



A Cry from the Dust

Carrie Stuart Parks

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A secret from a grim page of American history threatens to destroy thousands of lives.

Gwen Marcey was tops in her forensic field. Then cancer struck, her husband left, and her teenage daughter engaged in active rebellion. Gwen's best chance to start a new life was a temporary job in Utah reconstructing faces from an 1857 massacre site.

The Mountain Meadows Interpretative Center asked Gwen to reconstruct the faces of three intact bodies that were discovered from the wagon train massacre of more than 120 people by Mormon fanatics calling themselves Avenging Angels. But just as she is nearing completion on her reconstructions, things around the center turn deadly.

Gwen discovers the ritualized murder of a young college student with a stolen identity and is called on by the local police to use her forensic art skills to aid the investigation. Soon she discovers an uncanny resemblance between one of her reconstructions and the death mask of Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church. And realizes that she's the next target of the recreated Avenging Angels who believe she has an icon from the grave.

Gwen must weave through a labyrinth of Mormon history, discovering secret societies and festering grudges in a race against time.

Will she be able to stop another massacre?

A Cry from the Dust Details

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Author : Carrie Stuart Parks

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From Reader Review A Cry from the Dust for online ebook

Tucker says

Because I've always had an interest in The Mountain Meadows Massacre, I was eager to read this novel. Ms. Parks has obviously done extensive research into the Massacre and the Mormon church and it's various splinter groups. But that's not to say this is dry, historical reading. The characters (I especially loved Gwen), the plot, the skillful interweaving of the past and present, and the descriptions of how forensic artists work all created a suspenseful, absorbing, and fascinating read with the bonus of some laugh out loud humor. Outstanding debut!

Thank you to Thomas Nelson and NetGalley for an advance copy of this book.

Joan says

This is a great debut novel. Being mentored by Frank Peretti has left its mark. I really like the main character, a gutsy woman recovering from a divorce and recent breast cancer. The author is herself a forensic artist and she expertly weaves her own experience and skill into this novel. It is a good combination of fact and fiction as she clarifies in her Author Note. The plot is well done, taking us to the fringes of LDS offshoot groups. I enjoyed this novel a great deal and hope to see much more of Gwen Marcey.

See my complete review at <http://bit.ly/1DeEHhM>.

I received a complimentary galley of this novel from the publisher for the purpose of an independent and honest review.

Kalena says

Suspense/Thriller; first book in the Gwen Marcey series. This is the first book I have read by this author and it resided on my TBR list for an unfortunate amount of time. I am reading it now because of my interest in Montana authors and settings. Ms. Parks truly is an artist and her other books include instructional material on drawing. Her mentor is the one and only, Frank E. Peretti. I felt this novel was a great debut. It was very character driven and I did enjoy the cast of characters she created, particularly Gwen. Gwen has been through a lot and she is super intelligent, from being a forensic artist to understanding deception in its myriad of forms, she uses her powers for good. I love that. She is doing the best she can in the situation she finds herself and she is fallible in ways many of us will identify with. I felt the plot was interesting but very choppy and rather unbelievable in places. This was distracting. However, there are some points in her favor. I have always wondered about the validity of history texts or exhibits. Who decides these "facts" for us... Which leads me to another point. Who can we trust? Who knows our character so well they can vouch for us in the face of contrary evidence--even in the face of people manipulating appearances? Author did an excellent job with handling details of violence and while some of the commentary on religion seems a bit slanted, I was able to keep an open mind while reading. With all this in mind, I gladly pick up the next book in this series, The Bones Will Speak.

Heather Gilbert says

Wow! I will definitely be reading this entire series.

What I loved:

- a heroine who's unique--a plucky breast cancer survivor divorcee
- lots of research and obvious knowledge of the subject matter
- as I mentioned above, twists I can't see coming (and I can see most twists, being an Agatha Christie devotee since teen years). I did guess whodunit, but how we GOT there was a whole different matter!
- a non-preachy yet solid Christian worldview--I love that the MC is a character in progress. She's not perfect and neither are we, so it's realistic
- she has a teen daughter so I love that family element

I will be recommending this one to friends. So glad to find another mystery author to enjoy.

Carol Crigger says

A CRY FROM THE DUST

Carrie Stuart Parks

Trade Paperback

Thomas Nelson

You can read a story blurb about A Cry From the Dust anywhere, so I'm going to talk about other aspects of the book.

