



## Smart, But Dead

*Nancy G. West*

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## **Smart, But Dead** Nancy G. West

In *Smart, But Dead*, Aggie Mundeen, skirting forty and appalled by the prospect of descending into middle-age decrepitude, blasts off to the local university to study the genetics of aging. In addition to providing youthful hints for readers of her column, "Stay Young with Aggie," Aggie is doggedly determined to stay young.

Despite conflicts with her professor, she learns about the Human Genome Project and DNA. When she discovers a dead body, Detective Sam reminds her not to "help" with the investigation. But dangerously curious and programmed to prod, she races to solve the crime, winds up the prime suspect and is on target to become next campus corpse.

Related subjects include: cozy mysteries, women sleuths, academic mysteries, murder mystery series, whodunit mysteries (whodunnit), amateur sleuth books, book club recommendations, Southern humor, Southern living, humorous murder mysteries.

## **Smart, But Dead Details**

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Author : Nancy G. West

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# From Reader Review Smart, But Dead for online ebook

## Kathy says

Aggie Mundeen is a bit shy of forty and does not like what old age holds for most of us. She writes a column, Stay Young with Aggie, to provide information and hints on aging to her readers. Since aging is of interest, Aggie enrolls in a class on the science of aging at the local university, taught by a top notch professional in the field of genetics. Her foray into academia to gain insights into aging and helpful ideas and hints to give her readers becomes a nightmare as the professor keels over and dies in the classroom. From the moment Aggie knows he is dead, she thinks he was murdered and begins an informal investigation into his death, much to the dismay of her would be beau, Detective Sam, of the San Antonio Police Department. Thus, Aggie finds herself in the middle of a mystery, as someone tries to prevent the truth about the death and the mysterious and important discoveries the professor made in the field of genetics from getting out.

I had never read anything by this author, and thus have not read of the other books in this series. This one was okay, just not great, in my opinion. There is a lot of technical info about DNA and genetics discussed in the book as well as routine use of acronyms and language people in that field would know and understand. I found it a real detractor. I did not know/understand/follow much of it and, anyway, that was not why I was reading this book, so I think the author could have not gone into it quite so much. I also was not very taken by the main character, Aggie. She was intelligent enough, but I never felt like she was letting the reader into her soul and mind. She definitely was energetic, but almost too energetic, sticking her nose into many, many areas where she really had no reason going. Unlike other sleuths in other books, Aggie just did not make me warm to her or even root for her when she got into tight situations. I also found the side story about the baby's bracelet and her big secret to be a bit much. I am not sure, at this point, whether I will go back and read the other books in the series. If you have read the other books in the series and enjoyed them, you will probably like this one. If you are looking for something a bit different, this will also appeal to you. I received this from NetGalley to read and review.

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## Jessica says

I needed a relief from my current reading that I will be reviewing soon enough. This book looked like it wouldn't be too heavy a read and might relax me. It's my first by this author, but probably not my last. Smart, But Dead is book number 3 in West's series An Aggie Mundeen Mystery.

Aggie Mundeen is a colorful woman with a drive not matched by many. Her curiosity in all things makes her sometimes land in trouble. What she thought would be a simple class into the science of aging turns into a murder mystery Aggie can't resist. Suddenly she's head deep into something she can't control, but she can't stop and soon she is in the middle of it all, standing accused for something she didn't do. More is on stake now than just satisfying her own mind and impressing the man she loves. If she doesn't find the killer, she might well end up being sentenced for a crime she didn't commit. And that is more excitement than Aggie needs.

I liked Aggie, but at the same time I would not want to be best friends with her. Why? Because she would exhaust me. She was always pursuing something, always eager to learn. Her pace just felt too fast. For me, personally, who likes to take things slower. But to read about her adventures, her stupidity in some cases,

made me fond of her. So yes, Aggie, I would indeed show up at your funeral and cry for you. For real.

Sam was extremely patient with her. At first I thought Sam was a lot younger than Aggie, because she seemed so obsessed with being young for him, but at the end I think they were a similar age. Sam is a detective and when Aggie landed in trouble I thought for sure that this was it. This would be the time when he walked out the door and never came back. Of course, what kind of romance would that be?

This was a book with purpose and as such it was very enlightening. Of course I got lost when the scientists started talking about daf-2s and what-nots, but I have to say that when Aggie had a talk with imprisoned women it made my eyebrows go way up. Is that really the way justice should work? Is that what prisons are for? For people to seek shelter? Nobody should want to be locked up. Sadly that is probably the truth in some countries. Thumbs up for that, Nancy G. West!

What would I more have wished for? Well, I haven't read the two first books about Aggie Mundeen, but I would have liked more play on deep emotions when Aggie finally told Sam her secret. It felt like such a huge thing and I wanted to cry, but I just didn't get enough. It felt too fast.

