



A Stranger in the Family: A True Story of Murder, Madness, and Unconditional Love

Steven Naifeh , Gregory White Smith

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Who would ever connect this handsome, charming, straight-arrow son of a perfect all-American family with the gruesome crimes of a serial killer? Richard Daniel Starrett was the dangerous visitor for too many unlucky young women in Georgia and South Carolina in the late 1980s. Answering "for sale" ads in the classifieds, he was a buyer hunting for victims, not bargains, and he paid in grim coin: rape, kidnapping, murder.

Because of his articulate intelligence and prestigious job, no one suspected this "golden boy" of such heinous acts. This gripping, intimately detailed account by Pulitzer Prize-winning authors probes every tortured thought and twisted urge of a "boy-next-door murderer"--as well as the dynamics of the model family that shaped him. The result is both a stunning portrait of a diseased mind and the moving story of a loving family's emotional nightmare and painful disintegration.

A Stranger in the Family: A True Story of Murder, Madness, and Unconditional Love Details

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From Reader Review A Stranger in the Family: A True Story of Murder, Madness, and Unconditional Love for online ebook

Maureen says

The only reason I read this book was because a friend of mine was one of Danny Starrett's defense attorneys in this case, and I had heard about it for years before the book came out. From the outside, Starrett looked like a regular guy. He had a wife and child, and worked as a nuclear engineer at the DOD's Savannah River facility. Starrett was first discovered to be a serial rapist, and finally discovered to have killed one of his victims. A portion of the book consists of alternating chapters written from the perspective of Danny and his mother. In Mom's chapters, Danny is a happy little boy, who got hit on the head a couple of times, but always kept his room neat and never gave her any trouble. His chapters revolve his discovery of a cache of pornography and bondage magazines as a prepubescent, stealing "naughty books" from a neighbor's house, and buying his first VCR, which he describes as "a big mistake." This book is interesting enough for a rainy day read, and written well enough to sustain the reader's interest.

Stephanie Tuell says

Not a big fan of this book. For one, he killed one person, that doesn't make him a serial killer. And for 2, it doesn't tell us what happens to him in the end, with Danny, his mother, or his wife and daughter.

Ronnie Cramer says

A fascinating case (a seemingly normal young family man turns out to be a serial criminal), but this book is mostly about the mother of the offender, and while she's portrayed as a 'steel-willed' 'warrior' with unwavering loyalty, she's really quite annoying, and most certainly in denial (after her son's third conviction she still has the gall to say, 'Danny is basically a good boy'). When her daughter-in-law justifiably seeks a divorce from this now-notorious husband, the mother sees it as 'an attack' on her son. The killer's psychiatrist/advocate is nearly as delusional, arguing that the offender isn't a 'classic rapist' because 'he didn't beat the women he kidnapped, he didn't whip them, he didn't mutilate them,' a distinction that is no doubt very comforting to the numerous young women he assaulted. The mother (and worse yet, the authors) seem to think that she and her rapist/murderer son are the victims in this sorry saga.

Infantina Nivetha says

This book can be read to understand the mentality of the serial rapists. After reading, I googled about the man who committed these crimes. I was shocked to see his innocent face even today . He already had a wife

and a daughter when he did the crimes. He had a well paying job and he came from a very decent background. Why he killed a particular brave girl who loved him even after he kidnapped her is not explicit! Why the girl went with him after knowing he is a kidnapper is not evident. He though gives a reason, it is not solid proof. What does the man really want? It made me wonder after reading his sick acts.

Sex was not talked openly in his family as he himself says that is why he was curious since childhood. Though the answer is obvious but he had a brother who was righteous. May be. We can't tell. He must have at least thought about his two sisters and his mother especially his daughter before doing the crimes and trying to ruin young girls lives. Men like him must be punished severely for crimes heinous as these. Even though he didn't kill the other girls but still daringly doing the crimes thinking he will escape explains his stupidity. Some evil men's crimes are increasing day by day, we need to be careful who our girl children are talking to. If we read the newspapers, there are rapists who rape even a baby. It is a true fact. Our girl children and also our boy children need to be protected and we must make sure to guard them against bastards such as this man.

