



The Killer Inside Me

Jim Thompson

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Everyone in the small town of Central City, Texas loves Lou Ford. A deputy sheriff, Lou's known to the small-time criminals, the real-estate entrepreneurs, and all of his coworkers--the low-lives, the big-timers, and everyone in-between--as the nicest guy around. He may not be the brightest or the most interesting man in town, but nevertheless, he's the kind of officer you're happy to have keeping your streets safe. The sort of man you might even wish your daughter would end up with someday.

But behind the platitudes and glad-handing lurks a monster the likes of which few have seen. An urge that has already claimed multiple lives, and cost Lou his brother Mike, a self-sacrificing construction worker who fell to his death on the job in what was anything but an accident. A murder that Lou is determined to avenge--and if innocent people have to die in the process, well, that's perfectly all right with him.

In *The Killer Inside Me*, Thompson goes where few novelists have dared to go, giving us a pitch-black glimpse into the mind of the American Serial Killer years before Charles Manson, John Wayne Gacy, and Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, in the novel that will forever be known as the master performance of one of the greatest crime novelists of all time.

The Killer Inside Me Details

Date : Published March 13th 1991 by Vintage (first published March 13th 1952)

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Author : Jim Thompson

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From Reader Review *The Killer Inside Me* for online ebook

Mara says

I've read what some may consider to be a creepy number of non-fiction books on sociopathy (*The Sociopath Next Door*, *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work*, *The Mask of Sanity*). All of them attempt to offer insight into the heads of these individuals among us who exist without conscience, and adeptly "play human." Many of them (especially *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals That Protect Us from Violence* by Gavin de Becker - which rumor has it Oprah recommended) try to aid the average, non-sociopathic Joe in identifying and avoiding such individuals. The crux of the advice being that there's just this kind of gut feeling that you ought to go with. Jim Thompson, however, lets you climb into the brain of your neighborhood sociopath and does so in a way that is just so satisfying.

Lou Ford, deputy sheriff and creep extraordinaire is playing a game with the world around him.

That's what I was going to be; I was going to have to live and get along with rubes. I wasn't ever going to have anything but some safe, small job, and I'd have to act accordingly.

He bores people with platitudes just to watch them squirm, and (maybe I shouldn't be admitting this) I couldn't help but laugh with him as he did so. This book is a heaping spoonful of sick satisfaction...and I loved it.

Emily May says

I went into this with high expectations. I mean, who doesn't love a good psychopath? Especially one with a boat-load of issues who is in a position of authority and trust. Enter Lou Ford, small town sheriff and all-around good guy... or so his sweet and slightly slow disposition would have you think. But Lou has *the sickness*. Most of the time he manages to keep it hidden beneath a cheery and easy-going attitude, most of the time you would assume he is just your average Joe. Until every once in a while his temper rises and he becomes possessed with an uncontrollable rage... and the killer inside him comes out.

Fabulous. Except for the part where I was rather disappointed. *The Killer Inside Me* isn't a bad book, it was just nowhere near as good as I thought it was going to be. Lou Ford did not creep me out in the way he was supposed to, he didn't creep me out in the way Stephen King and Stanley Kubrick claim to have been creeped out by him. Dolores Umbridge is creepier than Lou.

Trudi says

First of all, a warning: if you happen to pick up the edition I did that includes an introductory essay from Stephen King, make sure you read it *after* you finish the book. Goddamn it, either the entire principal of *spoiler* completely flies over this man's head, or he just loves being a bastard about these things. After 2014's Twitter controversy where he spoiled a major death for fans of HBO's *Game of Thrones* series, I'm pretty certain it's the latter.

It's not that he doesn't get it -- he just doesn't care!!!

And he does it here too, spoiling a MAJOR scene from Thompson's classic noir novel. Thanks a lot, Uncle Stevie!!! I don't care that the book was published in 1952 -- it's not the same as revealing the Titanic hits an iceberg and sinks or that Janet Leigh gets stabbed in the shower in Psycho! And it's *especially* not the same as revealing that Romeo and Juliet die in Act 5. Now you're just being an asshole, asshole!

Anyway, all wrath and chagrin aside, Uncle Stevie gives great introduction (heh) and this essay is particularly inspired dealing as it does with Jim Thompson, his mark on dark literature, and the enduring legacy of his psychopathic, unassuming small town Deputy Sheriff, Lou Ford.

Told in the first-person, *The Killer Inside Me* is as close as you're ever going to want to get to the inner thoughts and irrepressible urges of a psycho killer. The most chilling part? On the outside, Lou Ford is a regular, down home good ol' boy, with charm and even some wit. But underneath his methodically constructed facade lurks a steel-trap mind and inexplicable violent compulsions. First published in 1952, I can only imagine the impact this book would have had on its original audience. Even to this jaded 21st century reader *The Killer Inside Me* still holds within its ruthless prose the power to shock and unsettle.

And despite Ford's obvious dark passenger -- his "sickness" -- you still find yourself rooting for the guy (that is when you're not screaming at characters to run for their fucking lives far, far away from the crazy man). It made me consider who I'd take my chances with in a locked room -- Lou Ford or Annie Wilkes? ::shudder:: There's a Sophie's Choice I'm glad I never have to make.

Without Jim Thompson -- and especially without Lou Ford -- I can only believe 'country noir' would not be what it is today. Donald Ray Pollock, Frank Bill, Daniel Woodrell, Ron Rash all owe a debt to Thompson. And as readers, so do we.

