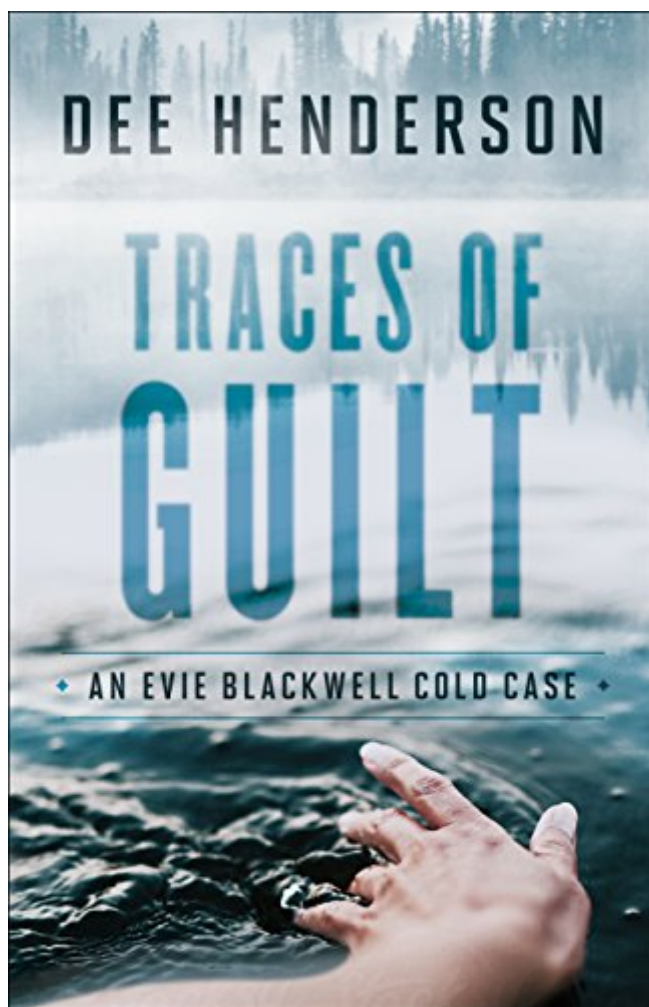


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Traces Of Guilt (An Evie Blackwell Cold Case)



Synopsis

A Riveting Cold-Case Mystery from Dee Henderson

Evie Blackwell loves her life as an Illinois State Police detective . . . mostly. She's very skilled at investigations and has steadily moved up through the ranks. She would like to find Mr. Right, but she has a hard time imagining how marriage could work, considering the demands of her job. Gabriel Thane is a lifetime resident of Carin County and now its sheriff, a job he loves. Gabe is committed to upholding the law and cares deeply for the residents he's sworn to protect. He too would like to find a lifetime companion, a marriage like his parents have. When Evie arrives in Carin, Illinois, it's to help launch a new task force dedicated to reexamining unsolved crimes across the state. Spearheading this trial run, Evie will work with the sheriff's department on a couple of its most troubling missing-persons cases. As she reexamines old evidence to pull out a few tenuous new leads, she unearths a surprising connection . . . possibly to a third cold case. Evie's determined to solve the cases before she leaves Carin County, and Sheriff Thane, along with his family, will be key to those answers.

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Customer Reviews

If you pick up *Traces of Guilt* looking for a romantic suspense, there's a possibility you will be disappointed with this latest release from Dee Henderson. On the other hand, if you enjoy the intellectual exercise of solving the unsolvable via good, old-fashioned detective work, then this could be right up your alley, because Carin County has two baffling cold cases that Evie Blackwell is determined to finally lay to rest. The first case involves the disappearance of a six-year-old girl, Ashley Dayton, who went missing thirteen years ago when her family stopped in Carin County on vacation. The second case involves the Florist family, a case close to the hearts of many in Carin County, particularly the Sheriff's Department. Deputy Sheriff Scott Florist, his wife, and his eleven-year-old son left on a camping trip twelve years ago and never arrived at their destination. Neither their bodies, nor their truck and campervan, were ever found. It's as though they just vanished into thin air. Gabriel Thane is the Sheriff of Carin County, like his father before him, and keen to do all he can to help Evie, but he doesn't hold out much hope of success. As a long-time friend of the Thane family, Ann Falcon (from *Full Disclosure*) has also come to Carin County to assist Evie, and it turns out she may hold the key to solving one of these cases. However it is information that will deeply impact the Thane family, revealing a disturbing truth about another young girl who grew up in their community; a young girl who was Joshua Thane's best friend, and who is about to return to Carin County on a heartbreaking mission of her own.

Illinois State Police Detective Evie Blackwell arrives in Carin, Illinois, for a working vacation. As a potential member of the state's new task force focused on solving previously unsolved cases, she has her eye on several crimes that have left local enforcement officers completely stumped. Carin County sheriff Gabriel Thane soon finds himself with an ambitious detective ready to dive into the community's past, even as families of victims are hoping to finally receive resolution on cases that have shaken their hometowns. With the help of Gabriel and his brothers, Evie soon discovers that several missing person cases may be intertwined as new evidence surfaces from unexpected places. Ms. Henderson returns with this captivating novel that introduces an entirely new cast of characters, while also featuring a few old friends from her previous books. One can only hope that *Traces of Guilt* serves as only the first of many stories featuring Evie Blackwell and her incredible detective skills. Overall, I very much enjoyed reading *Traces of Guilt*. Ms. Henderson consistently produces some of the best Christian suspense novels in the genre and this novel is no exception. While her previous works have primarily taken place in and around Chicago, *Traces of Guilt* offers a more rural setting. Likewise, Evie Blackwell's focus on cold cases presents a different type of story for Ms. Henderson's fans, even as it continues to build upon characters

and themes that have become essential elements of her previous works. In contrast to Ms. Henderson's most recent novels, *Traces of Guilt* also follows a larger cast of characters and relationships, which are designed in such a way that they require a multi-book series to fully develop.

One major thing stopped *Traces of Guilt* from being a very good, though surprisingly dark, suspense mystery novel is Henderson's penchant to tell, not show, characterization through the sermonizing of other characters. This book is long, and about 1/3 of it could have been trimmed down if Ann, one of the characters, had a few less sermons disguised as conversations, and a little more of what she was telling us characters were feeling had been woven into that character's actions and feelings instead. Henderson wants us to feel the pain that Grace and Karen feel, but because most of their development is told through the mouth of Ann or another character, they just feel like dead weight in a book that starts to plod 1/3 of the way in. After only the second pages-long Ann discussion, I knew that my liking of the book would be in fits and starts, much like the development of the main mystery. I was pleasantly surprised, though, that while the blurb indicates romance between Evie and Gabriel, there really isn't any. The book ends with them as friends, and nothing else, though they both consider what it would be like to be together. The content in this book means that even Henderson's attempts at romance don't mesh very well or perhaps it's just the writing style that makes everything seem stilted. I'm a bit confused as to why some of the questions raised in the Florist family case never got resolved. Who killed Frank Ash? Was Grace's uncle's death really a hunting accident? Maybe Henderson's point was that some questions are bound to remain unsolved, but in a mystery novel where the characters spend a lot of time thinking about these questions, it feels strange just to leave them unanswered. Or maybe I like a bit more resolution for my questions.

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