

Post Mortem  
by  
Patricia Cornwell

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Ms. Dobson

The novel Post Mortem was written by Patricia Cornwell. This novel deals with a medical examiner whose job it is to help the police find clues to serious crimes. Cornwell's use of setting, characterization, and conflict help to make this an exciting and suspenseful story.

The story takes place in the Richmond, Virginia, area. The city setting is important to the story because it provides many hiding places for the serial murderer the police are seeking. Richmond is a sprawling city, which covers a vast area of land and is on the Atlantic coast. Because of this, the city offers many places for criminal activity which adds to the story's suspense as the police attempt to find and stop the murderer.

The protagonist in the story is Dr. Kay Scarpetta. Dr. Scarpetta is a female physician in her early forties. She has never been married and has no children. She has chosen her medical career over intimate personal relationships, and her life seems to revolve around finding the medical evidence necessary to solve crimes. Besides the daily challenges required of a skilled medical examiner, Dr. Scarpetta must deal with the prejudices that many women who are intelligent, educated, and motivated face on a daily basis in a world that is run by men. Her cohort is Sergeant Marino, a middle-aged, balding, hardened cop who is shrewd and ruthless in his pursuit of criminals. In Post Mortem, the serial murderer is the antagonist. He has raped and murdered five women.

The conflict of the story is both internal and external. The internal conflict occurs as the protagonist, Dr. Kay Scarpetta, tries to find clues on the victims' bodies that will lead to the murderer. Her attempts are thwarted by men around her who are caught up in political and personal issues. At one point in the novel, she suspects that the man she is seeing romantically may have committed one of the murders for revenge. The main external conflict is Dr. Scarpetta's attempts to help the police unravel the clues and to find the man who is responsible

for these gruesome and morbid acts. In conclusion, in her novel, Post Mortem, Patricia Cornwell uses setting, characterization, and conflict to create an exciting and suspenseful story. I highly recommend this novel to anyone who enjoys a story that is full of twists and turns and that keeps the reader on the edge of his/her seat. This is a novel that is hard to put down once you pick it up and start reading.