Melki says

"It's always lightest just before the dark..."

This is one terrific tale, though nasty as all get out.

Thompson seems to have serious Mommy issues, as all his women, be they whores or schoolmarms, are shrewish harpies. AND, he seems to believe that a good beating is the only foreplay a woman should ever need.

He is not alone in his cringe-worthy treatment of the ladies. It seems to be a common problem that has bugged the hell out of me in other books of this ilk and is probably the main reason I don't read more noir.

If you can ignore the quite literal female bashing here, this is a remarkably intriguing and arresting story, and a fascinating look inside the mind of a psychopath.

Orsodimondo says

DOPPIO IN GIOCO

Kubrick definì questo romanzo *The most chilling and believable first-person story of a criminally warped mind I have ever encountered*.

Credo che Kubrick di menti deformate e criminali, e criminali dalla mente deformata, se ne intendeva un pochino.

Con Thompson, Kubrick scrisse uno dei suoi primi capolavori, 'Orizzonti di gloria', dove il male esiste, proprio come nelle opere di Thompson.

Jim Thompson con Sterling Hayden sul set di the Killing di Stanley Kubrick. Per questo magnifico film Thompson scrisse i dialoghi

Jim Thompson è sinonimo di noir da quando uscì questo libro, nel 1952, la sua opera più fortunata.

Questo libro è una pura meraviglia, come lo sono tutti quelli di Thompson.

Però, questo va oltre.

Anche se, come gli altri, racconta di uomini malvagi che fanno cose cattive. Cattiveria e ironia vanno a braccetto in Thompson, che conia il black humour all'americana, molto diverso da quello made in England.

Lou Ford è uno sceriffo rispettato e stimato, un bravo cittadino, magari perfino un po' tonto, oppure è un killer sociopatico che non riconosce regole e leggi?

La risposta è proprio nel punto di vista che il romanzo assume, la voce narrante dello stesso Lou Ford, che sa di essere quello che è, ma sa anche nascondere bene – fino a che la vera natura dello sceriffo prende il sopravvento.

Una voce narrante che non ruba spazio, che non spreca parole, ma incalza, porta avanti l'azione senza perdere tempo, creando e rafforzando la tensione, l'attesa, il mistero, il thriller.

Non è la storia in sé che conta, ma come nella grande letteratura, è lo stile che fa la differenza, che porta *The Killer Inside Me* a trascendere il genere, e andare oltre.

Thompson dice che la malerba è solo una pianta cresciuta nel posto sbagliato: un cespuglio di malvone in un campo di grano è malerba, ma piantata nel giardino di casa diventa ornamentale.

Se Lou Ford fosse cresciuto altrove, o non avesse fatto lo sceriffo, sarebbe potuto essere diverso?

Come si fa a non immedesimarsi negli anteroi di Thompson, ladri o assassini che siano?! Specie se si è amato *Delitti esemplari* di Aub, i protagonisti di Thompson sono tutti noi, sono quello che noi vorremmo essere e fare.

Molto saccheggiato dal cinema, Jim Thompson: solo per citare qualche esempio, tralasciando i due presi da questo stesso titolo, che non ritengo indimenticabili, citerei invece il memorabile Steve "voglio-una-vita-spericolata" McQueen nel primo *Getaway*, insieme ad Ali McGraw (molto meno memorabile il remake con la coppia Alec Baldwin – Kim Basinger); eccezionale Annette Benning in *Grifters-Rischiose abitudini*, insieme ad Anjelica Huston e John Cusack; grandissimo Philippe Noiret, circondato da un ottimo cast tutto francese, nel film di Tavernier *Coup de Torchon* da *Pop. 1280*; sempre per restare in Francia, *Série noire-Il fascino del delitto* con il compianto Patrick Dewaere.

Kemper says

Jim Thompson must have had noir in his veins instead of red blood cells. This dark first-person story has the reader inhabiting the mind of a killer in way that most authors can't even come close to matching. It's disturbing, chilling and one of the best pieces of crime fiction I've ever read.

Lou Ford is a small-town sheriff's deputy in West Texas. He appears to be just a good natured, not-to-bright, good-ole-boy who usually speaks in a series of clichés to the point of annoying or boring whoever he's talking to. But Lou's persona is all a mask to hide his true self and to keep what he thinks of as 'his sickness' in check.

When Lou is dispatched to give a warning to a call-girl named Joyce, it escalates into a confrontation that unleashes Lou's sadistic side, and he's shocked to discover that Joyce is a willing partner. Letting his darker impulses out of the box soon leads Lou to more violence, and then a lengthy cat-and-mouse game with the local power structure as he covers up his crimes with a mixture of his dimwitted persona and even more bloodshed.

Reading this is a really odd experience. At times, you find yourself rooting for Lou to get away with everything he's done, but at other times you want to scream at the other characters, "Run! He's freaking crazier than a shithouse rat! Get out of there before he murders you all!"

And I was both horrified and amused at the malicious joy that Lou takes in 'needling' people under the guise of playing the fool that can't stop running his mouth. He's got a knack for annoying and insulting people while he pretends he doesn't realize what he's doing. That's just one of the many ways that evil Lou has of getting under your skin.

Lou says

This was a humdinger of a story written through the eyes of a sheriff Lou Ford of a small, middle-of-nowhere west Texas town of Central City. Is he an easy-going, well-liked man and a respected citizen of the town, well known for his quiet, gentle nature? On the inside he has a dark-side he is a sociopathic killer who seems to think that life is ruled by any means necessary, full of both corny, small-town bonhomie and murderous psychosexual rage. He will not hesitate to eliminate his loved ones with brutal emotional dis-attachment. In the following discussion in the novel he is describing his perspective on life.

