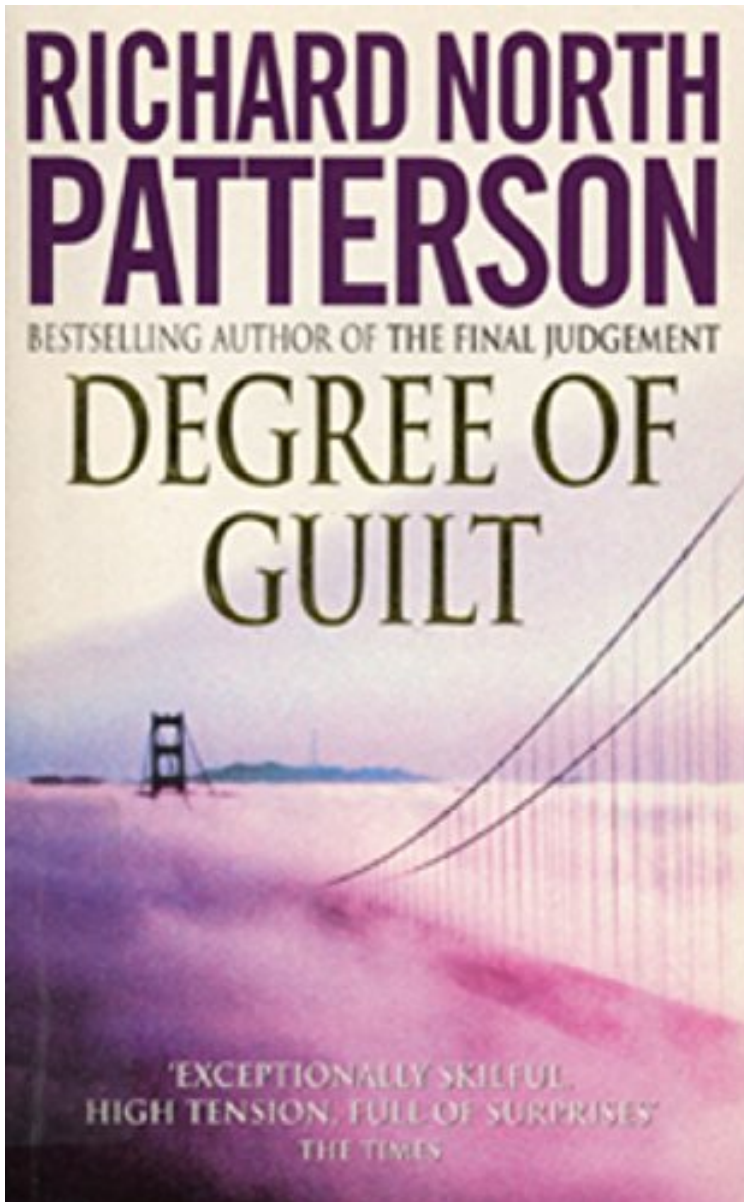


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Degree Of Guilt



*Par Richard North Patterson
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Description : Description du produit"One intense courtroom clash after another...An intelligent and gripping thriller."THE WASHINGTON POSTMary Carelli, one of the most powerful women in TV journalism, is charged with the murder of Mark Ransom, America's most eminent novelist. Her attorney, Christopher Paget, sets out to shock the courtroom with revelations about Ransom as a twisted sexual predator. But as the trial unfolds, it is Paget who will be surprised...by Mary's secret motive for murder...by evidence that Mary is lying by a woman prosecutor who believes Mary invented the story of rape...and by an enigmatic judge with an agenda of her own....A Main Selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club

Prsentation de l'diteurChristopher Paget is a trial lawyer with a famous past: as a young investigator in

Washington he unearthed a scandal that brought ruin to the President - and an abrupt end to his affair with journalist Mary Carelli. Now, fifteen years later, Carelli is a famous TV journalist in New York and Paget is

leading a relatively tranquil life raising their son in San Francisco. Until a charge of murder changes everything. The victim - a world famous (and infamous) novelist. The accused - Mary Carelli. When Paget agrees to defend her, largely for the sake of their son, her claims of attempted rape and self-defence seem water-tight. But gradually secrets from her past come to light and Paget is suddenly facing an explosive mix of public trial and personal conflict leaving his own and his son's fates vulnerable and exposed..com

The core of Richard North Patterson's legal thrillers is characterization, and *Degree of Guilt*, the novel that relaunched his career in 1993, features two captivating individuals: Christopher Paget and Mary Carelli. Paget, the upstart hero of Patterson's 1979 Edgar-winning *The Lasko Tangent*, is now a sophisticated trial lawyer doing

his best to raise a teenage son in San Francisco. He's a man to be admired: famous for bringing down the president in a financial scandal, he has settled into the comfortable life of a successful attorney. His life is transformed, however, when his former lover (and mother of his son), Mary Carelli, pays a visit. The novel begins in a San Francisco hotel room as Mary, now an NBC journalist, surveys the torn landscape of author

Mark Ransom's apartment. Ransom is, or was, America's most eminent writer. As she tells the police, Ransom had uncovered new recorded evidence of an affair between a long-dead starlet and a now-sainted senator (shades of Marilyn Monroe and JFK). While Ransom and Mary were listening to the tapes, she claims, he tried to rape her and she killed him in self-defense. Mary turns to Paget to defend her in what becomes a complex case of missing and conflicting evidence. Old emotions are stirred between the two just as Paget begins to doubt Mary's innocence. The suspense of *Degree of Guilt* is grounded in the twists and turns of the trial at the novel's center, but just as compelling is the emerging history of Mary and Paget, and Paget's struggles to keep his son out of the media frenzy surrounding his mother's case. As well, Patterson addresses the deeper ethical questions that face many lawyers as they decide which cases to take and which evidence to use. Capturing archetypal characters and situations, *Degree of Guilt* becomes a parable of

American law. --Patrick O'KelleyFrom Publishers WeeklyThis big courtroom thriller, which comes garlanded with hefty foreign sales and a huge first printing, is being touted as the best of its kind since Scott Turow's fiction debut. It does not survive such a comparison well, having none of the density, psychological acuity or sense of place and character of Turow's two bestsellers. It is an agreeable, overstuffed and creakily plotted but absorbing piece of work that passes the time well enough and leaves no aftertaste whatsoever.

The hero is Christopher Paget, who had an affair with TV newswoman Mary Carelli many years ago when both were involved in a Washington scandal; he is now an ace defense attorney in San Francisco. Carelli has killed obnoxious, world-famous novelist Mark Ransom in a hotel room, claiming that he tried to rape her.

Can Paget defend her, in view of their shared past, and the fact that she seems to be the mother of his only son? And why is so much of what she says about the would-be rape so plainly untrue? Patterson takes more than 500 pages--including often skillfully handled court scenes before a nicely characterized woman judge, and the discoveries of a lot of highly emotional old tapes, all involving the same Beverly Hills psychiatrist with several principal characters--before the issue is resolved. Along the way there are subplots galore,

involving an evil Kennedy-type senator with a Monroe look-alike ; a tragic lesbian movie queen ; Paget's pretty assistant's unhappy home life ; a shamelessly hokey climactic basketball game ; and ultimate political skulduggery by the DA. Patterson does his best to keep it all moving, and some court scenes tingle. But the characters, and many situations, are pure California cardboard. 250,000 first printing; BOMC main selection.

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