I would give this book a 3.5 because it gave me an enjoyable break from my current reading, but it left me longing for more. So I will probably have to read more about Aggie Mundeen's adventures. If she manages to stay alive that long.

I received a copy through NetGalley.

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## **Linda says**

Nancy G. West is a new author to me. I just finished her book, "Smart, But Dead" and because I liked it, I want to read "Fit to be Dead" and "Dang Near Dead" the first 2 Aggie Mundeen Mysteries! The main character of her books is of course Aggie Mundeen. Aggie's curiosity leads to danger when she tries to solve a murder. This is a fun series!

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## **Jenna says**

Science was never a strong subject for me. I struggled with it a lot; but I was always curious about it. Chemistry was an elusive topic, but I could follow some of biology lessons easier. (Though I was never a fan of the lessons that required dissection. \*shudder\*) I could relate to main character Aggie's drive to know, learn, and understand, and that made her more endearing to me.

In Smart, But Dead, the third book in Nancy G. West's humorous mystery series, Aggie is heading back to college to learn about the science of aging. She's feeling the pressure of nearly 40 as a single woman, and she's quite eager to know if there's a way to stop or even reverse the aging process. The trouble is that the course teacher is a man with whom she has history - and not a good one. Right off the bat, Aggie tries to make amends with the professor. It seems to work, but he's still acting strangely. When he literally drops dead, Aggie is drawn to figure out just what happened. But her efforts at investigation only serve to make her look guilty of doing the professor harm.

Smart, But Dead is easy to read and fast-paced, full of wit and humor. It's the first of the series that I have read and I found Aggie to be a fresh character in a cozy mystery character canvas.

FTC Disclosure: I received a free copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review. All of the opinions expressed in the review are mine alone.

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### **Kaye says**

While this was the third book in the series, it was the first that I have read. Usually, I just can't start in the middle (I'm weird that way). However, this book was a blast to read. It was extremely funny with great characters and a good plot. Aggie was attending classes which dealt with scientific ways to slow aging, and while the concept is way above my head, it was explained well enough that I mostly understood it.

I'm looking forward to being able to read the first two books in the series, and any future books.

I won an ARC, but the opinions in this review are entirely mine.

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### **Arlene Arredondo says**

Aggie Mundeen is obsessed with living younger and living happily ever after with the detective she is in love with. She has a high understanding of Biology and genes, so she takes a second course with the distinguished professor Carmody, called the Science of Aging, to improve her life and to feed the column she writes. Aggie hopes to find a great discovery in science, but instead she is turn in the direction of solving a murder mystery that could end her life.

This book is full of twists and a hint of comedy. Keeps you guessing till the end.

Note: Thanks to Netgalley and Henery Press for allowing me to read this book free for review purposes.

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### **Sapphyria says**

Smart, But Dead furthers the adventures of Aggie Mundeen, amateur sleuth and thorn in the police department's side. This time, Aggie takes a college class with a professor involved in the Human Genome Project who isn't happy to see her in his class. He acts pretty peculiar upon his meeting of Aggie prior to class, and even more so when lecturing to the entire class. When, after a rather exciting discussion ensues, her professors drops to the floor. Certain that his death was no accident, Aggie knows that she has to find out what happened.

Aggie's involvement soon leads her to another body as she's snooping for clues in the lab that her professor used for his research on aging. She's then arrested and off to jail for burglary. She's also suspected of murdering the person she found in the lab. Aggie's snooping has gotten her into a huge heap of trouble - one that her guy friend, and police detective, Sam can't help her out of.

It's now up to Aggie's friend Meredith to spring her from jail and keep her out of anymore trouble. If only containing Aggie's eagerness were that easy....

Oh, Aggie! When will you learn that people aren't nice, especially to those who interfere with their nefarious plans. Aggie is a neat character. She has a definite compassionate personality and that's what gets her into trouble. She knows that her professor didn't just fall down dead naturally. She wants to do right by him and find out who's responsible. This, unfortunately, puts her into harms way multiple times.

Aggie's relationship with Sam takes an unexpected turn that has their entire past laid out in front of them. Things that Aggie worked hard to keep secret are now exposed to the one person that she was trying to protect. Whether or not this is a good thing will not be revealed in the review. You'll have to grab the series and figure it out for yourself!

Aggie's inability to not put herself in danger is starting to get old, however. In all honesty, it's about time she got arrested, booked, and spent time in jail for her illegal escapes. Granted, she is really good at fleshing out ideas, possible motives, and those who may be involved, she just doesn't do a good job protecting herself. Aggie is the typical brainless heroine who puts herself into situations that are not at all well thought out ahead of time. She's impulsive, too narrowly focused, and her curiosity is going to do more than just kill the cat. I still enjoyed the book regardless of how impetuous our main character is throughout.