"You're a square Joe." "am I ?" i said."How do you know i am, Johnny? How can a man ever really know anything? Were living in a funny world, kid, a peculiar civilisation. The police are playing crooks in it, and the crooks are doing police duty. The politicians are preachers, and the preachers are politicians. The tax collectors collect for themselves. The bad people want us to have more dough, and the good people are fighting to keep it from us. It's not good for us, know what i mean? If we all had all we wanted to eat, we'd crap too much. We'd have inflation in toilet paper industry. That's the way i understand it. That's about the size of some of the arguments i've heard."

"Theres a time of peace I said and a time of war. A time to sow and a time to reap. A time to live and a time to die"

Jim Thompson creates a main protagonist that you get to like, but at the same time he has a side to him we would all hate. Thompson tries to show us that the cliched perspective of 1950s America as a land of communal benevolence and white picket fences requires attention. Paper thin, with a cancerous presence under the skin from the actions of 'evil that men do.' It is a mark of Thompson's skill that our identification with Lou, encouraged by his first-person narration, is never quite frayed. While he seems at the same time to explain his reasons for his actions he does not quite understanding why he treads that path, he tries to understand himself in his story by digging out a quote out of a psychology textbook.

"The subject suffers from strong feelings of guilt... combined with a sense of frustration and persecution... which increase as he grows older; yet there are rarely if ever any surface signs of... disturbance. On the contrary, his behaviour appears to be entirely logical. He reasons soundly, even shrewdly. He is completely aware of what he does and why he does it..."

This was my first Thompson novel and made me dig out his other works I found them all to just as hard boiled and compelling. The movie adaptation recently was good but had some brutal images.

Also on my webpage @<http://more2read.com/review/the-killer-inside-me-by-jim-thompson/>

notgettingenough says

This was my original thoughts with which I was never satisfied:

Until I saw this my gut feeling was that it would be impossible to take Jim Thompson to the screen, but I stand corrected. Fabulous movie which precisely captures the spirit of Thompson's writing. I first suggested seeing this to a male who refused on the grounds that 'horrible things happened to women' and they do, but I have no idea why this would be interpreted as being about 'male hate' 'misogyny'. Like most people, I guess, my reactions are that although at an intellectual level extreme violence against men is as dreadful as against women, at an emotional level that simply isn't so. However, I can't see that this movie is any more visually violent than, say, Pan's Labyrinth and Red Riding Trilogy, the violence being sickening in both. In both of these I recall violence against men. I don't think violence like this should ever be shown as 'entertainment'. It diminishes the nature of violence, it does desensitise, it does make it normal, even as we complain about it.

And this to me brings to mind a discussion I started in my review of Stendhal's *Memoirs of an Egotist*.
<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

There we were talking about the fact that a picture can give an impression which if read instead would be found cheap and coarse. At the time I suggested that the reverse would surely sometimes be true, that a nasty picture could be ennobled by a description in words and this kept coming back to me in the movie. One of

the things Thompson does is describe violence in the most gripping, gut-wrenching way which makes one feel there and part of it. I say that as one who finds descriptions of violence generally tedious, both visual and by word. His writing of this kind of thing is staggeringly good. And although I haven't read this book yet, I've read enough Jim Thompson to be sure that the scenes where Winterbottom attempts to force us to watch women (as it happens) being punched and kicked to death, would have been utterly readable in a way they were not - and indeed should not have been - watchable. However real Thompson's descriptions are, they still have not been robbed of the reader's imagination in the way film steals. I wish more film directors understood that suggestion is so much more powerful than blatancy. Strangely, I think the way to transfer to the screen what I expect to have been the explicit nature of Thompson's description of these scenes would have been to draw back from the explicit. Maybe this is because in the end, in a movie, you are watching rather than taking part in the way you are when reading.

Jim Thompson, out of favour for decades, has suddenly become flavour of the month, his books are back in mainstream print and now this movie. All I can say is that he should never have been out of fashion, he is a splendid writer and I don't want to put a genre on that any more than I would on Simenon's non-Maigret books. They are part of a movement of mid-to-late-twentieth century studies of sociopaths which are, in my opinion, a very important part of the literature of that period. So get trendy and read him...and yes, by all means see the movie too.

End of initial thoughts. Having taken these off this review, the discussion <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...> with Paul prompts me to repost.

And express a reconsideration. In retrospect, I consider the way in which the violence was portrayed here to be absolutely legitimate. Maybe there are other ways of doing it that would have worked. I think of the film *The Boys* in which there is almost no explicit violence and yet the threat looms far larger than the execution. But still, in order to get inside the head of the killer I can see that the approach taken by the director maybe worked in a way that was utterly horrific but still meaningful. I do not think that of either *Pan's Labyrinth* or *Red Riding Trilogy* where the violence served no purpose whatsoever.

I feel like I've failed this book, so I'm starting again...

It was watching the movie of this book that gave me one of those moments of understanding.

There are the ones who say what they believe, who say what they mean. Then there are the ones who believe what they say, who mean what they say. This second group is convinced that their very act of saying something makes it true. 'I've said it, therefore I mean it, therefore it is true.'

