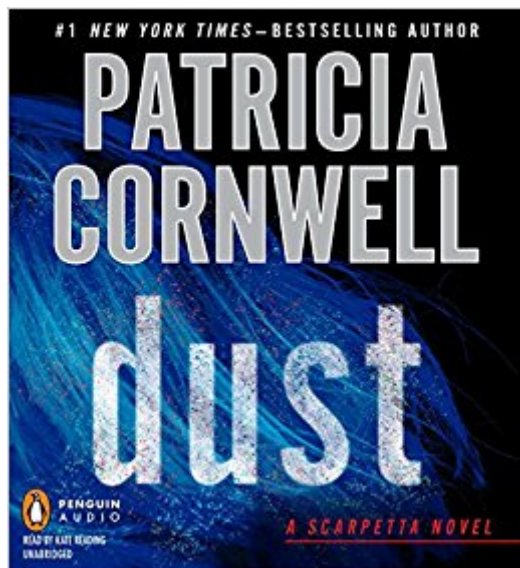


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Dust: Scarpetta (Book 21)



Synopsis

From the world's number-one bestselling crime writer comes the extraordinary new Kay Scarpetta novel. A Massachusetts Chief Medical Examiner Kay Scarpetta has just returned from working one of the worst mass murders in U.S. history when she's awakened at an early hour by Detective Pete Marino. A body, oddly draped in an unusual cloth, has just been discovered inside the sheltered gates of MIT and it's suspected the identity is that of missing computer engineer Gail Shipton, last seen the night before at a trendy Cambridge bar. It appears she's been murdered, mere weeks before the trial of her \$100 million lawsuit against her former financial managers, and Scarpetta doubts it's a coincidence. She also fears the case may have a connection with her computer genius niece, Lucy. At a glance there is no sign of what killed Gail Shipton, but she's covered with a fine dust that under ultraviolet light fluoresces brilliantly in three vivid colors, what Scarpetta calls a mineral fingerprint. Clearly the body has been posed with chilling premeditation that is symbolic and meant to shock, and Scarpetta has reason to worry that the person responsible is the Capital Murderer, whose most recent sexual homicides have terrorized Washington, D.C. Stunningly, Scarpetta will discover that her FBI profiler husband, Benton Wesley, is convinced that certain people in the government, including his boss, don't want the killer caught. In *Dust*, Scarpetta and her colleagues are up against a force far more sinister than a sexual predator who fits the criminal classification of a "spectacle killer." The murder of Gail Shipton soon leads deep into the dark world of designer drugs, drone technology, organized crime, and shocking corruption at the highest levels. With unparalleled high-tension suspense and the latest in forensic technology, Patricia Cornwell once again proves her exceptional ability to surprise and to thrill.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“When it comes to the forensic sciences, nobody can touch Cornwell.”
The New York Times Book Review

PATRICIA CORNWELL's most recent bestsellers include *The Bone Bed*, *Red Mist*, *Port Mortuary*, and *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper—Case Closed*. Her earlier works include *Postmortem*—the only novel to win five major crime awards in a single year—and *Cruel and Unusual*, which won Britain's prestigious Gold Dagger Award for the best crime novel of 1993. Dr. Kay Scarpetta herself won the 1999 Sherlock Award for the best detective created by an American author.

I've read every Scarpetta novel, even during the "lost years" before Cornwell got her groove back. But as I read the first 9 chapters of this one, I was thinking it was time for Kay to retire. First of all, I was flabbergasted at how disingenuously Cornwell inserted Scarpetta onto the scene in Newtown. No doubt this was Cornwell's way of dealing with the tragedy, but to me it just seemed self-absorbed and completely unnecessary to this story. I was actually offended. Then interspersed with that we get more feverish poor-me-what-to-do-about-Marino crap. Self-absorbed much, Kay? And again, yet another unbelievable conspiracy against Scarpetta and everyone associated with her. This book is at its best when it goes back to basics -- Marino being a detective, Scarpetta doing forensics, Benton profiling, and Lucy doing her tech thing. That's what I loved about this series back when it was strong, and that's what continues to carry it. But so much time is wasted with all the other distractions. We don't even get to the body until ten chapters in. I don't need conspiracies in high places and "everybody is against me" angst. I understand that authors and their characters need to evolve, but I still want a good mystery with a bad guy who's kind of scary and good guys who use their knowledge and experience to figure out how to stop him. For a good part of this book I was thinking it might be my last.

This may be the last book from this author that I buy (although I've said this before). Her writing style has become too rambling and wordy with description. I find myself skipping sentences just to

get to the storyline. For goodness sake, it takes chapters just to get to her plots (such as they are anymore). The later books are almost retrospectives with very little plot value. I have read and own every book she has written and faithfully read and look forward to a new book coming out. Not so much anymore. Having said that, she was my favorite author for many years - not so now. I feel sad for the loss of the old Kay Scarpetta.

As a Newtown, CT resident, the first chapter of DUST made me so angry, I put the book down (or, in reality, turned the Kindle off) for a week or so. That any writer of fiction would be so self-absorbed and insensitive to trivialize the horror of Sandy Hook Elementary by inserting a fictional character into such unspeakable loss is repugnant. Worse, that the author would presume to know how people felt - especially those that came from outside of Newtown to help families bury their children, sisters, brothers, and mothers - is presumptive and exceedingly disrespectful. As a long-time Cornwell fan, I will admit that I picked Dust back up some weeks later when I was past my initial reaction and thought that "she wouldn't just throw Newtown into the book, she must have done it for a reason". Unfortunately, by the time I finished reading, the only reason I could think of for the inclusion of the murders on December 14, 2012 was that Ms. Cornwell had written a novel that was so boring and poorly written, her editors probably insisted that she go back and insert the tragedy into the plot just to sell the book. Whatever the reason, this is, sadly, the last Patricia Cornwell novel that I will buy.

I am really concerned that I read a totally different book than the other reviewers who have posted. Where to start? What Dust needs is an editor and a plot. This book was absolutely everything I can't stand about what the Kay Scarpetta series has become in one 500 page novel. Implausible timing, totally no character development, and a storyline that takes less than 50 pages to wrap up with a neat, tidy bow. If this was a book by any other author, I would have stopped, but as a Scarpetta series fan I felt I owed it to the good doctor to finish. In fact, I'm so meh about the whole thing I'm not even going to provide a summary of the paper-thin plotline. There's more meat in the book blurb than the entire novel. Some random thoughts:- Really? You're going to have this whole murder/mystery solved in a day over 500 pages?! Really?! This whole novel reads like one run on sentence. I know that Dr. Scarpetta is an amazingly talented woman, but it's actually tiresome for the reader to have no change of scenery.- Would it kill you to write about a happy character? Everyone is so lost in their own self-pity/depression spiral that

it's honestly kind of a downer to read. I don't know if Cornwell is tired of this cast of characters or what, but she seems completely content to make their lives miserable and depressing. Also, I found it incredibly distasteful that Cornwell uses a recent tragic event and inserts Scarpetta into it. Not appropriate.

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