- * The writing is clear and sharp, with good flow.
 - * The subject matter is extraordinary. Domestic terrorism; the Mormon Church; plural marriage.
 - * Gwen Marcy, the point of view character, has a history too many of us can relate to; cancer (Gwen is bald), a messy divorce, single motherhood. All this, plus she's kidnapped, branded a terrorist and murderer, and tasked with stopping a major terrorist attack. Whew!
 - * I loved that, just like the author, Carrie Stuart Parks, Gwen is a forensic artist, so the story drips authenticity. Be prepared to learn something along with being royally entertained.
 - * The villains could be real people, with aspirations and desires outside the mainstream, but certainly imaginable. They could be going about their everyday business and we'd never know.
 - * Beth, Gwen's sidekick, is almost as interesting as Gwen herself.
 - * Gwen has the constant worry of a teen heartbroken by her parents' divorce, and we're shown exactly how the girl acts out.
 - * The depth of the novel is astounding.
 - * Best part, there are at least two more Gwen Marcy books in the pipeline.
 - * There's a dog.
-

Angie Fehl says

** I was given a complimentary copy of this book from BookLookBloggers.com in return for an honest review.

This was one of my first reads for the new year and it's now my first entry on my favorites for 2015! I think I barreled through this book in about 2 1/2 days! I found that the story was made even more interesting by the fact that the author herself actually is a forensic artist (like the main character), and that this storyline was inspired by real historical events.

The story opens in Mountain Meadows, Utah in the 1850s with a wagon train being attacked. At first, the attackers are thought to be Native American, but within just a few pages it's revealed that the real enemy is an army of rogue Mormons calling themselves the Avenging Angels. This army massacres most of the wagon train party, only allowing a small group of children (all under the age of 8) to live. No explanation for the attack is given. At least not at first. But answers are revealed as the story moves along. After that first intense chapter, the rest of the story takes place in modern times where the reader meets protagonist / forensic artist Gwen Marcey. Gwen is going through one serious rough patch in life -- surviving cancer, adjusting to a recent divorce, not to mention trying to keep the lines of communication open with her teenage daughter (who is a little resentful towards the parents about their decision to divorce, does the whole "acting out" thing. Teen years -- fun for the whole fam, right?! X-D). As if that were not enough, Gwen is also having to deal with the repercussions of a book her ex-husband wrote -- a novel, he swears! -- a thinly veiled portrait of how he viewed life with Gwen, which basically paints her as an emotionally unstable whackadoodle. It seems like everyone and their dog gets ahold of this novel, which ends up putting cracks in Gwen's reliability around the workplace. Seems like everyone can obviously see the "novel" is about Gwen. Desperate for new work and a change of environment, Gwen accepts the job of reconstructing the faces of three victims (their found skulls) of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Her work has her set up in a viewing area of the Mountain Meadows Memorial Site where visitors can watch her do her thing.

It's on one of these days, when visitors are passing through, asking questions about the tragedy, that Gwen has a confrontational moment with a few of the guests. She's simply giving the history of the incident when these people become strangely hostile about what she's saying. It then turns into quite the scene. Before she knows what's going on, she's got one girl fainting right in front of her and while she's distracted with that, someone manages to destroy one of the reconstructed faces, setting Gwen's work back at least a week. When Gwen comes back to her work station the next day, she discovers that the whole Memorial Center has been ransacked, ALL of her work has been destroyed and one guard has been killed.

The more she investigates, the more Gwen associates with people who were there the day of the hostile encounter, the more of these witnesses wind up dead. Who is behind all this destruction and what is it they don't want the public to find out?! Whoever the killer is, they are closing in on Gwen, not afraid to leave clues virtually on her doorstep.

I had a lot of so-so reads in 2014, so when I started this one up just a couple days ago, I was thrilled to have something that made my heart race once again! This novel -- the tension it made me feel from start to finish -- reminded me of what I love so much about reading. It shows how unnerving and infuriating acts of terrorism can be, how it so often strikes in the most innocuous places, and how it doesn't necessarily have to be from an outside country to be considered terrorism. Sometimes the most frightening threats are right out our backdoor. That's what gave me the chills about this story... that terror of not knowing who to trust, who is honestly on your side.

As the story gets nearer to the end, the POV seems to flip back and forth more and more between Gwen's 1st person perspective and the 3rd person perspective of Gwen's daughter, Aynslee. At first there are definable breaks between the two (by that, I mean that sometimes the switch happens mid-chapter but it's easy enough to see when it switches over) but as you get closer to the end, these breaks start to disappear. This may have been done to up the tension factor that much more. If so, it works!

There were a couple little cracks in the perfection for me, but oddly enough nothing that detracted this from still being on my 5 star list! I found myself riveted through and through and anxiously await the next

installments (I hear this is planned as at least a trilogy, maybe more?). The couple issues I had:

1) Good Lord, but Aynslee's attitude was irritating through most of the story. I know, I know, she's a teen. And she does come around. But just like a real teen, waiting for her to get to that point and having to listen to her moan and grumble along the way.. UGH lol

2) Just a little thing, but I was surprised that as a forensic artist, Gwen didn't know what a death mask was. Really?! Seems like it would at least kind of be related to her field. I learned about the history of death masks just in general jr high history classes, so I don't know, just seemed strange that a person who specializes in forensics could completely miss hearing about them at all in their studies.