The – I really don't know what to call him, villain??? – kicks and punches to death a woman. He explains as he is doing it that he has to do it, it cannot be helped and, of course, he has said it, therefore in his view of the world, it is true. In a deeply moving moment as the woman is lying on the floor, dying, a gentle pool of her urine growing on the floor, she reaches for her handbag. Why? Is there something with which to belatedly defend herself in there? Her hand doesn't make it. She dies first. Later we find that she was reaching to find a letter she had for this man, her love. I suspect some critics thought we were supposed to see this woman as weak, not putting up any resistance as she was so brutally assaulted, but they don't get it. She loved the man who was kicking her to death. Not at any point did that love waver. It was strength, not weakness that we witnessed in this scene. She loved this man. She wanted to deliver her letter.

knig says

When Boris Vian hoaxed his way into the roman noir scene in 1958 with 'I spit on your graves', he was giving Jim Thompson a nod.

This book is riveting. It springs on the back of Chandler and Hammet who were by then moulding the no-nonsense, cynical, take no prisoner 'Has- Been' into limelight situations, but whereas these pioneer anti-heroes seem to preserve a modicum of decency, their successors, guided by the likes of Patricia Highsmith, Vian and Thompson seem to surgically remove that modicum, leaving in its wake a macabre portrait of pathology.

General consensus ties our current era of rudderless moral drift into incoherent and incongruous direction to the sounding knell of overt rebelliousness in the 1960s, but it seems, in fact, a lot of groundwork was being laid quietly but decisively in the 50s. Its writers like Thompson who broke with established zeitgeist in the 50s and kickstarted the momentum culminating in the total anti-thesis of the status quo in the 60s.

Lou Ford is the quintessential psychopath, a bogeyman: he gives me the shivers across a fifty year divide, he is that fresh. And relevant. The full horror of this man is the utter unpredictability of a pillar in society jeckyll-n'hyding into a psychotic killer, with no warning signs to give the community at large an inkling as to the monster lurking inside.

Lou is a damaged, sad human being who epitomises, on some level, the universal sense of guilt imbued in all of us who are products of the 2000 year old judeo-christian legacy, and particularly in relation to sex (bearing in mind this novel came out in the 1950s). Psychologically gripping and disturbing, this book is unputdownable.

Dan Schwent says

Ever meet someone at a party and think they're pretty cool until they let something slip and you realize they may in fact be bat-shit psycho? That's how Lou Ford, the protagonist of *The Killer Inside Me* is. I also suspect that Jim Thompson may have been that way as well.

The Killer Inside Me is the story of Lou Ford, a small town sheriff who's a little slow and a little boring. Or he would have you believe. Lou Ford spends most of his time keeping *the sickness* inside him in check. Lou's a sociopath and has killed multiple times in the past. Lou tries to get even with a man he suspects killed his brother and gets himself ensnared in a criminal investigation. Can he murder his way out of it?

The story itself is pretty simple. Ford tries to set something up to sully the good name of the Conway family and chaos ensues. What makes it work is Jim Thompson's writing. Just like in *Population 1280*, Jim Thompson uses an unreliable narrator and plays it to the hilt. The writing is bleak, powerful, and unsettling. Like I said earlier, Thompson writes sociopaths a little too well for comfort. Sometimes you wish you could warn the characters that Lou Ford is a runaway train and they're standing on the track.

From beginning to end, this was one of the more disturbing books I've ever read. If you like noir, it doesn't get much noir-er than this.

"You've got forever; and it's a mile wide and an inch deep and full of alligators."

Lawyer says

The Killer Inside Me: *Jim Thompson's classic Roman Noir*

“Just as there are physical monsters, can there not be mental or psychic monsters born? The face and body may be perfect, but if a twisted gene or malformed egg can produce physical monsters, may not the same process produce a malformed soul?”

Monsters are variations from the accepted normal to a greater or a less degree. As a child may be born without an arm, so one may be born without kindness or the potential of conscience. A man who loses his arms in an accident has a great struggle to adjust himself to the lack, but one born without arms suffers only from people who find him strange. Having never had arms, he cannot miss them. To a monster the norm must seem monstrous, since everyone is normal to himself. To the inner monster it must be even more obscure, since he has no visible thing to compare with others. To a criminal, honesty is foolish. You must not forget that a monster is only a variation, and that to a monster the norm is monstrous.”? **John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*, 1952**

Faucett Crest, Paperback edition, 1952

"A novel about murder unlike anything you've ever read." There it is right on the cover of the Faucett-Crest Original. And the people at that publishing company got it right.

My grandmother had a saying it was always easy to know someone who wasn't right. "That boy just don't look right out of his eyes." And I've known the times that she was right--absolutely right. But I think Steinbeck nails it. Because you can't always tell you're dealing with a monster. Because the face and body may be perfect. They are not physical monsters, no freak at the side show at the carnival. These people walk among us, looking and acting just the way we do, day to day. But they lack something we don't have. That is conscience. That is a value for the difference between right and wrong.

Take Jim Thompson's protagonist, Lou Ford. He's a deputy sheriff. He's the go to guy when it gets down to getting someone to talk. He's a natural at it, mouthing platitudes, assuring his suspects that he's their friend. He's respected by his sheriff.

