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Green River, Running Red: The Real Story Of The Green River Killer--America's Deadliest Serial Murderer



Synopsis

In the most extraordinary book Ann Rule has ever undertaken, America's master of true crime has spent more than two decades researching the story of the Green River Killer, who murdered more than forty-nine young women. The quest to discover the most prolific serial killer in American history has been an intimate part of Ann Rule's life, with some of the corpses found only a mile or so from where she lived and raised her own daughters. She did not know the killer, but he apparently knew her and attended many of her book signings. For twenty-one years, the killer carried out his self-described "career" as a killing machine, ridding the world of women he considered evil. His eerie ability to lure his victims to their deaths and hide their bodies made him far more dangerous than any infamous multiple murderer in the annals of crime. A few men -- including a law student, a truck painter, and a taxi driver -- eventually emerged as the prime suspects among an unprecedented forty thousand scrutinized by the Green River Task Force. Still, there was no physical evidence linking any of them to the murders until 2001, when investigators used a new DNA process on a saliva sample they had preserved since 1987, with stunning results. Ann Rule has followed the case since July 1982, when the first body -- that of teenager Wendy Lee Coffield -- was found in the Green River, snagged on pilings under a bridge. Rule has compiled voluminous files, working through an incredible 95,000 pages of official police records, transcripts, photographs, and maps, winnowing out the chaff and identifying what is truly important. Over the years, she gained unparalleled access to all the key players -- from King County Sheriff Dave Reichert to those close to the killer and his victims. When finally apprehended and convicted, the killer made a detailed confession -- of his twisted sexual obsessions -- that will shock even the most jaded reader. *Green River, Running Red* is a harrowing account of a modern monster, a killer who walked among us undetected. It is also the story of his quarry -- of who these young girls were, and who they might have become. A chilling look at the darkest side of human nature, this is the most important and most personal book of Ann Rule's long career.

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Customer Reviews

Ann Rule waited 20 years to write this book, until the GRK was caught, and it was well worth the wait. The first half of the book is devoted to the victims: desperate women, many of them drug addicts and/or emotionally fragile, most of them uneducated and living on the fringes of society. She draws sensitive, compelling portraits of these young women, too many of them still in their teens, living a hard existence. They had families, children in some cases, and friends who loved and cared for them. They weren't just faceless nobodies, walking the streets, not caring about themselves and their families. Many of them wanted to escape the life they were living, but could see no way out. These poor, victimized women are worthy of the reader's attention not just as some kind of object lesson, but as human beings engaged in a very real tragic struggle. The victims also offer some insight into the nature of their killer: a marginalized, banal little man who got his kicks murdering defenseless women desperate enough to get into a vehicle with a total stranger on the mere promise of 30 or 40 dollars. Ann Rule introduces us to him slowly at first with brief snapshot-like depictions of his childhood and early adult years. Then in the second half of the book, readers come face to face with this meaningless individual whose primary interest in life (aside from murder) was collecting and hoarding other people's junk. He is, it turns out, no fiendish genius, no Hannibal Lecter, just an inconsequential man who hates women and can only feel important when he is taking someone's life. I cannot even imagine how the law enforcement officers charged with interrogating him could stand to be in the same room with him.

Having written such true crime standards as "The Stranger Beside Me" and "Small Sacrifices," Ann

Rule long ago established herself as one of the brightest stars of her genre. Her best work shines in its detail, moves along quickly, and reads almost like fiction rather than cold fact. In "Green River Running Red," though, Rule takes her eye off the ball and spends less time (a LOT less time) telling us about Green River Killer Gary Ridgeway than about his dozens of victims. Yes, it's a noble cause to give these young women an identity beyond 'known prostitute' or 'Jane Doe #4.' But in spending literally hundreds of pages on mini biographies, Rule can't help but make them seem, well, boring. As reported in 'Green River Running Red,' there's a downbeat, dreary sameness to the lives of the killer's victims. They have, for the most part, unhappy childhoods and incapable parents. They become estranged from their families. They drop out of school. They get into drugs. They hang out with losers and, eventually, fall into prostitution. They're busted a few times. They live in motels. Finally, they meet Gary Ridgeway, and their sad lives come to an abrupt, violent end. Wading through hundreds of pages of "She was a beautiful, intelligent, well-liked girl," you get the feeling that Rule isn't giving you much credit. After all, these women don't HAVE to have been beautiful or well-liked for their lives to have had value. If we have any humanity at all, we're already on their side, and we're horrified by Gary Ridgeway. In spending SO much time telling the victims' stories, Rule simultaneously sugarcoats their lives and underestimates her readers.

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