That's it though. Other than that, loved, loved, loved this. Already have Book 2 way high up on my Book Wish List now :-D

Colleen says

What a fabulous mystery! Love the protagonist and the entire premise of a forensic artist.

Mark says

The saying "don't judge a book by its cover" does hold true. The cover of this book didn't appeal to me at all, and I almost passed on it as a book to review, but the book and author both sounded interesting, so I requested it. And then I started to read it and discovered it was written from the first person point of view, not a favorite of mine. But I kept reading. And got sucked into a great story. I really intended to read some of it and finish it another day, but it was too good to put down, so with a break for supper and few drink and bathroom breaks, I read on and until I finished the book.

Maybe I don't remember everything I studied in history, or I just never studied the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but I don't remember ever hearing about it. The book is fictional, but is based on that very real event. The author spun a fascinating and suspenseful story using that event and other history about the Mormons and their leader, Joseph Smith.

I liked the characters in the book, although there were a few surprises with some of them, and although the plot was convoluted and intricate, it was easy to follow. The author has experience in forensics, and that came through in the book. And I really found the historical information about the Mormons fascinating and learned more about the religion while reading this book, and the interesting theories and ideas about the famous (at least to other people) massacre.

This is a debut novel for this author, and she has hit one out of the park. Anyone who reads it should give it five stars, for it is worthy of five stars. It is truly a terrific read, and I look forward to reading the next book by this author.

Carrie Schmidt (Reading is My SuperPower) says

Gwen Marcey is such a great character! She's "real" and authentic, and her inner dialogue is delightful. Her

relationship with her best friend Beth is both hilarious and sweet, and Gwen's struggles with her ex-husband and her teenage daughter are ones to which many women can relate. On top of all of that, her job as a forensic artist is fascinating as are her skills at deception detection. In short, she's a fictional character I would want as a friend should that ever be possible.

In Carrie Stuart Parks' debut novel, she takes this great character and plops her down in the middle of Utah where she encounters an extremist religious group, gruesome murders, and a century-old mystery that begs to be solved. It starts out intriguing and gets intense really fast - and then stays that way through most of the novel. Just about the time you think it's safe to relax.... it's not.

The story is told in first person, from Gwen's perspective - which allows for more of that delightful inner dialogue - with occasional brief switches to other characters and the third person. This added to the suspense and the tension for me, and I really enjoyed it. Because you know at those moments you're seeing things that Gwen isn't seeing and it makes you want to holler the updates at her when next you switch back to her perspective.

A Cry From The Dust is a strong debut novel - with well-plotted suspense, an intriguingly possible historical mystery, and vivid characters. I was completely absorbed in this book from word one, and I highly recommend it to any one who loves a good thriller!

Patricia Bradley says

A Cry From the Dust by Carrie Stuart Parks blew me away. Parks knows how to put her characters in danger and then up the threat. I didn't put the book down until I finished...at 1 in the morning. I enjoyed learning about what a forensic artist does. Will be reading the next book in the series as soon as I can get it downloaded!

Sarita says

This book was not for me. Maybe I reached a reading slump, or perhaps it was because I just finished 3 great books from Irene Hannon, but I found the book a bit boring and the subject matter did not interest me at all. I didn't connect with any of the characters and was glad the book was done so that I could put it aside.

Matt says

In her debut novel, Parks presents a powerful story whose action does not stop until the final page. Desperate for work after a recent battle with cancer and divorce, Gwen Marcey finds herself at the Mountain Meadows Information Center in Utah, home of the infamous massacre which, in 1857, marked a dark day in the Mormon Church. Using her background as a forensic artist, Marcey is working on reconstructing skulls found in the area. After a group of protesters cause trouble at the Center, two people are found murdered by the following morning and Marcey cannot help but want to solve the mystery. Returning home to handle a rebellious teen daughter, Marcey discovers that there is a religious undertone to these murders and that the Mormon Church is at the centre of the controversy. Using a patchwork of Church history and a skull that may hold significance, Marcey begins working with the FBI to lure out a set of Mormons who call themselves the Avenging Angels, tasked with handling issues within the Church. When Marcey pushes too

hard for answers, she finds herself caught in the middle of the Angels and uncovers the master plan, set to play out on the anniversary of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Unsure who she can trust while being framed for murder, Marcey must reach the authorities and save her daughter before devastation strikes again. Parks grips the reader from the opening pages and weaves a masterful novel that mixes historical fact with mysterious fiction. A novel not to be missed by those who love forensic-based mysteries.

