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# **The Last Precinct, Abridged Edition**



## Synopsis

The eleventh Scarpetta novel, in which the Chief Medical Examiner is under a Grand Jury investigation for murder. She knows she's being framed and she no longer knows who she can trust...Physically and psychologically bruised by her encounter with the killer Chandonne, Dr Kay Scarpetta has to leave her home in the hands of the police team investigating the attack. She finds shelter with an old friend, Anna Zenner, but it is not the haven of security she needs when she discovers that Anna has been sub-poenaed to appear before a Grand Jury which is investigating Scarpetta for murder. Kay knows she is being framed and she also knows she can trust no-one. Meanwhile it appears that Chandonne killed a woman in New York before his murderous spree in Virginia, but when Scarpetta looks more closely into that case with the NY prosecutor Jaime Berger, proof of his guilt is far from certain -- in fact she begins to believe that he may not be the perpetrator of any of the crimes he is accused of. As she follows the forensic trail to the real killer she gradually realises that someone has been spinning a web for years with the aim of entrapping her. Who is it, and why are they so desperate to be rid of her?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Patricia Cornwell's legendary crime fiction creation, Virginia's Chief Medical Examiner Kay Scarpetta, has logged a host of fans among mystery readers and, within the bounds of her fictional world, an equally impressive tally of individuals intent on causing her grievous physical or psychological harm. The 11th Scarpetta novel, *The Last Precinct*, doesn't add any new names to the second roster. Instead, in a sweeping narrative gesture toward retrospection (less-than-fervent

fans might whisper "or stagnation"), the novel depends largely on ground already covered in its predecessors, *Black Notice* and, to a lesser extent, *Point of Origin*. All the familiar faces--friend and foe--are here: police captain Marino, Kay's niece Lucy, the so-called Werewolf murderer, and (in memoriam) Kay's lover Benton Wesley and his killer, Carrie Grethen. Kay, who nearly killed the Werewolf in self-defense as *Black Notice* came to a close, now finds herself the target of a corrupt police investigation that will dredge her darkest secrets from the deepest corners of her past. Torn between a desire to clear her name and the instinct of a wounded animal to turn against even its would-be rescuers, Kay sifts through the forensic evidence that seems to link Chandonne to other horrific events in her past, up to and including Wesley's murder. Physical analysis, however, will not be enough to right her up-ended world. Instead, Kay must rely on the strategic support of her niece, cofounder of the Last Precinct (an odd, ill-defined organization that is, in the words of its motto, "where you go when there is nowhere left"), and on her willingness to examine her own fears, misconceptions, and anything-but-altruistic motives. The most important setting in this novel is not the morgue--it's the living room where Kay's therapist forces her to address (you guessed it) "unresolved issues." The novel's focus on Kay's emotional evolution does not, unfortunately, mask the leaps of illogic that pepper the plot's murky stew. More disturbing than these occasional lapses, however, is the feeling that Cornwell has written herself into a corner. The Scarpetta of *The Last Precinct* is a far cry from the irritably independent woman of previous books. Her often over-inflated musings are more tiresome than tantalizing. Cornwell's impressive track record makes this excursion a bit disappointing, but that same record means that loyal fans will race to acquire the book anyway and that the odds of her returning to her usual stellar form next time are (hurrah!) favorable. --Kelly Flynn --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

"My central nervous system spikes and surges, my pulse pounds. I am sweating.... " If only readers would share this response with Cornwell's immensely popular Kay Scarpetta, Virginia's chief medical examiner. But most won't. Kay has plenty of reason to be upset. She's standing in a room in a shabby motel where a body has been found, severely tortured. She's under official suspicion of having murdered maleficent ?ber-cop Diane Bray (in Kay's last outing, *Black Notice*). She's suspected of trumping up charges against accused serial killer Jean-Baptiste Chandonne, also introduced in *Black Notice*. She's reeling from the aftershock of Chandonne's murderous attack on her; she mightily misses her slain FBI agent/lover Dan Belson; she's learned that her gay niece, Lucy, is quitting law enforcement for a private PI firm called the Last Precinct. And it's Christmas time. Kay has a lot of support in the midst of this law-and-disorder soap opera, from, among others,

