



# Chasing the Ripper

*Patricia Cornwell*

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## **Chasing the Ripper** Patricia Cornwell

In 2001, #1 New York Times bestselling crime novelist Patricia Cornwell was pulled into a real-life investigation of her own—the long-unsolved and deeply unsettling “Jack the Ripper” murders that mesmerized London in the late 1800s. Applying modern science and forensic techniques to a century-old crime, Cornwell’s research led to the publication of *Portrait of a Killer*, in which she identified the renowned British painter Walter Sickert as the Ripper. The book became a #1 bestseller but also embroiled Cornwell in controversy as Ripperologists dismissed her claims and her credibility. But for Cornwell, the book was only the beginning. For more than a decade, Cornwell has devoted countless hours and invested millions in her pursuit of new evidence against Sickert. Now, twelve years later, Cornwell revisits the most notorious unsolved crime in history—determined to solve the mystery once and for all.

In this exclusive Kindle Single, Cornwell restates her case against Sickert, unveils new evidence, clarifies his motivations, and makes him human—and, along the way, explains how such a prominent cultural figure could be a notorious killer. She also directly faces down her critics with withering skill and, in doing so, is likely to re-ignite the debate over history’s most heinous unsolved crime.

*Chasing the Ripper* offers a surprisingly personal and revealing look into what it has been like for Cornwell to pursue the most sensational murder case in criminal history—even as she continues to thrill her fans with a steady diet of new Scarpetta novels, including *Flesh and Blood*, her latest New York Times bestseller.

## **Chasing the Ripper Details**

Date : Published November 25th 2014 by Thomas & Mercer (first published January 1st 2014)

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# From Reader Review Chasing the Ripper for online ebook

## Damaskcat says

I have to admit that I know very little about the Ripper case except that it is still unsolved after more than a century and likely to remain so. I have also not read the book by Patricia Cornwell that this short essay relates to. That said I think this works as a first hand account of an obsession and how others treat someone new coming in and investigating a case and firmly announcing that their theory is the only valid one and the rest are rubbish.

Even if the theory that the artist Walter Sickert was Jack the Ripper is the correct one, and Cornwell was not the first person to mention his name in this connection, then it needs to be put forward in a calm and rational manner. Evidence needs to be presented both for and against. I gather from reading this essay that this is precisely what Cornwell didn't do. There are many people who have made lifetime studies of the Ripper case and who have their own theories. Naturally they do not take kindly to someone else coming in and telling them they need to tear up those theories because they are nonsense.

I felt the author came over as a little petulant and as though other people interested in the case should have embraced her theories whole-heartedly but I think she was expecting too much as human nature just isn't like that. I don't condone death threats or insulting messages but calm and rational debate takes two to make it work and perhaps neither side was feeling terribly rational at the time. I shall be reading the revised edition of Cornwell's book about the Ripper case when it is released next year and in the meantime I shall read other books about the case so that I come to it with rather more information than I have at present.

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## David L. Milner says

**Well researched and written. Having done such good work only to have it ripped apart by ignorance and self aggrandizement is tough. She convinced me in the first book. I regret she felt compelled to write this one, but I believe that she acquitted herself well.**

Interesting and informative. The first book showed an excellent research model. If some felt put out over it, let them do better. Bet they can't.

David Milner

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## Susan says

In 2002, crime author Patricia Cornwell wrote a very contentious book about Jack the Ripper, titled, "Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper – Case Closed." In that book she recollected how, after a visit to London, she became interested in the Ripper case and concluded that artist Walter Sickert was responsible for the killings. I have to say that I, and many others, were unconvinced by her arguments. Considering the terrible ratings the book got and the way it was pretty much savaged, I was surprised to see this Kindle Single appearing.

However, despite my misgivings, I decided to read this and see what her latest conclusions were. I was curious to see whether she would defend some of her earlier suggestions, such as Martha Tabram being his first victim (hotly disputed by Ripperologists) or the many assumptions she made about Sickert himself. In fact, this seems to be little more than a rant, in which the author defends her first book, whilst also making some rather wild accusations about Sickert continuing to kill, murdering many more women and children than she first suspected and generally confusing the issues outlined in her first arguments even more.

From the beginning, Cornwell admits that she is asked constantly about her conviction that Jack the Ripper was British artist Walter Sickert – more than anything else she has done. Considering her successful career as a crime writer, I am sure that this must rankle and, indeed, Ms Cornwell's hackles are up in this book. She questions aloud - why is she so sure? "How did he get away with serial homicides for more than a century?" Hmmm, she is still obviously convinced that he IS, without doubt, the Ripper, but he is only one of a number of proposed possible suspects and not a front runner in any other book I have read about the case. Again, she shows disturbing certainty – "I feel sure," crops up time and time again – that Sickert followed the murders, that he read all about the Ripper, that he wrote letters to the police. However, even if he DID write to the police, the fact that he was the killer does not necessarily follow. He was obviously quite obsessed with the case, but then so were many people living in the city of London at the time.