Casey Affleck as Lou Ford in the 2010 film directed by Michael Winterbottom

However, when Lou feels the sickness, as he calls it coming on, he says he can't control himself. Perhaps you say Lou Ford was criminally insane. Not so. Lou knew the difference between right and wrong. He didn't give a damn. And when he determined it in his best interest, if people had to die, well, they were already dead in his book. Lou is a careful planner. He is a craftsman at construction of alibis. Adept at creating evidence pointing in anyone's direction but him, he's capable of covering his tracks well. Murder is not something that gnaws at his conscience, because he lacks one. Killing two people and covering his own skin, Lou returns home to his father's house where he prepares and wolfs down a large breakfast of ham and eggs. He's not squeamish.

I can't fault Jim Thompson for the psychology he cites accurately, the material that was commonly referred to at the time of his writing *The Killer Inside Me* Emil Kraepelin, whose works Lou Ford studies in his father's medical library is credited with the birth of modern psychiatric diagnoses. However Ford singles out Kraepelin's work on *dementia praecox* the precursor for what we now know as Schizophrenia. That diagnosis is a psychosis, amounting to a break with reality and a failure to recognize reality. A common description of defining a person's mental status is whether he is oriented x 3, that is, to person, place and time. That does not ever fit Lou Ford. He's conscious of person place and time at all times. It's his "moral" compass that's broken.

Emil Kraepelin, Lou Ford's favorite author

Lou Ford's personality is described with unerring accuracy in Kraepelin's later work, which would have been available to Jim Thompson, under sections dealing with *moral insanity*. From wikipedia:

In fact from 1904 Kraepelin changed the section heading to 'The born criminal', moving it from under 'Congenital feeble-mindedness' to a new chapter on 'Psychopathic personalities'. They were treated under a theory of degeneration. Four types were distinguished: born criminals (inborn delinquents), pathological liars, querulous persons, and Triebmenschen (persons driven by a basic compulsion, including vagabonds, spendthrifts, and dipsomaniacs). The concept of 'psychopathic inferiorities' had been recently popularised in Germany by Julius Ludwig August Koch, who proposed congenital and acquired types. Kraepelin had no evidence or explanation suggesting a congenital cause, and his assumption therefore appears to have been simple 'biologism'. Others, such as Gustav Aschaffenburg, argued for a varying combination of causes. Kraepelin's assumption of a moral defect rather than a positive drive towards crime has also been questioned, as it implies that the moral sense is somehow inborn and unvarying, yet it was known to vary by time and place, and Kraepelin never considered that the moral sense might just be different. Kurt Schneider criticized Kraepelin's nosology for appearing to be a list of behaviors that he considered undesirable, rather than medical conditions, though Schneider's alternative version has also been criticised on the same basis. Nevertheless, many essentials of these diagnostic systems were introduced into the diagnostic systems, and remarkable similarities remain in the DSM-IV and ICD-10.[4] The issues would today mainly be considered under the category of personality disorders, or in terms of Kraepelin's focus *Antisocial/Dissocial personality disorder or psychopathy*. (Emphasis added)

If there is anything in modern psychology that rings true, it deals with the development of sexuality. It is borne out by current research in the field that an adult's aberrant sexual behavior is often set during adolescence by the occurrence of a sexual event which leads the target of that event to recreate situations

similar to those experienced in adolescence. So, perhaps whatever happened between Lou and his father's housekeeper, bent Lou a little crooked in his interactions with women in his adult years. And, of course, we know of his experience with a three year old girl up in the barn loft for which his foster brother took the blame. We also know that Dr. Foster knew of his son's aberrations, keeping him close under wraps, at home in Central City, Texas.

So, if you want to know what runs through the mind of a killer, Jim Thompson's novel is the one for you. Don't blame me if it sends a chill up your spine every few chapters are so. Listening to Lou Ford's story puts you across the table from Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy, just to name a few. And, when you're finished with this book, don't take too much comfort that it's only a story. For there are monsters that walk among us and sometimes they look just perfect out of their eyes.

Jim Thompson, (September 27, 1906, Anadarko, Oklahoma Territory – April 7, 1977, Los Angeles, California)

Malum says

4.5 stars.

Imagine if Mayberry's Sheriff Andy Taylor was secretly a serial killer and you will have a good idea of what you are getting into with this novel.

This one is hard for me to rate. Just going by how I felt when reading it, I felt it was a solid 4. I really enjoyed it, although I felt it started slowing down just a touch near the end (although the ending itself was fantastic). I have to give it extra points, though, because Thompson's craft is absolutely incredible. He totally nails the "murder mystery from the murderer's point of view" story. Also, as the story progresses and the main character's mind starts deteriorating, you can actually feel this breakdown happening. You literally follow the main character into the jaws of madness.

As far as I can remember, this is my first Jim Thompson novel. Based on the strength of this one book, however, I went and picked up a bunch of his other novels. Anyone who likes *American Psycho* or noir should definitely pick this book up.

Brandon says

The threat of violence in the small Texas town profiled in Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me* is so low that the patrolling sheriff, Lou Ford, doesn't even need to carry a gun. Lou doesn't worry because hell, who's more dangerous in Central City than good ol' Lou himself? While he speaks in clichés and exudes a friendly demeanor, Lou's true nature exists behind this social mask; a chilling homicidal maniac who could kill at any moment.

This was my first Jim Thompson and although the brutality of the violence and the pleasure Thompson's Lou Ford receives in administering beatings and committing murder will stay with me for some time, the writing style kind of threw me off. I guess I haven't read all that many West Texas noir novels and the language

coupled with the manner of speaking came across as disjointed and difficult to identify with. Maybe it has something to do with being a Canadian living on the eastern seaboard born some thirty two years after this book was published. Who knows?

