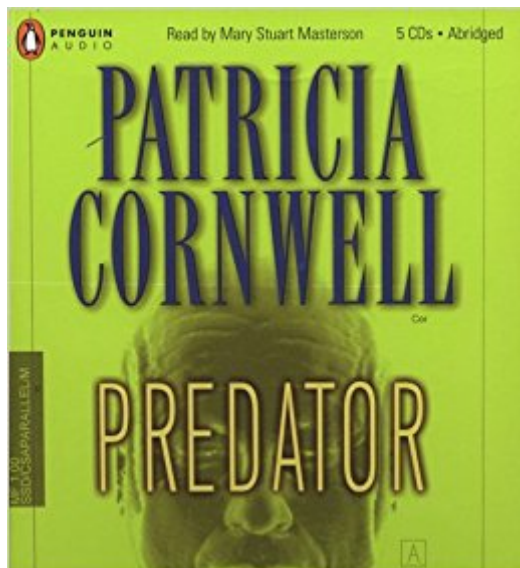


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Predator (A Scarpetta Novel)



Synopsis

The exhilarating new Dr. Kay Scarpetta novel from America's number-one-bestselling crime writer.

Abridged CDs - 5 CDs, 6 hours

Book Information

Series: A Scarpetta Novel

Audio CD

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Average Customer Review: 3.1 out of 5 stars 610 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,003,821 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in Books > Books on CD >

Authors, A-Z > (C) > Cornwell, Patricia #5227 in Books > Books on CD > General #5425

in Books > Books on CD > Mystery & Thrillers

Customer Reviews

It's not often a crime novel offers such a smorgasbord of oddball elements, including autopsy advice, methods of combating tree blight, the use of spiders in sadomasochist torture and couples covering the sexual and psychological waterfronts. There's even a little nasty fun at the expense of television psychoanalysts. With geographic locations switching slightly faster than the speed of sound, it's to Reading's credit that she smoothes out the ultra rumpled excesses of Cornwell's mind-boggling plot and takes full advantage of the yarn's narrator-friendly present tense. Having given voice to several earlier books in the series, she's got the main characters down cold. Her Dr. Kay Scarpetta is all snarky professional reserve and personal insecurity. Self-loathing lesbian niece Lucy, sounds properly troublesome and troubled, with an added catch in the throat due to a secret she's keeping. Pete Marino, the bullet-headed, gym rat security chief of the Lucy-originated National Forensic Academy, sounds so gruff and aggressive, he should be kept on a chain leash. And Scarpetta's innamorato, Benton Wesley, whose study of mass murderers' brain patterns gives the novel its title, is, as his name suggests, the very model of a dry, annoyingly passive-aggressive personality. The joke here-intended or not-is that the novel's protagonists are almost as mentally or emotionally disturbed as its homicidal villains. Cornwell seems to have grown weary of the lot of

them. But there's still a flicker of life left and Reading has the skill to make the most of it. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

• "Sensationally plotted, with a twist at the end that will leave you gasping for breath." • "The Daily Express (U.K.) • "A fine psychological thriller" recalls the work of writers like Minette Walters or Thomas Harris. • "The Denver Post • "[Readers] will find themselves entertained and surprised by the ending." • "The Stuart News/Port St. Lucie News (Stuart, FL) • "There is a steely authority to the prose." • "The Independent (London) • "Cornwell and her original heroine Kay Scarpetta are both back in top form." • "Birmingham Post --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

The first thing that struck me about Predator was how small (short) the book was. Is Ms Cornwell downsizing, or what? This was a short story in comparison to her previous works. It sure doesn't look like it's over 300 pages. As I began reading, I began to wonder who wrote this book. Everything was off: tone, style, characterization. Even as I finished it, I was still not convinced that this was Patricia Cornwell's work. Speaking of characterization.... PC did kinda sorta tone down her rhapsodic deification of Scarpetta that was so cloying in her last novel, Trace. It's still obvious that she's hopelessly in love with her creation, but I found her treatment of Scarpetta to be easier to take in Predator. PC certainly subscribes to the theory that "conflict drives drama." However, the interpersonal conflicts she's created among Scarpetta, Marino, Lucy, and Wesley are approaching a degree of painfulness that's making it all a little hard to take. It would seem to me that a good old murder mystery would be quite enough conflict. In Predator, the murder mystery is virtually eclipsed by all the angst in Scarpetta & Co.