In this book, Cornwell considers her decision to write her book on the Ripper. She claims it gave her no pleasure and that weird happenings occurred during the time she was writing her book. If she is obsessed by the Ripper, then possibly she needs to take a step back and distance herself from something which is obviously causing her distress. She bemoans the fact that, wherever she goes, she is taken to view gruesome sights. Presumably, specialists think they are aiding her writing, but it obviously disturbs her – and she would not be normal if it didn't. However, a chance tour of Scotland Yard and a comment about Walter Sickert led to her book and a furore she obviously did not anticipate. She discusses her early research on the case and yet still dismisses other Ripperologists theories as 'utter nonsense.'

One of the problems I had with the first book, also occurs here. Cornwell asks, "what if modern science were applied?" The problem is, it wasn't and now it can't be. She complains of being 'ridiculed' and 'resented' and finally admits to being 'too adamant....' Again, also, she puts modern judgements on those inhabitants of Victorian London – too drunk, too poor, too uneducated... In fact, considering the distain in which she seems to hold those concerned with the Ripper murders, it is confusing why she seems to so concerned about the murder of a series of women little known for their sobriety. In fact, her obsession has little to do with the victims and far more to do with her desire to label Sickert as the Ripper and for us to agree with her. Does she answer her critics in this ill advised ebook or simply defend her position? She tries to answer criticisms aimed at her, but comes across badly. Even in the 'About the Author' section it states, "Cornwell has written a definitive book about Jack the Ripper." Well, no, she didn't. She hasn't here either; she has taken the evidence she found and fitted it around a theory, while discarding anything which disagrees with her stance. She is obviously resentful of being questioned, especially by any British Ripperologists, and is too eager to state her case as the correct one. Personally, I do not think Walter Sickert was the Ripper, but I would be more willing to read her argument, if it were a little less biased. As it is, I think Ms Cornwell should go back to writing her very successful crime novels and let go of this obsession which is obviously causing her enough distress that she feels the need to answer her critics in this way. Frankly, this whole book sounds like a long complaint of how she has been treated and, although I am sad she feels so resentful and ill-used, this book does not help her case.

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## **Kathy Winch says**

### **Interesting**

I read the first book and she had me convinced then. I still believe her findings to be true and done only to put it out there for us to decide.

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## **GracieKat says**

### **Foot-Stamping**

Her answer (and to hype her upcoming revised book) to the criticisms that she met with. Her single bounces around mentioning a few facts here, her suppositions there, some whining thrown in and a dollop of egotism spread on thickly.

She tries to rebut some of the criticism she met with but does so in a coy way, more to pique the readers interest in buying the revised edition, not to share information.

I did read the Portrait of Jack the Ripper but found it very heavy on supposition and too many what if moments. In this single she backs away several times from absolutely saying her theory is the only correct theory. But then says repeatedly that she's not wrong. Others are just simpletons if they disagree is the attitude that shines through.

There are a lot of poor me moments on how she hates to view all these horrible places (places incidentally that quite a few people would give their eye teeth to see) but didn't want to disappoint her fans. There is also a bizarre out-of-nowhere fantasy of kicking some muggers ass as she's walking down the road with her editor. Um, ok? What that has to do with the rest of the book is beyond me.

Apparently she was also plagued with mysterious occurrences such as software glitches, odd fogbanks, wildfires, wind and mysterious men. Apparently even 9/11 was involved. She makes a point to say that the deal was struck and signed the moment the first plane hit the tower and the deal was done when the second one did. The egotism of it is what got me. Trying to link everything she could to it to make it seem that much more important, as though mother nature and man itself were out to get her.

She also adds in excerpts of critical letters she received. In one she makes a half apology to someone she had interviewed who said she was 'deceptive'. She apologizes but then adds, ' But I did try to tell you your uncle was a bad man.' As though admonishing him for having the audacity to be upset about what she wrote.

Another she says she spoke with another woman but did not want to use any of her quotes because the lady in question wanted to review them and have approval over what was written about her. Which I think is fair enough. Maybe she didn't want her words to be taken out of context but 's. Cromwell acts like she wanted total manuscript approval and was overstepping her bounds.

All in all, I still think she's reaching and this single to me just seems like it was published to drum up interest for a new, revised edition and a little foot-stamping to say "I'm right and anyone who disagrees with me is just stupid."

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## **Hanan Elsharif says**

Do not know what to say. felt like a load of speculation and her covering for the fact that her previous book

was slated and she even admits that she made many mistakes. It was boring listening to her deny rumours about her destroying some Sickert art. not keen on it. ready to move on to some short stories or something instead

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### **Randee says**

I think many of us find unsolved murders fascinating and Jack the Ripper is one that tops the list. I had no idea until I read this that Patricia Cornwell had done intensive research on the subject and had come to a theory she stands behind as to whom the Ripper was. This is information about her researching the subject, her conclusions and the blow back she got because of it. This has made me want to read her full length book on this subject.