When I discovered Parks recently, I could not believe how strong her writing could be. I parachuted into the second book in the series when offered an advance copy and wondered how much backstory would emerge in this, the first novel. While the reader is given some more context into Gwen, Aynslee, and even Gwen's friend, Beth, there is much that is only insinuated and could be fleshed out into more flashback pieces. Parks tells a very strong story and uses what she knows best, forensic art, to carve a niche into this well-established genre. The amount of research that must have gone into the novel is astounding and it surely caused its share of controversy, though the reality in which it is rooted makes it all the more plausible. Parks uses these strong factors to sculpt a great story, with strong characters and believable dialogue, all while ensuring the reader is kept on edge with no chance to lull themselves into a spot of comfort. The jump to fiction writing was a profitable gamble for Parks and her fan base should grow exponentially with further novels of this calibre.

Kudos, Madam Parks for this sensational piece. I am pleased that I stumbled onto your novel and cannot wait to read more of your work, in the years to come.

Like/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

Staci says

A Cry From the Dust starts off very strong. First, there is the endorsement from Frank Peretti in his note sharing how he served as a mentor for the author. Second, there is an event that occurred on September 8-11 in the late 1800s to set the stage for the novel. The first quarter of the book was very good and I was enjoying the history element in addition to the mystery. The shell of the story was strong and I liked the author's dry humor. After the first quarter of the book, the writing was not as tight and I was not as engaged in the novel. I plan to read the second book in the series.

Marji Laine says

I just spent an enjoyable three days stealing every excess moment to absorb Carrie Stuart Parks's debut novel. This story would make an EXCELLENT movie!

Gwen Marcey has had it all: success, failure, disease, dismal humiliation, and now murder and destruction following her. Her best friend, Beth, always says, "Everything happens for a reason," but how can there be any benefit in Gwen's sanity being questioned, her co-worker murdered, her work decimated? Not to mention the other dysfunctional elements of her life like her family and need for secure, paid employment.

Gwen's job as a forensic artist places her at the site of an 140-year-old tragic massacre hugging the edges of Mormon history. Something she's doing—something she's recreating—is stirring up a hatred strong enough to kill. The ritualistic murders of a young college student and an aging security guard baffle her. Then terror

sets in when she realizes she's been targeted. Is she going to be the next victim, or is something more sinister in the works?

I loved this book. It just soared to the top of my all-time-best list! I'd like to say my favorite element is the main character. Usually, that's true, and Gwen was no exception. A pretty, quirky lady, near or at middle age with a fetish for caffeine, a huge dog, and a quick wit. She was hysterical even in the midst of the most intense moments. At one point she thinks, "They shouldn't mess with a divorced, menopausal, bald woman in a bad mood." Ha. Had me in full-belly laugh more than once! She's smart, skilled, and has a masterful memory. A Holmes with a heart, so to speak.

But my favorite element was the plot in this novel. Non-stop suspense, increasing tension, mammoth stakes, disastrous repercussions. Just as I felt the relief of a completed issue, I'd near the end of the scene and get a new revelation. A shocker that would make me lower the book for a second and give a "Wow." This happened over and over throughout the story. In addition, for the first time in a long time, I was completely surprised by the ultimate revelation. Here, I thought I had the resolution well in hand. I had expectations of who and what and a twist. Only to find I was completely wrong. I mean totally!

But I delighted in the error! The story was that much sweeter since I hadn't anticipated the ending! If you're a fan of suspense, don't miss this book!

And did I mention that Frank Peretti, one of the pioneers of Christian suspense, worked with Carrie Stuart Parks as she developed A Cry from the Dust?

I'm looking forward to the next Gwen Marcey suspense!

Carrie Parks says

Thank you, dear readers, for taking a look at my debut novel. This particular book tumbled around in the back of my head for some time. It was actually the second book in the series, but I liked it better than the first, so put that one on the back burner.

I'm not sure exactly where the idea for this novel originated. I have a number of LDS friends and had studied their faith at length. As a forensic artist myself, I was fascinated with the facial reconstructions done by my instructor at the Little Bighorn battlefield. Other tidbits got tucked away in the back of my brain: no known image of Joseph Smith, the search for his burial site in 1928, and of course, Mountain Meadows. I researched the book extensively to be sure I made it as accurate as possible, using a great deal of published LDS material. My husband and I traveled to Salt Lake City to visit the history museum.

As a breast cancer survivor, I thought it would be interesting to make my protagonist a cancer survivor. I wanted readers to know that it's not only possible to live beyond cancer, but to live fully. A few folks have said that all the bad stuff happening to Gwen wasn't realistic, but I assure you, things were pretty rough for me: not only did I have cancer, my work dried up and I was taking care of my dying mother.

Of course, no other dog would work for the canine in this book but a Great Pyrenees. My family has owned a Pyrenees kennel since 1960, and "Winston" is a blending of a number of my favorite Pyrs over the years.

I love to hear from my readers, so please feel free to contact me.

Blessings,
Carrie