Lucy, tough cop/sidekick Pete Marino and Kay's aged friend, psychiatrist Anna Zenner. And that's part of the problem with this novel. Excessive emoting and way too much talk (including long therapeutic sessions between Kay and Anna) derail momentum time and again; the pages feel soggy with tears. Cornwell does provide intense intrigue, but it's a strain to follow as she connects events and loose ends from several novels. Within this narrative swamp, there's one new and very memorable gator, though. A New York prosecutor Jaime Berger, obviously modeled on real-life ADA (and novelist) Linda Fairstein, to whom Cornwell dedicates the novel; she's sharply drawn and charismatic. Cornwell will win few if any new fans with this overlong, sluggish offering, but her giant readership is so hardcore and so enamored of Kay that the publisher's first printing of one million seems, if anything, conservative. \$800,000 ad/promo; Literary Guild, Mystery Guild and Doubleday Book Club main selections; national satellite tour; foreign rights sold in the U.K., Germany, Italy, France, Holland, Japan, Finland, Turkey and Spain. (One-day laydown, Oct. 16) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

One of the best books of the Scarpetta series. First one that is not written in the first person and seems to flow better. This one wraps up several things that have happened in previous books. For the most part it concentrates on one part of the story line or person for a short while, then skips to another one very much like the Dan Brown books. I still have no idea how or why chapters are split up like they are. This one seems much faster paced than the previous ones and an easier read.

I started reading the Kay Scarpetta mysteries about a year ago. The first four were good. the next three were OK, but I liked the Kay Scarpetta character. Then things went downhill quickly. In this novel, in order to help new readers (or because she became incredibly lazy) Cornwell recaps the information from the previous novel..not once, not twice, but three times! I have now switched to Kathy Reichs, whose main character, although a bit indecisive in the romance aspect, is on the money regarding forensics (as is Cornwell), is not in love with her own ego, is not independently wealthy and gives only brief explanations or references to past novels.

I liked The Last Precinct written by Patricia Cornwell. As a matter of fact I read it twice by mistake. I had evidently read it the first time it came out and when I saw it listed again I got it. Although parts were really familiar, some I was able to read twice and it was like reading it anew. The character Dr. Kay Scarpetta is a great character. She is many- faceted, with a family of interesting characters and friends. Her scenes are intense and the sinister characters are chilling. Although I might read it

again (hope not as the really familiar scenes will be too much) I would definitely recommend it to anyone. I don't want to forget her detective friend and often pain in the butt, Pete Marino, he could have a book of his own.

This book picks right up from the previous installment, *Black Notice*, so I recommend that you read that one first. The first few chapters are a bit tedious as Kay Scarpetta goes through a lot of introspection from almost being murdered in *Black Notice*. I was hoping for more action and it slowly comes around, but not to the same suspense as the earlier books of the series that made me turn page after page. I think if you are a Scarpetta series fan, you'd like this book, as you've been bringing the history of Kay, Benton, Lucy and Marino along with you. I think many reviewers here are a bit harsh, even though this is not as good as the first few in the series. If you are new to the series, this would probably be a 3 star book.

I walk four miles a day and during this time, I get to listen to my audio books and let me tell you this one is so engrossing and downright entertaining, I can't wait to go on my walk each day just to find out what happens next. Patricia Cornwell has always been a wonderful author but this two series book set, *Black Notice* and *The Last Precinct* have by far been my favorites. Let me tell you, when I knew there was a "sequel" for the *Black Notice* when I was finished I was ecstatic, heck, it was like Christmas came early. You can't describe the wonderful details, Patricia has brought these characters to life and I just can't wait to see what she has to offer me next. Thank you to her for her career choice in making all our lives a little nicer when we get to hang with Kay Scarpetta, Pete Marino, Lucy, and all the rest. "THANK YOU!"

Although I am not a literary critic, I felt compelled to enter some thoughts after reading *The Last Precinct*. I too have read, with relish, every Kay Scarpetta novel Patricia Cornwell has written, and usually long for the next to appear. I could have waited longer for another version. My first distraction was that the novel was written in first person, present tense. It was very uncomfortable reading and I actually had to pull out all her other books to see if I had lost my perspective, but no, this appears to be her first attempt at that writing style. I hated it. Secondly, Cornwell is toying a bit too much for my comfort and enjoyment with the lesbianism theme. I just don't get it and did not like one of my favorite characters wrestling with her sexuality, albeit briefly. Then it just hung there. Finally, I just couldn't buy the entire plot. Come on - that anyone would suspect Kay Scarpetta of such a gruesome murder is ridiculous. The one point I should mention is that at least I did enjoy Marino, as

usual, but a little more so in this novel. A last note. I'm just not sure I would read another Kay Scarpetta. I don't want to ruin her character in my own mind. For what it's worth.

Great read, intrigue and murder. Dr Scarpetta does not fail to hold our interest. Hard to put down as usual

I found this a bit hard to follow at times - never had that happen before in her previous book. But nonetheless, I will be definitely reading the next book in the series. I am addicted to her books

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