



## **Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein, the Original "Psycho"**

*Harold Schechter*

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**Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein, the Original "Psycho" Harold Schechter Murder Was the Least of His Crimes...**

The truth behind the twisted crimes that inspired the films *Psycho*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, and *The Silence of the Lambs*...

From Harold Schechter, "America's principle chronicler of its greatest psychopathic killers" (*The Boston Book Review*), comes the definitive account of Ed Gein, whose ghoulish crimes stunned an unsuspecting nation.

The year is 1957. Photographs would show him across the country: a slight, Midwestern man with a twisted little smile, a man who had lived for ten years in his own world of murder and depravity.

Here is the grisly true story of Ed Gein, the killer whose fiendish fantasies inspired Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho"—the mild-mannered farmhand bound to his domineering mother, driven into a series of gruesome and bizarre acts beyond all imagining. In chilling detail, *Deviant* explores the incredible career of one of the most twisted madmen in the annals of American crime—and how he turned a small Wisconsin farmhouse into his own private playground of ghoulishness and blood.

**From the Heartland of America comes a true story more horrifying than any movie or novel...Harold Schechter's acclaimed true-crime chronicle...**

**DEVIANT**

## Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein, the Original "Psycho" Details

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Author : Harold Schechter

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# From Reader Review *Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein, the Original "Psycho"* for online ebook

## Kim says

This book was originally recommended to me by a psychiatrist I worked with when I worked in mental health. It's the story about the original psychotic killer, Ed Gein, the basis for "Psycho" and "Silence of the Lambs"'s Buffalo Bill. I've actually read the same author's book on the serial killer H.H. Holmes so I expected it to be pretty good.

I wasn't disappointed. This was generally an excellent telling of Ed Gein's life, his crimes, and the public revelations of those crimes. My only real criticism of the book is that it shows its age a bit (it was written in 1989) in dealing with subjects such as transvestism, gender confusion, and some psychological details. It's fairly obvious the author isn't an expert in psychology because he uses some really doubtful quotes and psychological interpretations in places. For example there's a point where he seems to refer to Kraft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* as a reliable source of information whereas anyone who's read it knows that's a joke. (Kraft-Ebing considered masturbation a sign of sexual deviance, for example.)

Beyond that, though, I'd say this is probably the book to read if you're interested in learned about the fascinating story of Ed Gein. What I take away from this, as a former mental health professional, is that Ed Gein was something of a "perfect storm" of innate and genetic schizophrenia, extreme childhood abuse (physical and mental, but most relevant is the mental), isolation, and suggestibility. Thankfully these kinds of convergences are rare, and hopefully the problem more likely to be detected earlier than it was in Gein's case. But it makes for fascinating, and at times scary reading. I probably shouldn't have read most of this late at night.

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## Brad says

I have to hand it to Harold Schechter. There are few in the true crime genre who can turn spin a creepy yarn the way he can.

*Deviant: The shocking True Story of Ed Gein, the Original "Psycho"* is written more like a novel than an act of reportage. The reporting is still there, but Schechter is quite adept at hiding the reportage under a sneaky tale-telling voice, that sucks his readers in to the horror he's conveying and makes us want to reach the mysterious revelation even if we already know the outcome.

Ed Gein, is the prototypical American serial killer. He was the inspiration for Robert Bloch's now immortal character Norman Bates, and most horror movies owe some debt to the crimes of Ed Gein. His mother's farm house -- where he lived, killed and crafted after her death -- was a charnel house of horrors, filled with the victims of his killings, his collection of body snatching bits and pieces, and all of his human leatherworking.

Yet somehow Schechter's *Deviant* filled me with pity and sorrow rather than horror and revulsion.

Of all the serial killers I have read about, Ed Gein seems the most deserving of pity, and Schechter's *Deviant* deepened my feelings. What made him do what he did seems so clear, so much a fault of outside forces or forces beyond his control -- abuse, isolation, mental illness, gender dysphoria, religious fervour, neglect --

that I couldn't and can't muster anger at Gein for his crimes. Listening to *Deviant* (as I listened rather than read this book), I couldn't help wondering at how many points Gein's crimes could have been avoided by even a modicum of intervention.

When the last chapter finished pouring into my ears, I found myself thinking again of Stephen Crane's Blue Hotel, and the idea that we are all guilty. All of us. And that Gein, and his even nastier brethren, are simply the manifestations of all our sins.

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### **M says**

Maybe this book could be appeal to a certain audience, but this is written like a dime store novel instead of an informative exploration into the mind of what is possibly the most notorious killer that this nation has ever seen. *Deviant* is written like a tabloid article, when the subject should be thrilling enough to stand on its own feet.

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### **Fishface says**

Excellent study of the Midwestern serial killer -- the basis of the fictional characters Buffalo Bill, Norman Bates and Leatherface. Also played by Steve Railsback in a biopic, which should tell you a great deal. Proves that in America, anyone can become a big star if he has a low IQ and very weak personal boundaries.