Angela Blanco says

This book was good, but it just was not quite what I was hoping. They spent too much time covering what Danny was thinking rather than what was actually happening. It was more about what the lawyers and doctors were saying than the actual court case. I may choose to read it again, but this book by far is not one of the best that I have read.

J.H. Moncrieff says

Starts off strong, but gets too long-winded and repetitive in the last third. Including all of Richard Starrett's accounts of his crimes twice - once normally and once as he claimed to have a second personality - was unnecessary.

Ryan Sanders says

I've had this book on my shelf for a decade now and I finally got around to reading it. Now I can't understand why I never read it sooner. This true account of the Starret family's ordeal during Richard Daniel Starret's trial is riveting, compelling, and most importantly, true. It delves deep into the delusional crevices of a man driven mad by the machinations and compulsions of his own twisted reality and slowly throughout the course of the novel you see him spiraling further and further into his own hallucinations, beliefs, and theories. If you want to get inside the mind of a deeply disturbed individual this is the book for you. Beware though, if you're like me and have a weak stomach when it comes to the abuse of adolescents you may find this book difficult to digest, but once you disassociate yourself from the subject material a little bit you'll find one of the most well-written accounts of the criminally insane ever conceived. If I could give this six stars I would, but alas, I cannot. So five stars and accolades are all I can offer. If you own this novel, don't be like me and let it collect dust for a decade. Open it up and immerse yourself in it. If you don't own it, then what

are you waitin for? Buy it! It will be well worth your time.

Alyson says

Very interesting.

Lauren says

This got really good in the final third, when the questions about Starrett's sanity and his family become really conflicted. I wish the entire book had been like it. That said, it's a fine true crime book with a great deal of insider info.

Rebecca Corrow says

I thought the book was very well written. You never fully know someone. Denial. Denial, and more denial is dangerous and can lead to delusions. By the end of the book I felt sorry for the main guy.

Louise says

Very good typical true crime!

From back cover:

"Who would ever connect this handsome, charming, straight-arrow son of a perfect all-American family with the gruesome crimes of a serial killer? Richard Daniel Starrett was the dangerous visitor for too many unlucky young women in Georgia and South Carolina in the late 1980's. Answering "for sale" ads in the classifieds, he was a buyer hunting for victims, not bargains, and he paid in grim coin: rape, kidnapping, murder.

Because of his articulate intelligence and prestigious job, no one suspected this "golden boy" of such heinous acts...until, after a nationwide manhunt, the police finally caught Danny Starrett. This gripping, intimately detailed account by Pulitzer Prize-winning authors probes every tortured thought and twisted urge of a "boy-next-door murderer"-as well as the dynamics of the model family that shaped him. The result is both a stunning portrait of a diseased mind and the moving story of a loving family's emotional nightmare and painful disintegration."

Lenny says

Danny Starrett. A typical all American kid or so everyone thought.

Peacegal says

R.D. Starrett's case seems to be one for the "nature" rather than "nurture" theory of violent crime. By his own admission, he was raised in an "Ozzie and Harriet" family environment. Still, he grew up to become a violent sociopath who kidnapped women he found selling items through classified ads.

Even though the authors had a penchant for puns and cheesy lines, the writing was better than average in a genre not known for boasting many stellar authors.

I did think the book relied a bit too heavily on excerpts from the convicted man's journals. He was highly intelligent, no doubt, and the passages occasionally served up some dark humor (a serial kidnapper/rapist/murderer extolling Reagan and Bush as "tough on crime"). However, Starrett's motives in writing and releasing these journals were abundantly clear: he was trying to escape punishment, pinning his awful crimes on an evil double personality. In the crime reporting genre, it's a fine line between exploring the psychology of the murderer and making a celebrity out of them.

Laura Kenny says

I'm sorry, I am half way through this book and am struggling to finish it...is the book about the "beloved son" Danny....or about his mother??? Seems to be more about Gerry rather than the actual criminal...would no recommend. Poorly written

Jarrett Simonds says

This "man" abducted, raped, and murdered one of my best friends from High School. the book is well written, and details the "man" in a way that few of us as teenagers realized people could actually exist. We grew up in a very secluded, protected, and privileged suburb of Columbia, SC. This man terrorized and traumatized many in our community by his acts and the lack of ability to capture him.

I enjoyed reading this book, for it gave me insight into this "person" who stole from me a person I loved and cared about.

GREAT READ!