I'm definitely interested in checking out more of Thompson's work and perhaps giving this one a re-read sometime, after all it is only a few hundred pages. Stephen King writes the foreword (where he self admittedly rambles) and it's listed as a crime classic with its influence reaching many of the top writers in the genre.

Also posted @ Every Read Thing.

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

Stephen King said about novelist Jim Thompson: "He was crazy. He went running into the American subconscious with a blowtorch in one hand and a pistol in the other, screaming his goddamn head off. No one else came close."

I thought I would love this book, and I did somewhat. I feel kinda dirty after reading it though. Deputy Sheriff Lou Ford is well..he is a fucker. He hides in plain sight. That calm deputy that draws no attention to himself, but deep inside his monster's lurk.

Told from the first person this story draws you in and spits you out at the end. It's not a long book, I finished it in just a few hours. That's honestly about all I could take, any longer and I would have screamed for mercy. Lou likes smacking around and spanking his women. (I hated him immensely at that point) then you find out some of his history and kinda feel sorry for him.

Then the monster rears his ugly head again and you want a shower and mind bleach because you felt sorrow for this F@#CKER!!!!!!

I'm a pretty jaded reader. I can't even begin to imagine if I had read this book when it first came out. Things like this just didn't exist then. It was way before it's time. I'm giving it four stars even though I want to give it a one star for just..for just damn being in my head now.

I'm gonna go hug my dog ..Just because.

Patrick says

This book was recommended to me by someone who worked in the publishing industry, what's more, they liked my book, so I was pretty sure they had excellent taste. I bought it almost immediately, and was excited to give it a try.

That was almost exactly nine years ago. (This might give you a dim glimmer as to what my to-read shelf is like.)

A couple days ago, I was in-between books and looking over my shelves for something I could read before going to bed. I didn't want to start up another Pratchett novel because I was hoping to to bed early. And

starting a book that I love is going to cost me sleep.

So I pulled this off the shelf instead. Big mistake.

Six hours later I finished it, and I've been dealing with the after-effects of too little sleep ever since.

I'm not going to describe the book to you. It's something you really need to experience on your own. But I will say this.

It was written in 1952. And I found myself thinking, "Wow. I didn't know folks were writing dark shit like this back then." Then I realized what a dumb thought that was.

I think its genre is "Crime Fiction" but again, that was fifty years ago. I don't know where it would be placed these days. Psychological thriller?

It's one of the best uses of first-person narration I've ever seen.

I found it incredibly emotionally engaging. Even slightly distressing. But at no point was it gruesome or gratuitous.

If you enjoy shows like Dexter. I'd say this book should be an absolute read for you. But honestly, I'd recommend this to anyone who appreciates good writing.

Dealbreakers: If you've got an issue with violence, this isn't the book for you.

But again, I'd like to stress that there isn't a lot of it in here. Game of Thrones has vastly more and it's vastly more graphic. This book just has a bit, but as I've said, it's just... intense, it's not slashery at all.

Really amazingly good book. I'll absolutely be digging up more by this author.

Nickolas the Kid says

Δεν είναι τυχαίο που ο Κιομπρικ θεωρούσε τον συγκεκριμένο συγγραφέα μεγαλοφυΐα... Το βιβλίο σε μεταφέρει στις ΗΠΑ του 1952, σε μια noir ατμόσφαιρα που ?λα είναι πιθαν?>..

Ολ?κληρη η κριτικ? στην Λ?σχη του Βιβλ?ου:

<http://www.λ?σχη.gr/forum/showthread...>

Panagiotis says

Ο Τ?μσον είναι μια απ? αυτ?ς τις ?μορφες περιπτ?σεις της λογοτεχν?ας. Απ? ?σο ?χω καταλάβει, το ?ργο του τοποθετ?ται στην λογοτεχν?α του αστυνομικο?, με τ?σεις να το τραβ?νε προς το νου?ρ. ?σως ?χει να κ?νει με το ?γκλημα ως βασικ? στοιχε?ο των ιστορι?ν του, την παραβατικ?τητα σαν

μοτ?βο και, σ?γουρα, τους σκλήρο?ς ?ρω?ς του. Μ?λιστα, στην εποχ? του εκδιδ?ταν μαζ? με ?λλους συγκαιρινο?ς του, σε σειρ?ς της "σειρ?ς".

Αν ε?ναι δυνατ?ν! Ο τ?πος με το προηγ?μενο βιβλ?ο του μου χ?ρισε τις πιο απολαυστικ?ς αναγνωστικ?ς μου εμπειρ?ες του τελευτα?ους χρ?νου. Ακ?μα κι αν μιλ?ει για ματσ? καταστ?σεις, για Αμερικ?νικη βλαχο-επαρχε?α και αιματοβαμ?νες περιστ?σεις, ?χει μια εξαιρετικ? π?να: οι δι?λογοι του, οι ?ρω?ς του και η εμβρ?θεια με την οπο?α προσεγγ?ζει, τελικ?, κοινωνικ? θ?ματα με ?ναν σχεδ?ν αντι-διδαστικ? τ?νο, καταλ?γοντας σε αναζωογονητικ? επιμ?θεια. Λοιπ?ν, ανοησ?ες. Ο Τ?μσον αν ζο?σε τ?ρα θα ?ταν ο ?ρχων της southern gothic/nouar λογοτεχν?ας, με τον Donald Ray Pollock να ακολουθε? κατ? π?δας.

