from the medical side of things and those were definitely my favorite parts of the book--the autopsies, discussions of injuries, etc. The least successful (read: most annoying) sections of the book for me were Kay Scarpetta's interactions with her precocious niece. Evidently her niece is the Doogie Howser of the computer hacking world but without his boyish charm. (and lab coat)

The book is entertaining but it didn't do much for me overall. I will keep going in this series though because my dear friend Maja is in love with it and I think it will get better as I get out of the dated technology era. I bet I would really enjoy this if I read it in twenty years!

At this point, I'm just going to rehash a few plot points for people who may have forgotten. As I keep following series for years (I'm on number thirtysomething with Eve Dallas!), I realize how much I forget about early books. This will serve as a reminder to me (and you?) about the events of book one in this series. Don't read on if you don't want to absolutely spoil the book!

(view spoiler)

Matt says

In introducing the reader to Dr. Kay Scarpetta, Cornwell does a masterful job of developing both the character and a back story, while also forging ahead with a novel-based mystery. While the genre is supersaturated with these types of stories nowadays, Cornwell writes in such a way as to rise above the rest (putting aside that the novel came out before the aforementioned overkill). When a string of women are left strangled and murdered, Dr. Scarpetta must piece things together and determine whether this is a serial killer or simply horrific coincidences. The latest victim's death points fingers at someone close to her, leaving Scarpetta to use her forensic knowledge to decipher who it might be. Cornwell hints at numerous suspects throughout, leaving the reader to wonder 'whodunit' from beginning to end.

Cornwell uses great research to bring the book to life as well, from detailed forensics, police jargon, and computer-speak. This being before the wonders of GOOGLE, she took a great amount of time to thoroughly present things in a believable way. I cannot attest as to whether it was truthful, but it sounded as such. Anyone (like me) looking for a great series that many people have lauded, should surely begin with this novel and continue on the great journey Cornwell lays out for Dr. Scarpetta.

Kudos, Madam Cornwell on a highly entertaining and thoroughly enjoyable novel. I look forward to seeing what the rest of the series has to offer.

Christy says

If you can handle scary, and can look past gory and profane, Patricia Cornwell's novels are AMAZING. Aside from good old J.K. and Harper Lee, Cornwell is my favorite author. I'm convinced that all the CSI-esque shows were spawned from her books, and if you like that kind of thing, you'll LOVE these. Gripping, intense, nightmare-inducing ... plus you might learn some new things.

Start with the older books in the series, her newer works aren't as good.

James says

Patricia Cornwell's Postmortem was my first foray into the forensic science crime novel. While I am fully capable of reading detailed descriptions of gore and autopsies without getting sick, I was a tad worried that it would get too technical where I'd lose some of the understanding of the medical aspects. While it happens on occasion, the editors and author have done a great job at finding the perfect level of language to keep the words flowing properly most of the time.

Scarpetta is a true hero -- someone to admire, someone to fear. She will always solve the case even in the most intricate complex ones out there. The style is strong, the descriptions and setting vivid. You feel like you are in the story along side the protagonist.

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365

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