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### **Jlsimon says**

This book goes over the crimes and adjudication of Ed Gein.

One of the things that makes this case particularly interesting is that it was successfully adjudicated as an individual that was judged to be incompetent to stand trial. Gein was determined to not be able to distinguish between right and wrong, and unable to assist in his own defense. This hardly ever happens in a serial killing. In fact, although there are surely other cases that have been successful in this, I can't think of a single other case of a book written that the defendant was found to be incompetent to stand trial. 10 years later he was found competent and stood trial, but still it was interesting.

I would recommend this case study to individuals that are interested in how sexuality might influence deviant behaviors. More specifically I would recommend this book to individuals who are interested in if sexual repression is a contributing factor to psychosis.

This case study is also beneficial to individuals who are interested in if bullying/self-esteem is linked to psychosis, and individuals looking for correlation between intelligence levels or emotional intelligence levels to psychosis.

I would recommend this book to individuals who engage in true crime books for academic reasons rather than those that are interested in the personal stories. This book is closer to the writing style of Truman Capote than Ann Rule or M. William Phelps.

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## **J. Pacheli says**

As a result of my interest on famous serial killers, I came across this book. After previously having found a book about the famous cultist, Charles Manson, I wondered if maybe there was any piece of information about the killer that has always intrigued me the most: Ed Gein.

I took the plunge and bought this book on Amazon. I must say that it's well written, no complicated language is used and the thread is awfully easy to follow. It definitely grabbed me from beginning to end. Schechter explains what was that that took hold of Gein's mind and pushed him to perform the aberrations he did. I think there is enough information for us to understand how his mind worked.

People have complained about not being deep enough, but I'd suggest another kind of research since this book (I'll venture to say) was written for the curious and maybe criminology amateurs and not for psychiatry or psychology students.

In the end not only does the author illustrate who was Ed Gein and what he did, but he also shows what was going on his mind. Additionally, he explains the legacy in the film industry that was born after Gein's crimes were discovered. Movies like "Psycho", "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre", and "The Silence of the Lambs" are just a few examples. So yes, this is a very intriguing book and I'd highly recommend it to anyone who likes criminology and exploring the dark depths of the human mind.

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## **Medhat The Book Fanatic says**

This was one of the most disturbing books that I've read in a while!

Deviant is a character-study of Edward Gein, the notorious killer, serial-ghoul, whose crime will always be memorable, mostly for the inspiration that it contributed to the making of Psycho, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, and Silence of the Lambs.

The book was extremely well-written and very graphic that it drove me sick. Regardless of how it made me feel while reading it, I gotta say that I never found myself bored due to the manner of how it was written, which is like a novel, and the book ended-up being very interesting.

After reading Deviant, I might take a break from true-crime books - Yes, it's that disturbing!

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## **Vicki Willis says**

This is the kind of book that raises the hair on the back of your neck. A very chilling and gruesome retelling of Ed Gein's life. Starting back when he was child all the way to his death. It was horrifying and difficult to put down at the same time. Very engrossing and disturbing because of the effect on the town and society at that time. He, being the first of many killers, has a shock value of no other. A recommended read for anyone who enjoys this genre.

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### **Susanne says**

I think I dated this guy.

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### **Gene says**

This book has so much significance for me. It happened only 60 miles from my home where I grew up, he was sent to Waupun Correctional facility where I lived after he was determined insane, and my Father worked at that facility. I visited that place many times with my father but don't remember seeing Ed Gein but I probably was shown him. This is a well written book detailing the happenings that was immortalized in the movie Psycho which was written by another individual from the area. My understanding is that Silence of the Lambs was also taken from this incident.

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### **Dave Risner says**

Definitely a good read for the uninitiated. Schecter comes off a little boring describing Wisconsin and dropping the word "oddball" one too many times, but the people in that area at the time did the same.

He's great at describing the atrocities committed, but can keep it all within the context of Gein being a terribly mentally ill man.

Would recommend it to all!

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### **Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says**

Unbelievable! I'll never complain about my neighbors again!

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### **Amy says**

If you have a sick fascination with serial killers, as do I, this book will be intriguing, addicting, and incredibly creepy. Gein is said to have been an inspiration behind the Texas Chainsaw Massacre, a favorite of many horror movie fans, including this one, which made the book all the more addicting.

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### **Books, Vertigo and Tea (Danielle) says**

Writing a review for this will be a true challenge. But none the less, one to follow.

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## **Karen says**

I've always heard about Ed Gein and what he had done but never knew the details. This book not only gives details but also has little tidbits about other monsters I'd never heard about. When all is said and done Ed Gein was a sicko genius.