Σε το?το εδ?, που θεωρε?ται το αριστο?ργμ? του, εξακολουθε? να ε?ναι καυστικ?ς και χιουμορ?στας. Ε?ναι, ?μως, και προκλητικ?ς γιατί επιλ?γει να φ?ρει τον αναγ?στη σε επαφ? με κ?τι πρωτ?γνωρο για τα ?ως τ?τε δεδομ?να: την πλευρ? του εγκληματικο? μυαλου?. Και το κ?νει ?πουλα, καθ?ς ο πρωτοπρ?σωπος αφηγητ?ς, ?νας καθημεριν?ς ?νθρωπος, ξεδιπλ?νει σταδιακ? τα πλ?να του. Ε?ναι ?να παντελ?ς αν?ξιος εμπιστοσ?νης αφηγητ?ς. ?χι γιατί αποκρ?πτει τα κ?νητρ? του, αλλ? γιατί και ο ?διος δεν τα γνωρ?ζει απ?λυτα, καθ?ς χ?νεται σε ?ναν δα?δαλο α?ματος και εγκλ?ματος.

Στα μ?τια μου, το ?ργο του Τ?μσον ε?ναι κ?τι μοναδικ?. Φα?νεται να τους ?χει ?λους γραμμ?νους στα παπ?ρια του, ?ταν δομε? μια ιστορ?α. Τα μοτ?βα τσαλακ?νονται, καθ?ς και οι προσδοκ?ες κ?θε αναγ?στη που θα περιμ?νει να απολ?σεις τις συμβ?σεις της αγαπημ?νης λογοτεχν?ας του. Ο Τ?μσον ε?ναι αντισυμβατικ?ς, ε?ναι προκλητικ?ς, ?ξυπνος. ?σως ε?ναι ?ρρωστος και να απευθ?νεται σε ελαφρ?ς πειραγμ?να μυαλ?. Π?ντως εγ? δεν θα χαιρ?μουν να ?βλεπα το παιδ? μου να ?χει στα χ?ρια του ?να βιβλ?ο του.

Για μ?να αυτο? οι συγγραφε?ς, μαζ? με τον Σελ?ν και τον Ουελμπ?κ, που σπ?νε τα φρ?γματα της ηθικ?ς, που προκαλο?ν και καυστηρι?ζουν, εν? παρ?λληλα προσφ?ρουν στιγμ?ς υψηλ?ς λογοτεχνικ?τητας, ε?ναι οι λ?γοι που δεν χ?νω την π?στη μου στη λογοτεχν?α.

foteini_dl says

Αναρωτι?μαι αν μου ?ρεσε τ?σο πολ?,επειδ? ο Thompson γρ?φει απ?στευτα ? επειδ? ε?ναι καλοκα?ρι που κ?νω μια στροφ? στα αστυνομικ? και τ' απολαμβ?νω. Εντ?ξει,δεν τ?θεται θ?μα,η γραφ? του συγγραφ?α ε?ναι αυτ? που σε τραβ?ει.

Αυτ? που με ?κανε ν' ανατριχι?σω ε?ναι ?τι επ?λεξε την αφ?γηση σε πρ?το πρ?σωπο για να μας παρουσι?σει ?να ?ρρωστο μυαλ?. ?ρρωστο ?χι απλ? γιατί σκοτ?νει (σιγ? το «περ?εργο»),αλλ? γιατί φα?νεται να μην ?χει κ?ποιο συγκεκριμ?νο λ?γο να σκοτ?σει. ?λα ε?ναι α?μα.Μπρρ...

Να σας πω,ε?δα ?τι αυτ? ?ταν ?να απ? τ' αγαπημ?να βιβλ?ο του Stanley Kubrick (ο Thompson συνεργ?στηκε με τον σκηνοθ?τη για το σεν?ριο της ταιν?ας "The Killing") και ο Thomspson απ? τους αγαπημ?νους συγγραφε?ς του Stephen King (λογικ? το βρ?σχω). Και ε?ναι λ?γο ανησυχητικ? ?τι το απ?λαυσα και εγ?,γιατ? δε νομ?ζω ?τι αυτ? τα βιβλ?α ?χουν απ?χηση στα πιο ισορροπημ?να μυαλ?.Οπ?τε,προσ?ξτε μην με εκνευρ?σετε,?χω π?ρει δι?φορες ιδ?ες. (Just kidding.Η' μ?πως ?χι;)

Stephen says

HOWDY FOLKS...MY NAME IS LOU FORD AND I'M A MILD-MANNERED, DEPUTY SHERIFF IN A SMALL TEXAS TOWN...OH BTW...I'M ALSO A SADISTIC, DEEPLY DISTURBED, PSYCHOPATHIC KILLER....NICE TO MEET YOU!!

5.0 stars. A “one of a kind” reading experience that I can not recommend more highly for fans of noir crime fiction or psychological thrillers. Told in the first person by Lou Ford, who to all outward appearances is a thoughtful, considerate (if somewhat slow) Deputy Sheriff of Capital City, Texas, population 50,000. Lou never gets mad, doesn't even carry a gun and seems to be the ideal law enforcement officer given his even keel and ability to handle almost any situation.

Well don't get too comfortable because there has never been a better example of the old adage, “looks can be deceiving.” Inside Lou is a cold, calculating killer with absolutely ZERO empathy for the people around him who he sees as simpletons and worthless. In fact, Lou's practiced “down home” manner and slow way of talking is part of the “**GAME**” he plays with people so that they will never know who he really is. This man will make your skin crawl right off your body.

