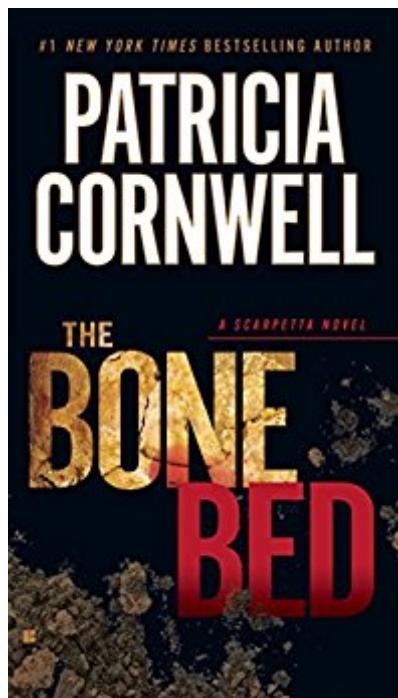


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The Bone Bed: Scarpetta (Book 20) (Kay Scarpetta)



Synopsis

A woman has vanished while digging a dinosaur bone bed in the remote wilderness of Canada. Somehow, the only evidence has made its way to the inbox of Chief Medical Examiner Kay Scarpetta, over two thousand miles away in Boston. She has no idea why. But as events unfold with alarming speed, Scarpetta begins to suspect that the paleontologist's disappearance is connected to a series of crimes much closer to home: a gruesome murder, inexplicable tortures, and trace evidence from the last living creatures of the dinosaur age. When she turns to those around her, Scarpetta finds that the danger and suspicion have penetrated even her closest circles. Her niece Lucy speaks in riddles. Her lead investigator, Pete Marino, and FBI forensic psychologist and husband, Benton Wesley, have secrets of their own. Feeling alone and betrayed, Scarpetta is tempted by someone from her past as she tracks a killer both cunning and cruel.

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Customer Reviews

What can I say about Scarpetta number twenty? I didn't dislike the book, but in my opinion, Cornwell has yet to produce a follow-up book that is in anyway comparable to the quality of her first six to

eight books. This review does contain a few mild spoilers! Before I air my complaints, I will give credit where credit is due. *Bone Bed* reintroduces readers to the Kay Scarpetta they met in *Virginia*. For the first time in I don't know how many books, Scarpetta is back in her diving gear and working the crime scenes like she used too. That is the one thing I really appreciated about this book. Kay is sharp. I had forgotten what an impressive investigator she could be. As she goes through a crime scene, very little escapes her attention. Her intelligence, ambition, and compassion are magnetic. I can't speak for everyone, but that is the character that captured my attention and held my interest in 90s. With that said, I found her supporting characters highly annoying and redundant. Marino and Benton are still stuck in a downward spiral of regret and resentment. I know that real life issues (you know, your average faked death and attempted rape) don't go away over night, but I think Cornwell has taken it to a level that is entirely unnecessary. I for one, am very tired of hearing the sad song that refuses to end. Benton played dead; Mario got drunk and tried to play hooky. Naturally, these flaws in character will keep the two of them from being best friends and undoubtably leave some skeletons in the closet, but Cornwell has strung it out to the degree that she has allowed it to monopolize the chemistry that made the characters so captivating in the beginning. Another issue I had with this book is that I felt like I had read it already. Scarpetta and her team discover links between several different homicides and find themselves chasing a deranged serial killer. As they close in, the lunatic loses control and ends up going after ... Wait, I don't want to spoil your fun, I'll let you guess, but I'm betting you'll get it right without even having to buy a vowel!! Any of that sound familiar? It's almost as if Cornwell follows a formula. She changes the locations, characters, and modus operandi, but the big picture remains the same. While this formula may be making her millions, it has flattened her series and turned into average and predictable. She has sold Scarpetta out and it's a d*** shame.

Cornwell has made an effort with this book to bring the Scarpetta series back on track; however, it did fall a tad short. Acceptable (meaning I was able to finish it), but definitely not up to the first half dozen or so efforts that captured our imaginations...but not as bad as the preceding recent efforts...and this is #20 in the Scarpetta revenue stream. In my opinion, Cornwell went off-track with Scarpetta years back when she started making the characters appear persistently dysfunctional rather than them having momentary periods of human frailty. Her niece Lucy went from being an exciting, intelligent, major player in the series to being a hard-to-believe damaged psyche that is interjected now and again to accomplish Brobdingnagian technological tasks to forward the plot. Husband Benton went from a mysterious, multi-layered FBI profiler to being a one dimensional bore.

Pete Marino is the hardest of all to accept. The first two have a familial relationship with Kay Scarpetta. Pete, her lead investigator, does not. This emotionally impaired character is a hard drinking, tattooed biker/ex-cop and verbally abusive employee who continually flouts her direction...to say nothing of having attempted to rape her in a previous novel. And yet, he remains happily employed. Our 'beloved' protagonist appears to spend more time psychoanalyzing her employees and herself than she does solving crimes...and the pace screeches to a halt. In *The Bone Bed*, Cornwell unfortunately starts out with another rambling amateurish psychological evaluation of Pete Marino which caused me to strongly consider stopping the read right out of the chute. The original character construct of Pete Marino was a good one which unfortunately Ms. Cornwell could not leave alone. I am tired of hearing about the myriad of complaints about Marino which would have caused anyone--other than Kay Scarpetta apparently--to have fired him. It is just not believable. I will say though that toward the end of this novel Ms. Cornwell seemed to begin adding just a smidgeon of stability back into the Marino character. Here's hoping. Eventually both Cornwell and Scarpetta get moving doing the things that they do best. Very enjoyable descriptions of the forensic pathology world and a relatively fast paced mystery eventually evolve. Cornwell keeps us guessing as she moves from one possibility to another using multiple misdirection. I guess the ending was a tad deflating to the mystery reader only because there was the obligatory interjection of the protagonist into the final scene which was difficult to accept as anything other than a forced maneuver by the author as well as another condemnation of the common sense of Scarpetta...and the actual antagonist was fairly impossible to determine (or even guess) until the end because...well, read the book. I will say however that it was disappointing primarily because it did not take much author ingenuity and made the reader feel a bit 'played'. And yes, I'll buy her next installment just to see if she does in fact begin to mend these originally likeable characters...but I'll read some reviews first. Let the books focus primarily on the mystery, not the character foibles.

I bought this slogged through 7-8 chapters of emotional garbage, then tossed the book. I love a clean cut detective story, one that moves along sharply like a Connelly or Coben or Rendell or Burke--and by early Cornwell. I don't care what the characters wear, what they eat, why their feelings are hurt. I don't want to psychoanalyze every character, to deal with the psyche of Lucy. I don't care why she's hurt or gay or whatever. Too complicated to believe as are all the relationships in this one--between Kay and Marino, Kay and Benton, Kay and Lucy. After 6 chapters there's still a lady in the water while emotional entanglements are worked out. Just get the plot going for Pete's sake. Glad I paid only \$1.99 for this one.

This book is a typical Scarpetta mystery, with her continuous ramblings. The last few Scarpetta books have been a boring mess of rambling retoric. It seems that Cornwell has run out good writing and has to fill her books with nonsensical stuff that makes Scarpetta seem to be losing it mentally. The mystery itself is quiet good and yet disappointing. There was no explanation of why Marino was targeted by the killer. Overall, this book was a real disappointment. I hope her next book will be better. The Scarpetta novels had been my favorite for a long time.

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