Smart, But Dead is a cozy mystery full of humor, suspense, heartache, and, in this case, panic and fear. The plot takes the reader all over the place. Just like books 1 & 2, there are different threads to the craziness that don't seem to be connected and then all of a sudden something happens or is said and everything falls into place. I enjoyed the plot and character development; the world building was done well. We were given the important back story information on the new group of characters in just the right dosage - not too much, not too little.

Review copy courtesy of the publisher, at no cost, in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Debbie says**

Aggie's back and this time she's going to school. She's taking a class that the professor professes to have found a link to helping people live longer. Aggie is ecstatic!

Unfortunately, it's not working too well for the professor as he falls down dead right after one of his classes. Of course, Aggie is on the scene, she's going to figure out what or who happened along to end the professor's life.

Along the way, Aggie even takes her own "Orange is the New Black" adventure as she's jailed for B&E and possibly murder.

It's another cozy little mystery where Aggie is bound and determined to figure it out.

It was definitely entertaining and I totally recommend it!

Thanks to Henry Press and Net Galley for providing me with a free e-galley in exchange for an honest review.

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## **LuAnn says**

I read Fit to Be Dead, the first book in this series, not too long ago and enjoyed the character of Aggie Mundeen. Somehow I totally missed the 2nd book, Dang Near Dead; I'm pleading temporary insanity on that one. So when the opportunity came up to read and review Smart, But Dead, I was one happy reader.

First off, the titles of the books in this series are very punny, and rate very high on my cozy mystery title favorites scale. When I see the title Fit to be Dead, I start hearing the song "Hip to be Square". Go figure. 'Dang' is just fun to say out loud, especially if you hold onto the vowel. And Smart, But Dead, just makes so much sense. Sure, that professor was brilliant and on track to solve one of the mysteries of aging. But someone (and I'm not saying who) gets greedy and for all his smarts, he still winds up dead.

I suppose I identify with Aggie and that's why I like her so much. We are both 'of a certain age' ... but she seems to be taking it all in stride better than I have.

She writes a blog on how to stay young, she goes back to university and studies genetics, which is tough enough to dive into anyway, let alone when you are a 'mature student' (or whatever the current preferred euphemism happens to be), and she's enjoying a relationship with a regional officer of the law. Shoot, if I was single and Aggie wasn't in the picture, I'd go after Sam myself!

Smart, But Dead receives a high grade from me. Ms. West's words are witty (try saying that a few times quickly), the characters live and breathe, and I look forward to Aggie's next adventure!

(Disclosure: I received a copy of this book in exchange for my objective review.)

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## **Teresa Kander says**

This is my first encounter with this series, and I absolutely fell in love with Aggie. She's pushing forty, and writes a column about staying young. She's taking a class with a professor who claims to have found a way to help people live longer. His theory doesn't work out very well for him, however, as he drops dead after one of his classes. Naturally, Aggie jumps into the investigation, hoping to find out who or what killed the professor.

This is a very fast-paced mystery, and Aggie's curiosity gets her into some very sticky situations. She even manages to get herself thrown in jail along the way.

There was a lot of technical stuff about science and DNA, which bogged down my reading. I understand that it was important to the story, but it would have been better if it were kept to a minimum.

I look forward to more of Aggie's adventures in the future.

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## **Laura says**

Great Series!

This is a great series; this is the third book in the Aggie Mundeen Mystery series by Nancy West. Aggie

Mundeen is almost forty and is worried about becoming middle-age. She enrolls in a class at the university to study genetics of aging. When she discovers a dead body she is determined to solve the crime. I am looking forward to reading the next book in this series.

A Review copy was provided to me in exchange for a fair and honest review. The free book held no determination on my personal review.

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### **Nicola says**

Thank you to the publisher and Netgalley for letting me read this book in exchange for an honest review.

Aggie Mundeen is extremely focused or even bordering on obsessed with aging and how to reduce its impact. She embarks on a course at a college where she meets the professor Carmody who is acting very strangely both in and out of class. After he suffers a fit within class, Aggie finds it her mission to look into what is going on within the lab and the professors that works there. This leads her into getting more than she bargained for.

Her character is extremely determined and headstrong in her focus to find out the truth. She gets herself into lots of situations that is she advised not to be in, but battles ahead anyway. As a character, I felt that I couldn't warm to her mainly because I didn't really know her very well and also I found her to be quite irritating after a while. There was so much more that I still wanted to know, perhaps this is because it is no.3 in the series (I haven't read #1 or #2).

Overall this was an average read for me. I'm not sure if I would be rushing to read the previous books in a hurry.

