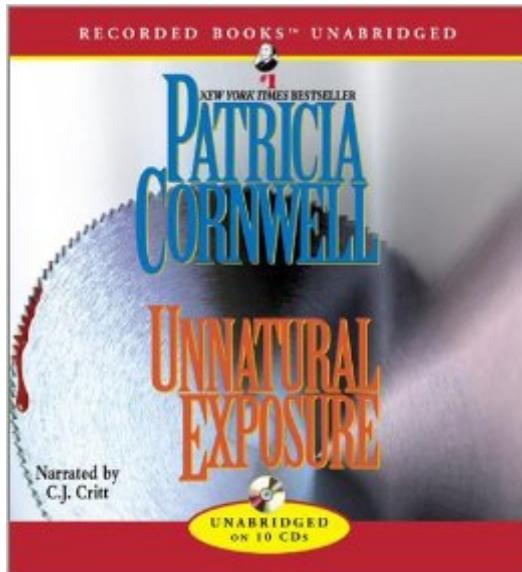


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Unnatural Exposure (Recorded Books Unabridged)



Synopsis

Taut with unrelieved tension and continual surprises, *Unnatural Exposure* is the case of Kay Scarpetta's life -- and a triumph for author Patricia Cornwell. When the body of an elderly woman is found dismembered in a Virginia landfill, forensic pathologist Kay Scarpetta initially believes that the clues mirror that of a serial killer she's encountered before. But upon further investigation she discovers puzzling pox-like eruptions on the woman's body that, perhaps, point in another direction. The killer then contacts Scarpetta via e-mail, and she enlists the aid of her computer-savvy niece, Lucy, to help track this monster through cyberspace. When Scarpetta learns that the Virginia victim was exposed to a high-tech virus that might unleash an epidemic, she begins to realize that she's dealing with a sophisticated and devious mind. Her investigation leads her to the government's biological defense facility in Utah and to Atlanta's Center for Disease Control -- and eventually to quarantine, when it is discovered that Scarpetta has been exposed to this often fatal virus. Along the way, she's forced to deal with the unscrupulous ambitions of a slick FBI agent, Lucy's problems, and her own turbulent feelings for Agent Wesley Benton.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a somewhat interesting, Dr. Kay Scarpetta mystery, replete with its usual attention to forensic detail, as well as a myriad of subplots. Though not her best novel, it still manages to entertain the reader. Once again, Dr. Scarpetta, Chief Medical Examiner, finds herself on the hunt for a serial killer, when the body of an elderly, dismembered woman is discovered in a Virginia landfill.

Moreover, a mutated, high tech, variant small pox virus appears to be on the loose, and Dr. Scarpetta finds herself receiving taunting emails from the alleged killer, signing as "deadoc". Couple all this with an overly ambitious and unscrupulous law enforcement agent named Percy Ring who arrests an obviously innocent man for the elderly woman's death, and the reader has an intriguing mystery to unravel. Homicide Detective Pete Marino is pivotal to the success of this book. His relationship and repartee with Dr. Scarpetta contribute to many of the book's highlights, and it is he who gives dimension to the book, as he is simply a wonderful, down to earth character. Dr. Scarpetta's relationship with FBI Agent Wesley Benton is less memorable, as he is on the periphery of the story, for the most part, though in the end he provides closure for the torch Dr. Scarpetta was carrying for her ex-lover, Mark. The only real fly in the ointment, however, is the continued appearance of Dr. Scarpetta's niece, Lucy, who is an obnoxious character. In the real world, Lucy would not be allowed to hold the position of responsibility that she does in the book, due to her complete immaturity. She is a loose cannon waiting to misfire at any moment. It flies in the face of her professionalism that Dr. Scarpetta seems unable to fathom this, but blood is thicker than water.

I listened to Cornwell's earlier Cause of Death and Unnatural Exposure on tape and Unnatural Exposure is better. ... Cornwell has created a first class nail biter that is flawed because of artificially created tensions, some poor characterizations and inconsistent philosophy. The mystery/thriller works pretty well on that level. The plot follows Cornwell's heroine Kay Scarpetta initially through a serial killer's dismemberings to a possibly contagious disease outbreak. There are twists and turns although the ultimate outcome is no great shock. Unnatural Exposure follows a standard path although most stories of this ilk have a premature solution that turns out to be false. I.e. the wrong person is arrested or found dead. In this one an innocent person is arrested but the reader knows it's a false arrest from the word go. There is also someone found dead but it's pretty obviously not the guilty party. Along the way we get graphic and gory forensic details of autopsies making the novel unsuitable for reading around mealtime. There are several problems with the novel aside from the mystery. Cornwell's agenda gets in the way sometimes and she has fillers that detract from the story. Earlier in the story Scarpetta receives pictures via email that are described as gif files. All the pictures I receive are jpgs. Maybe this is an indication that the novel is becoming dated. I had a problem with some of the artificially created tensions. In particular, I found it offensive that airport security people would be portrayed as boobs for doing their jobs. Scarpetta shows up at the airport with body parts and hazardous materials and the security people and flight attendants are made to look like fools for questioning her the way they do.

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