I don't want to spoiler plot details so I will just mention a few things about Jim Thompson's writing which I thought was PERFECT PERSONIFIED. The author, through his disturbed protagonist, takes us along on the killer's journey, seeing everything through the lens of his warped worldview and so we are not seeing a view of his actions as wrong but as he sees them (i.e., the completely justified actions of a deranged mind). It is a unique experience to say the least.

The deftness and nuance of the writing was amazing. Throughout the story, we are given subtle clues and snippets of information that explain to the reader that Lou has had “the sickness” as he calls it since he was 15 years old, when he brutally attacked and killed a little girl. The two things I found most chilling about the story were (1) the complete lack of emotion on the part of Lou as he describes **truly despicable** acts as if they simply had to be done and (2) his outwardly pleasant demeanor and interaction with the residents in the town while we are aware of how he despises the world around him.

It reminded me a little of Michael Rooker's excellent performance in the truly disturbing movie, “*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*”, though Jim Thompson's writing is much more subtle and nuanced. However, both that film and this book did a great job of creating a constant and ever present sense of “dread” in which the audience is aware that even though everything seems normal, it really isn't and are left waiting for something to go horribly, horribly wrong.

This book will crawl inside you and make you feel like.....

Brilliantly written and deftly plotted, this is certainly worthy of the praise Stanley Kubrick gave it when he said, “**Probably the most chilling and believable first-person story of a criminally warped mind I have ever encountered.**”

David Schaafsma says

I had not before this read any work by Jim Thompson, though I knew his reputation as a dark and grisly noir novelist from the mid- twentieth century. I had seen *The Grifters* (which I loved), but never read the book on which it was based (but now will!). I had recently read a comics adaptation of *The Killer Inside*, and liked it, so committed to reading the original, which I really did basically love.

Well, “love” is perhaps a simplistic stretch of an assessment for my experience of a serial killer’s first person account. It reminds me a little bit of *Lolita*, or *Satan*, in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*; in all three of these works you have elegantly written depictions of articulate monsters who convince many others (including many readers!) they are charming and admirable.

The Killer Inside Me is the story of Lou Ford, a small town (Central City) deputy sheriff who is straight-laced and on the surface unremarkable. He has girlfriends, he has other friends, he does good and responsible work, but he allows no one to get close. Lou grew up with a sickness that he wants to control. He’s articulate, he’s well read, but he’s also a sociopath who has killed many people, and no one suspects anything about him. So can he cure his own sickness? The route he takes to mental health, well, let’s just say he may have benefitted just a bit from some professional help instead of just going that self-help route. Mistakes were definitely made going down that road.

The book has some terrific writing, it is deservedly a classic of the genre, but there are some (I warn you) disturbing revelations in this book, which he details even as he talks about the weather and so on in a very calm fashion. He’s seemingly unaffected by what he does. For instance, he seems to care very much for a young man, Johnnie, Lou listens to him, he counsels him, but is finally willing to throw him under the bus (Okay, not literally).

There’s some speculation by the narrator himself about what makes him tick, and we are naturally curious about all that. Why does he do it? Is it the result of some early shock? Is it the fact that his mother died when he was young? That he got a step-brother early on, or is it the loss of his step-brother from murder? Lou’s Dad had scores of books on religion and psychology around the house, and Lou read many of them; the presumption is that moral and psychological explanations were sought, once Dad decided Lou had a “problem,” but nowhere in this book is a satisfactory explanation given for Lou’s horrific behavior. He has almost no real insight into himself, which is one really chilling thing about him, of course. At one point Lou says, “There are things that have to be forgotten if you want to go on living,” but he only hints just what it is that needs to be forgotten. He does terrible things and seems to forget them right away!

There’s a fascinating exchange between Lou and his pragmatic lawyer about whether anyone can accurately be identified as evil. The lawyer says, “The name you give a thing depends on where you are standing. A weed is just a plant out of place.” This kind of relativistic thinking is twisted by both of these guys to their own advantage.

At one point the oblivious monster Lou philosophizes to the young Johnnie: “‘Yeah, Johnnie,’ I said, ‘it’s a screwed up, bitched up world, and I’m afraid it’s going to stay that way. And I’ll tell you why. Because no one, almost no one, sees anything wrong with it. They can’t see that things are screwed up, so they’re not worried about it.”

We're living in a funny world kid, a peculiar civilization. The police are playing crooks in it, and the crooks are doing police duty. The politicians are preachers, and the preachers are politicians. The tax collectors collect for themselves. The Bad People want us to have more dough, and the good people are fighting to keep it from us. It's not good for us, know what I mean?"

You might wonder why a killer would write his own morbid story. So periodically he talks about the process of writing his (fictional) "memoir." For instance:

"In lots of books I read, the writer seems to go haywire every time he reaches a high point. He'll start leaving out punctuation and running his words together and babble about stars flashing and sinking into a deep dreamless sea. And you can't figure out whether the hero's laying his girl or a cornerstone. I guess that kind of crap is supposed to be pretty deep stuff—a lot of the book reviewers eat it up, I notice. But the way I see it is, the writer is just too goddam lazy to do his job. And I'm not lazy, whatever else I am. I'll tell you everything."

Oh, and he does, I warn you. I do recommend it, but it's disturbing in places though at the same time very well-written. But I have to go back to reading Agatha Christie for awhile. This was a pretty intense!