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### **Betty says**

Worrying about staying young Aggie Mundeen takes a class on ageing at a local university. It is a class on the study of genes. The Professor teaching the class collapsed in the class with unknown causes. Aggie decides to investigate; Sam tells her to stay out of it. Aggie decides to take an other class to learn how to protect herself. There is a lot of good information on that subject. Aggie does not listen to Sam and ends up in jail on a burglary charge and possibly murder. The twists and turns the story took keep me turning the pages. The Genetic information was too detail.

Disclosure: I received a free copy from HENERY PRESS through Netgalley for an honest review. I would like to thank them for this opportunity to read and review this book. The opinions are my own.

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### **Lghiggins says**

Smart, But Dead is only an OK read. As a mystery of the chick lit variety, it contains the requisite amateur female sleuth nicknamed Aggie, the handsome detective, and built in attraction and conflict between the two. Also on board is a friendly and helpful sidekick for the leading lady. Unfortunately the plot depends on an



understanding of DNA and related research possibilities. The author tries to weave in descriptions naturally, but there is just too much explanation needed to make the plot work. A geneticist would find it fascinating. I enjoy science, but was definitely not spellbound.

The situations Aggie chooses to involve herself in, as well as her motivations, are unbelievably stupid for someone who is portrayed as educated, intelligent and successful as a banker. I won't spoil the story, but my highest praise for the book lies in the descriptions of Aggie's feelings towards the end of the book when she is suffering the consequences of her most inane stunt. The author uses a series of short chapters with language that leads the reader to truly empathize with Aggie's reactions to her predicament.

Thanks to netgalley.com for the opportunity to read and review this book.

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## Ukgardenfiend says

### A NetGalley Review

Telomerase - also called telomere terminal transferase - is a ribonucleoprotein - and if you know what that means you're clearly a scientist with a degree in biology and working on cancer drugs or anti-ageing. Well in this book it is all about anti-ageing and age-related diseases.

In Faust the Devil suggests that the best way to stay young(er) is to:

Seek out a life of moderation, stop being lazy, exercise regularly and avoid unhealthy foods! But Faust prefers the magic pill / potion, and so too do many people - after all living a healthy life is just too much work! We don't want to gradually lose our memories - forgetting where the car key is - the name of the flower - who that celebrity is - nor do we want to get flabby and lose muscle tone - those batwings are not attractive! So we all look for the magic potion as mentioned in the press that will stop the decline - eat blueberries, or flax seed, or drink kale smoothies, or, or... or just maybe there is something else that we can take - a medicine - perhaps related to telomeres that will do the job without us having to lift a finger. For the scientist who can market an anti-ageing pill that really work on the cellular level - that actually prevents cells from ageing, there is a fortune waiting to be made. A similar pill could be adapted to prevent cancer or to heal and reverse it, and as it is estimated that 1 in 3 of have some form of cancer before we die, just think how much money could be involved.

“Where does this interaction of telomere-dependent and telomere-independent aging pathways as well as the influence of known (and many unknown) stressors leave us? The molecular understanding of cellular aging is progressing steadily, but the complexity of cellular aging and the even more complex question of how organs such as the brain and heart age requires a lot more work. There will be no single molecular switch which can reverse or halt aging and triple our lifespan, but most aging researchers do not this as their goal. Understanding specific aging pathways, as well as the genes and stressors which activate them, will allow us to prevent and treat age-related diseases as well as one day be able to provide personalized advice to individuals on how to maximize their “healthspan”. For now, we can stick to some of the broad lifestyle interventions which were recommended by Mephistopheles: exercise and a healthy diet. Originally published as "The Stress of Aging" in the Lindau Nobel Laureates Meeting blog.”

So from all of this we can conclude that if someone could find the way to maximum life span then there is a lot of money to be made and it would be worth killing for .

In this book I learn quite a lot of science about ageing - I learn that the APOE genes are implicated in 20-

25% of Alzheimer cases; this gene is found on chromosome 19 and has 3 variants - depending on which of the 3 you have, your risk of Alzheimer's is increased or reduced, but there is also Vascular dementia, Frontal-temporal dementia which also runs in families and other ways to lose your memory as you get older - over 65 (oh dear, I'm now 65!).

So it seems that 35% of the individual differences in ageing are inherited and that lifestyle can change the length of your telomeres. If you do as the Devil recommends.

I learnt all of these facts (with the addition of what I looked up) in the first 50% of the book but as the storyline didn't explore much further I gave up. it was a very thin story-line indeed and it seems to me that I never found out enough about the heroine - she wasn't young that was clear from her interest in the genetics of ageing; and she seemed to lust after the detective. In her role as detective (very privately) she seemed rather inept even if it was a sideline. I felt that the story was just a way of getting across the science of ageing in a very lightweight way without exploring the issues connected - included just what a drug company would do to get their hands on a wonder drug!

This is the 3rd book in this series and to me it was just one of those series that seems to tail off as more is written. Other reviewers have called this series 'cozy' or 'lighter reading' and I do agree and thus it is not for me.

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