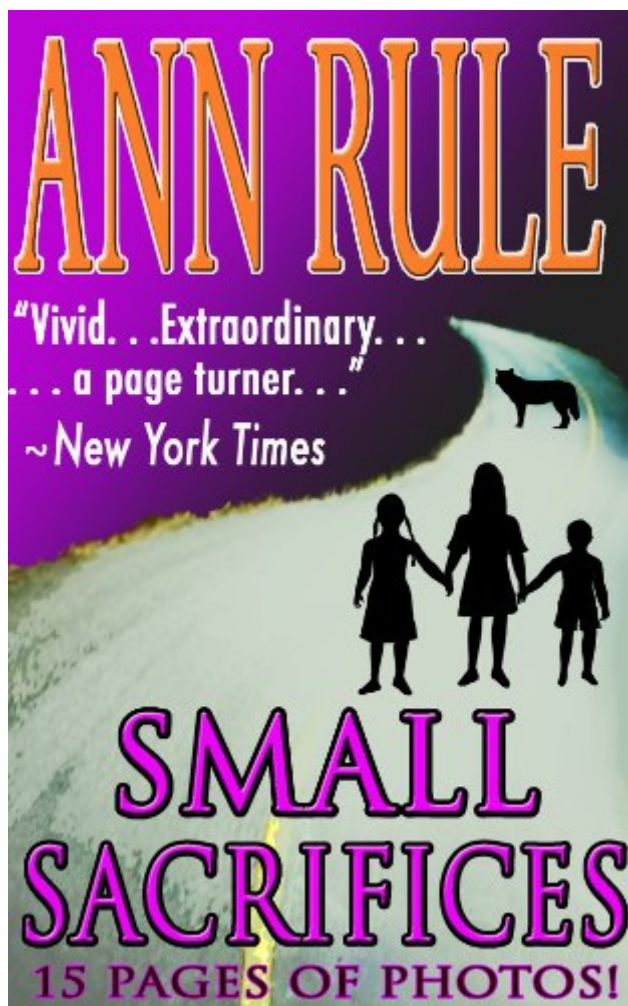


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Small Sacrifices



Synopsis

When Diane Downs and her three children were shot on a quiet, country road, residents of Springfield, Oregon, were frightened. A bushy haired stranger had flagged down their car, Diane told police, as she described how the man had coldly opened fire on her sleeping children. Despite the fact she was shot, too, the young mother managed to drive to the hospital in time to save all but one child. But something about her story was fishy, and detectives began to suspect Diane was lying. Was it possible that she was the shooter? Absolutely not, her supporters insisted. Diane, they said, adored her children. When investigators suggested a motive, Diane was indignant. Not only would she never harm her own children, she certainly would never do it for the reason detectives suggested. Was the attractive blonde the wonderful mother she claimed to be? Or was she a woman so obsessed, she would kill her own young to achieve her goal? Ann Rule's critically acclaimed *SMALL SACRIFICES*, was an instant bestseller, and later Farrah Fawcett was nominated for an Emmy for her portrayal of Downs in the TV miniseries based on Rule's book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Small Sacrifices" was written over twenty years ago and it remains one of the greatest true crime stories of all time. Ann Rule is a first class writer. She is so well known for her true crime books that it's easy to forget that her writing- her writing style- is very fine indeed, full of elegant descriptions of the Pacific northwest that she knows so well, remarkable insights of the players on her stage and heavily flavored with almost unbearable suspense. The research required to pen "Small Sacrifices," which took three years to write, was staggering. The book is just as topical today as it was when it was written, and the tragic saga of one woman's unspeakable crime will forever tear at the reader's heartstrings. Diane Downs shot all three of her children in the car and then dawdled along on the way to the hospital, giving the children time to die. Her little girl Cheryl died at almost once, "death so close behind her it could whisper in her ear" while Christie and Danny were heroically saved by the medical personnel at the hospital emergency ward, but both children were severely handicapped. Christie was so traumatized she sustained a stroke even though she was only 8 years old. She hovered "as tentatively as a butterfly's wings" at death's door before the team of frantically working doctors brought her back from the abyss. Little Danny at only three years old was shot in the spine and will be paralyzed for life from the waist down, but the heroic efforts of the doctors saved his life. Diane concocted a story of a bushy haired man who suddenly appeared in the street ahead of her car and demanded the car, then shot all three children, a tale that did not convince the police assigned to her case. Diane shot herself in the arm after shooting Cheryl, seven, Christie, eight, and Danny, three, at point blank range. Of course the invented story made no sense at all. Why would a gunman shoot three small children and not kill Diane who could identify him? Diane wanted to get rid of the children because her married boyfriend Lew didn't want kids. The children, of course, are the "small sacrifices". A year after the shooting Diane was finally indicted and brought to trial. As always, Rule is a hands-on writer and she sat perhaps two feet from Diane during much of the trial. She can describe how Diane at one point along with the people in the courtroom was listening to "Hungry Like a Wolf" the song that had been playing in her car when Diane shot her children. Diane sat there at the side of her lawyer, merrily snapping her fingers and juggling her leg in time to the music, apparently oblivious she was on trial for murder. While her little girl, Christie, who barely survived being shot in the chest twice, was on the witness stand the courtroom was eerily silent, hushed, almost frozen with horror. The little girl had one paralyzed arm and her speech was halting but she named her own mother as the shooter and the killer of her little sister. Up there on the witness stand she struggled with her emotions and practically everyone in the courtroom except Diane was in tears. Rule described Diane's strange yellow or green eyes and her inappropriate laughter. There is something extremely discordant about Diane Downs. Rule delves