I picked up "Predator," the 14th of the Kay Scarpetta Mysteries written by Patricia Cornwell wondering what wringers the author was going to put her creation through this time. This is because I am convinced that Cornwell does not like her creation, which seems a reasonable explanation as to why Scarpetta wallows in such despair. Her chief medical examiner is now freelancing with the National Forensic Academy in Florida and working on a case regarding the disappearance of four people who appear to have been abducted from their home. Meanwhile, Benton Wesley is interviewing a psychopath as part of the PREDATOR research study in Boston, Pete Marino discovers that a woman who complained about being harassed by a citrus canker inspector has

been murdered, and Lucy is cruising bars in Provincetown. The good news is that there actually is movement on some of the three elements that have defined the recent Scarpetta novels. First, the requisite hack who is out to get Scarpetta actually gets a little of what is coming to them for once and I will tell you right now that is the reason I ended up rounding up on this book was because this finally happened. It was not the completely cathartic comeuppance I have been dreaming of (where my imagination with regards to how such an event should unfold would be more in keeping with that of the subjects of *PREDATOR* than Marino's day dreams). Second, this time Lucy is aware that she is self-destructive and that she is getting involved with somebody with whom she should not be involved from the moment they meet up. Acknowledging you have a problem is the first step to solving it, and while I never expect Lucy or anybody else in these books will ever tame their demons, a half step in the right direction still constitutes movement. Then again, lots of people are suffering in this one because of Lucy's mistake. I am also pleased to report that Scarpetta cooks up another meal relative late in the book (*Risotto alla Sbriggalia*). However, the third and most important part of the formula is still firmly entrenched. This is the one that declares whatever cases Scarpetta, Lucy, Marino and Benton are working on they are all related and just one giant case. Of course they are all preoccupied with their own cases and there is a snow storm to contend with as well, but the main problem this time is that neither Lucy nor Marino are currently talking to Scarpetta, for different reasons, and we know full well that Scarpetta and Benton have a hard time having a meaningful conversation about anything other than dead bodies. This is such a small, small world that has been created here that you would think the characters would have noticed every serial killer (sorry, Benton, I meant compulsive murderer) in the nation is after one or more of them. There is nothing in *"Predator"* to convince Cornwell's dwindling fan base that she is not simply going through the motions. Scarpetta's forensic knowledge, which was pivotal in the earlier books in the series, has now become tangential. It used to be that her exhaustive examination of a corpse and crime scene was crucial to catching the killer, but in this book the most rigorous forensic examination Scarpetta undertakes consists not of looking at a body but at photographs on a computer disc and the conclusion that she reaches has nothing to do with the resolution of the case at the heart of the novel although she does put the key piece of evidence in front of the right person at the conveniently perfect moment. Beyond that, Cornwell teases us in the final chapter by hinting at a future autopsy that would be the basis for making a rather interesting argument in court as to how a suicide would be a murder. Actually, Scarpetta talks about making another case against long odds to stand up in court in that final chapter that would be interesting to see played out as well. Unfortunately, I have no reasonable hopes that Cornwell would write a novel that included those

stories and get back to the strengths of her character and her mysteries. I will continue to read these books for the simple reason that I find doing this ongoing postmortem on this series to be painfully ironic, which is really not as much fun as it sounds.

Patricia Cornwell remains to be one of my favorite authors. However, lately, I have not been impressed with the Kay Scarpetta series. I wasn't thrilled about this whole "werewolf" serial killer storyline. Despite the bad reviews in .com on Predator, I was thrilled to learned that there would be no mentions of the werewolf. I thought Predator was a fresh change. However, it is not without faults. First of all, Pete Marino...ugh! He needs to go. I've never liked him. He's just rude and brash. I hope that Cornwell will kill him off without any chance of resurrecting him like she did with Benton. Lucy is also getting to be a PITA. She's a good character but she's withdrawing to the point where nothing is shared about her. And that is getting boring. She's been like that the past 3 or 4 books. The story starts out interesting. However, in the last 1/4 of the book, the story starts to become a bit complicated where I had to go back and re-read a couple of chapters twice. Here's what's going on: Kay, Lucy and Pete are in Florida, working for the National Forensic Academy. The NFA was founded by Lucy. They currently have an intern, Joe Amos, that no one can tolerate, especially Scarpetta. However, unline Marino, she remains professional. Benton Wesley is up in Massachusetts, studying and testing the brain patterns of violent perpetrators. (He avoids the term "serial killer".) One of his patients is Basil Jenrette. There's a series of murders in southern Florida that seem to echo Basil's previous murders. Therefore, all the characters are working together on these cases. Meanwhile, Lucy is contemplating her one-night stand with Stevie. Plus, she has a health issue to worry about. Marino chews out just about everyone, especially with a local police detective, Reba. Benton and Kay are on the rocks about their relationship. Bottom line, this isn't one of the impressive works by Cornwell. So, yeah, I was disappointed, especially how the story ended.

Patricia Cornwell's original writing style was much more engaging. Regrettably I will not be purchasing further books as this has become her new style.

Predator is scrambled words, not multiple thread lines that weave around and through each other. Not my favorite Scarpetta book.

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