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### **Teri says**

Chasing the Ripper is Patricia Cornwell's follow up to Portrait of a Killer where she surmises that famous painter Walter Sickert is the legendary Jack the Ripper. In this Kindle single, Cornwell discusses her continued research in the unsolved murder and pointedly responds to her critics and their specific concerns with her work.

Likely we will never know beyond a shadow of a doubt who Jack really was, but Cornwell has thoroughly done her research and has a valid hypothesis.

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### **Kate Johnson says**

As many of the other...spirited reviews on this book, I, like the rest of them, am not glad that I spent my time reading this book. In Chasing the Ripper, Patricia Cornwell follows up her best selling novel Portrait of a Killer with this book. She felt as if there was more to the story than the shaky ties that she made from her suspect to the killer in her last novel. She remains convinced that the well liked, handsome 19th century British artist Walter Sickert, was indeed, Jack the Ripper. She returns in this novel to make us believe "without a doubt" that she has really found the mastermind behind one of the most famous unsolved crime stories ever. I, like many other readers are not convinced. It has also been over a century since these crimes were committed. Can this author really time travel? I think not. How can anybody claim to know the answer to such an important question that, as far as we know, cannot be answered? As you delve further into the book, the sources, while providing interesting interviews have little more to provide Cornwell than what she already had. In which case, should they really be interviewed? What's the point? I thought that her little passages that acknowledged the criticism from her last book was comical. "CRITICISM: Sickert couldn't have murdered anyone, because he has an alibi. He was in France in the late summer and fall when the early Ripper crimes began." (Cornwell 35) Her almost comic response to this is; "FACT: This is patently untrue." Oh there's an argument. Sorry Cornwell, stick to fiction!

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## **Luci says**

This single would probably be better suited as the preface to the rewrite of Cornwall's Portrait of a Killer. It relies extensively on the reader having read the previous work and who is planning on reading the revision. It comes across as an angry diatribe but I suppose it is due as the Ripper book was pretty well panned by critics and readers. Skip it if you haven't read the Ripper book.

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## **Sam Miller says**

wouldn't had DNF'd if she didn't sound so snotty and bitchy about her research. Just my opinion. The facts are interesting but other than that....

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## **CrabbyPatty says**

I can understand how the case of Jack the Ripper becomes an obsession. And for Patricia Cornwell, it started when she first heard about the case and decided to write Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper - Case Closed framing the case with forensic evidence. Her conclusion - that Walter Sickert was the Ripper - met with a great hue and cry from the "Ripperologists" and now she is publishing a new book Ripper: The Secret Life of Walter Sickert in early 2017 with more details and some additional chapters.

This Kindle Short (under 50 pages) is a teaser for the upcoming book and has plenty of "humble brags" - as in "who knew when I started that I would SOLVE the case" (my paraphrase) - which gets tiring after a while. But having said that, I think she's gotten enough evidence on Sickert that he could possibly BE the Ripper. It makes as much sense as any other theory out there.

So, I'll probably read the new book - because Cornwell isn't the only one obsessed with the case - but will borrow it from the library rather than purchasing.

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## **Kaufmak says**

Honestly, don't bother. It isn't very entertaining, comes off as defensive and petty, even immature. If you are going to posit theories about a subject that has many competing theories, prepare to come under fire. I get it, criticism is hard to take, especially when you are convinced you are right, but to engage in discourse surrounding a controversial topic requires a much thicker skin.

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## **Kristin says**

It was definitely an intriguing read. I can't say that I've ever read any non-fiction books about The Ripper

before this. I found it educational and interesting. Many of her theories were intriguing and appeared plausible. It peaked my curiosity and actually made me want to read future work on the reality of attempts to uncover the true identity of Jack the Ripper. Between the style of writing and the subject matter presented, I was sucked right in. I recommend this read to anybody who enjoys what I will dub as plausible historical theories. Since the facts presented are widely disputed, and can't be considered 100% conclusive I hesitate to call it facts. I'm not sure that this review is doing it as much justice as I had hoped- just read it!

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## **Jaclyn says**

### **More of a companion novel than stand-alone single**

Let me start this review by saying that I haven't read Cornwell's Portrait of a Killer. Had I read that, I think I would have enjoyed this novella more, or found it more interesting and informative. Basically, Cornwell, the well-known author of the Kay Scarpetta mystery novels, wrote a book in 2002 about Jack the Ripper, and detailed what she thought was the true identity of the infamous serial killer. This Kindle single seems to assume the reader has already read that book, and starts by detailing how Cornwell became interested in Jack the Ripper. Then, the single shares a few brief details about how Cornwell is updating that 2002 book, before arguing some criticisms of that book and of Cornwell's belief of Jack the Ripper's identity.

I wouldn't recommend reading this unless you've already read A Portrait of a Killer. This single may be a good companion read after finishing that book, if you found the book interesting. To someone who has not read that book, I don't think this novella is worth the time or money.

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