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Trace



Synopsis

Since POSTMORTEM garnered critical acclaim and a record-breaking five awards for a first crime novel, the Scarpetta novels have often been imitated, but never bettered. Against her own judgement and the advice of Benton Wesley and her niece, Lucy, Scarpetta agrees to return to Virginia as a consultant pathologist on a case involving the death of a fourteen-year-old girl. Accompanied by Pete Marino she finds the once familiar territory of her morgue and her department much changed, and the new Chief Medical Examiner treats her with disdain despite the obvious fact that he is in desperate need of her expertise. But professional as ever, she re-examines the evidence and proves the girl was murdered. She also finds trace evidence which matches that found on an accident victim and at the scene where one of Lucy's operatives was attacked. It is not only a forensic puzzle, but opens up the probability that someone is after those closest to Scarpetta. Visit the author's website at www.patriciacornwell.com

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Time Warner AudioBooks; Abridged edition (September 7, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 140550076X

ISBN-13: 978-1405500760

Product Dimensions: 5 x 5.6 x 1.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces

Average Customer Review: 2.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (593 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #13,121,346 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #79 in [Books > Books on CD >](#)

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Customer Reviews

Each time I pick up a new Scarpetta novel, I am filled with hope that Patricia Cornwell will return to the style of the early novels that made me fall in love with the series. Sadly, this novel, like so many of the recent ones, is another big disappointment. I'm not even going to bother trying to give a plot summary because it's hardly worth the effort. Yes, there's a disturbing murder of a 14-year-old girl, but it hardly counts for anything in this book. Instead we have the usual Lucy angst because her lover, Henri (Henrietta), was attacked and won't talk to her. We also have Scarpetta angst because Benton Wesley faked his death for years and didn't tell her. Wesley has angst as well because he's

still keeping secrets from Scarpetta and Lucy. And why are Wesley and Lucy keeping the fact that Henri was attacked such a big secret from Scarpetta? Why don't these people just TALK to each other? Since they keep getting interrupted on the phone, then maybe they could try emailing each other. Oh yeah, there's also Marino angst, with his long time crush on Scarpetta and a really bizarre "rough sex" scene involving him and the mother of the victim. As usual, even though Scarpetta is a respected expert in forensic analysis, the bureaucrats are out to get her. She is summoned to her old ME office in Virginia to work on the case involving the 14-year-old girl and faces overt hostility by Dr. Joel Marcus, her successor. He calls her in to help with the case but doesn't even have the grace to pretend he's happy to have her there. Of course, the office has become a shambles under his direction-- but nobody seems to care that the man hired to replace the brilliant Scarpetta is incompetent.

My working hypothesis for the past several Kay Scarpetta Mysteries is that Patricia Cornwell does not really like the character she has created. If there are levels beyond adding insult to injury then Scarpetta gets to explore them. When it turned out that Benton Wesley was not dead that was a stunningly cruel low blow. Until Marino drops dead or one of the whackos Lucy keeps letting into her life kills her or gets her killed that represents the lowest moment of Scarpetta's life, which has been exploring the Marianas trench rather relentlessly. So when I picked up "Trace," the 13th (oh-oh) of the Scarpetta mysteries, my first thought is what wringers is our heroine going through this time? We know that there are certain things we are going to get when Cornwell writes one of these novels and "Trace" provides them. First, there is going to be some political hack who is out to get Scarpetta who is not going to get his comeuppance. I gave up years ago on this every happening, although time and time again somebody goes gunning for Scarpetta unfairly without ever having to pay a price. This time it is Dr. Joel Marcus, the idiot who was eventually hired as the chief medical examiner of Virginia to replace our heroine. Apparently having created the best ME office in the continental United States they decided to find the least qualified person to run it. But by the time Marcus gets to gleefully accuse the great Kay Scarpetta of incompetence he is disappearing quickly in her review mirror. Add to this that going back to her old stomping grounds in Richmond is nowhere close to being a happy homecoming either. Second, Lucy is once again involved with somebody with whom she should not be involved.

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