deeply into the psyche of Diane Downs. Diane had lamented over her unhappy childhood and abuse by her father. But most children who are abused do not become killers. Diane is thought to have three serious personality disorders: narcissism, histrionic disorder and she's a sociopath. Like her soul mate Ted Bundy, she is always on stage and the center of that stage. She cares absolutely nothing about anybody, and her obsession with Lew, the married man she shot her children for, is just that: an obsession. Diane believes that people exist to serve her without her giving anything in return. She is and was an empty shell devoid of sympathy, empathy and love. The only love she is capable of is for herself and she has no conscience. Like all sociopaths, she's an accomplished liar. An empty shell. Ann Rule keeps you reading her page-turner, gasping at the horror and you may even shed a tear or two over those children, wounded so long ago by their own mother. The evil in Diane is balanced by the good of people involved in the case: the doctors who struggled to save the children's lives, the detectives who labored on the case, the Slaven family who cared for the children during the trial, and especially the prosecuting attorney, Fred Hugi, who adopted Christie and Danny after Diane was convicted and sent to jail, brought them up with love and sent them to college. (Christie is now married and has a baby boy of her own. Danny, although in a wheelchair, is a cheerful, successful computer whiz). Diane, Rule emphasizes, is not insane because a psychosis (insanity) can be treated by therapy and medication and can be reversed. There is hope for an insane person, but the sociopath will never change. He bears the mark of Cain which will brand him for life. You could almost say that the tattoo of a rose Diane has on her shoulder is the mark of Cain.

This book was exceptionally well written!!! It delved into the mind of Diane Downs in a way that made her very easy to understand. I've often wondered how the two children who survived the tragedy inflicted on them by their mother are doing. I was so glad to hear that they had been taken in by a family who cared about them and weren't afraid of dealing with their disabilities. This book brings home the truth that some women will actually abandon or even go so far as to kill their children in order to be with a man they profess to love. If you look close at all the sketches Diane Downs had drawn by the sketch artist, you will see the sketches look almost just like her. The Oregon State Crime Lab and Jim Pex did so much work on this case, and no one could put it into words better than Ann Rule. Her books are the most accurate recounts of police investigations you could ever read. Her books just are hard to put down once you start reading them. I highly recommend this book and any other books by Ann Rule to anyone who enjoys true crime books.

Truly an excellent read for those who are interested in true crime. This true crime story takes place

in the Great Northwest (Oregon). Without going into too much detail, this story concerns the murder and attempted murder of three small children...this by their own mother. This book describes the crime in detail along with the follow-up police investigation and criminal trial outcome. The Author, Ann Rule, is a true professional when it comes to writing about true crime. As with all of her books, this book delves into the actual Killer's psyche. The question is, and will always remain, why?.....why was the crime committed? In order to come to a conclusion to the question, the reader will be provided a psychological profile of the Killer herself. The book includes actual photos of some of the police personnel involved and also includes actual photos of the children, their mother, and of the crime scene. Photos are not graphic.

This is the first Ann Rule book I've read and it was excellent! I read it in a day and a half. Her writing is easy to read (with the exception of the repeated use of the word "fecund" which I had to look up - just say fertile!). She is very clear and thorough and you definitely feel like you were there. Diane Downs is a mentally ill, narcissist who is exactly where she belongs. I would absolutely recommend this to anyone who enjoys true crime.

If your into true crime then this is a book to read. Ann Rule is a great author and really knows how to get the story line across. Matter of fact all of her books are a great read. I remember when this did happen here in Oregon state. I saw a lot about this on the news. Then saw the movie. The book seems to bring to light a lot more of the actual story than the movie did. I would recommend the read.

I have not read anything by Ann Rule before. I expected a simple narrative gleaned from journalistic sources, a few facts and a number of quotes from court records. I looked at the reviews before purchase and saw that a number of readers had said that they were not able to put down the book. I was quite astounded by the book. I felt that I got to know everyone associated with the case. At times I had to remind myself that this was not a novel, but it was a book by someone who was in the Court Room and who interviewed those involved. Ann Rule has then crafted her notes into a narrative that looks at the motivations of each person and put's there differing perspectives. I to found it difficult to put down the book and a number of times suffered at work the next day as I read late into the night. I really enjoyed this book. Well done Ann Rule.

This story was ok but the book was not very well written. Then I looked and she has a ton of books,

so I guess not much time spent cleaning up syntax and the confusion of pronouns and vague characters may be par for the course. I know I won't be purchasing anymore of her work. I only got this one as the story is set in a town I used to live in!

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