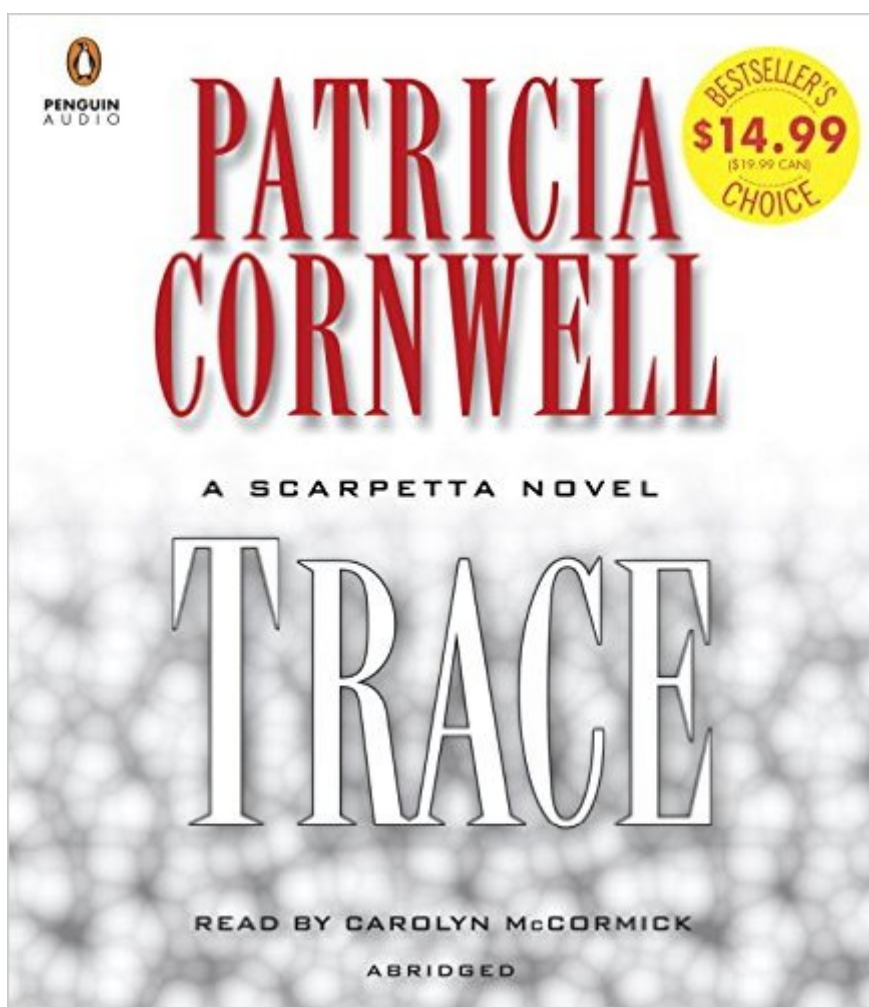


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Trace: Scarpetta (Book 13)



Synopsis

The heart-stopping new Dr. Kay Scarpetta thriller from America's #1-bestselling crime writer. Dr. Kay Scarpetta, now freelancing from south Florida, returns to the city that turned its back on her five years ago. In *Trace*, Scarpetta travels to Richmond, Virginia, at the odd behest of the recently appointed Chief Medical Examiner, who claims that he needs her help to solve a perplexing crime. When she arrives, however, Scarpetta finds that nothing is as she expected: her former lab is in the final stages of demolition; the inept chief isn't the one who requested her after all; her old assistant chief has developed personal problems that he won't reveal; and a glamorous FBI agent, whom Marino dislikes instantly, meddles with the case. Deprived of assistance from colleagues Benton and Lucy, who are embroiled in what first appears to be an unrelated attempted rape by a stalker, Scarpetta is faced with investigating the death of a fourteen-year-old girl, working with the smallest pieces of evidence—traces that only the most thorough hunters can identify. She must follow the twisting leads and track the strange details in order to make the dead speak—and to reveal the sad truth that may be more than even she can bear.

Book Information

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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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