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## **Bryn Dunham says**

This is the story of the guy who inspired *Psycho*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *Silence of the Lambs*. Like Dahmer, a little pitiful man named Ed Gein, raised by a dominant mother and abusive father, drifted into insanity after the death of his mother and proceeds to murder two women, rob the graves of several others and uses their body for multiple goulish ends.

Easy read, well written, but overly simple; this book does not delve significantly in depth into the mind of Gein but just explains the facts that overwhelmed Plainfield, WI in 1957. I read it in two sittings and feel confident I know enough of what happened. Pretty good book, but not really worthy of my library for the long term, as Capote's "*In Cold Blood*" which was outstanding.

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## **Lisa says**

Mothers, be careful how you raise your boys, especially if you're an overbearing religious wackjob who thinks the best lesson she can impart is that all women are wanton, wicked and deserve to be punished as this could lead to a host of mental illnesses and some terrifying life choices on the part of your child...

Ed Gein is infamous as the inspiration behind more than one of our cinematic bogeymen - *Psycho*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Silence of the Lambs*' Buffalo Bill being the most notable examples, but as ever the truth is far stranger, more horrific, shocking and plain insane than fiction could ever hope to be (film audiences would reject half the occurrences within for being too outlandish to be plausible, but unfortunately this is all real.)

Raised by the aforementioned mother and a weak-willed, alcoholic and abusive father, Gein was always considered an oddball, meek and polite but completely unequipped to socialise with others (early opportunities were halted by Mommy Dearest who, of course, thought that every friend Ed made at school was wicked and stopped him from seeing them). With his mother being a larger-than-life, almost God-like figure to him, his problems really started to bubble up once she died, leaving Ed alone in the world. Sealing up the rooms she lived in as a make-shift shrine, Gein lived in absolute squalor in the few rooms left to him, reading lurid true crime magazines (which will be blamed for the crimes by some \*eyeroll\*) and accounts of Nazi atrocities (some of which *will* inspire his grisly collection of memorabilia).

Described as a voyeuristic, schizophrenic, fetishist necrophile and transvestite Gein fixated on women who resemble his mother, although as women who could never be as good as Augusta was, murdering and dismembering them in the most awful manner (the accounts of how the last victim was found seriously gave me the heebie-jeebies) though he was also a keen grave-robber, digging up yet more women, and taking body parts home with him. Collections of human heads turned into masks, chairs made from human skin, and body parts sewn into yet more furniture abounded through Ed's house of horrors (local kids had been



telling stories for years of Gein's shrunken heads, which were written off by their parents as wild imaginations) and it is obvious that Gein's transvestitism went a lot further than most - instead of wearing women's clothing he much preferred wearing their skin (yeesh).

As you can see, the subject matter is fascinating, and more than a little sensational, but it was mostly handled well imparting a fair amount of information in a very readable format. There was one instance (as there was in another of Schechter's books that I'd read) where the author presents an 'inside the mind of the killer' moment that I could have done without (I take exception in true crime books to the kind of recreations when no-one could really have known what was going on, and Gein's constant memory lapses, whether real or fake, made sure he never came clean about what had happened after Mrs Worden's murder) and I would have liked a lot more depth to the psychology angle, as well as more on what was behind the rash of 'Gein humour' as the local population struggled to come to terms with what had happened in their midst.

The most successful angle of the book was with regard to the media frenzy that Gein's crimes inspired, and the antagonistic relationship between the press and police. While a strong believer in press freedom, I also believe that can only be properly achieved when the press that you're dealing with have ethics, and unfortunately most of the mob of reporters behaved much more like those in trouble recently in the UK for hacking and other various underhand methods than journalists with integrity - happy to print anything, true or not, if it gave good story.

As for just why Ed Gein has had such a lasting impression on our collective psyches, this book doesn't quite pin it down but gets points for making a decent attempt.

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### **Jenna says**

What a strange little man. This was a fascinating and tough read. Even though there wasn't that much killing, it was all the other weird and unusual obsessions that really got under my skin. Plus, how is it possible that someone who was only proven to have killed 2 people, inspire some of the scariest and most iconic movie killers of all time!?! Incredible.

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### **Paul Bryant says**

Harold Schechter is an author with Tourette's Syndrome - consider some of his book titles:

*Deranged!*

*Depraved!*

*Fiend!*

*Bestial!*

Now imagine inviting Mr Schechter to dinner....

*"Ketchup!"*

*"Salt!"*

*"Mayonnaise!"*

*"Pickle!"*

*"Hideous!"*

*"Fuck!"*

*"Vile!"*

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### **Miriam Smith says**

I love anything to do with gory serial killers, and this is about a true life one, which inspired the Psycho, Texas Chain Saw Masacre and Silence of the Lambs.....need I say more? Sadly I thoroughly enjoyed this book, it is very shocking and saddening for the victims and families involved, but I was engrossed and read in virtually one sitting which is very unlike me. Not for the faint hearted but would definetly recommend.

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