



Small Sacrifices

Ann Rule

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Ann Rule's shocking and powerful account of the destructive forces that drove Diane Downs, a beautiful young mother, to shoot her three young children in cold blood. Includes 11 photos!

On the evening of May 19th, 1983, Diane Downs arrived at McKenzie-Willamette Hospital driving a blood splattered Nissan. Inside were her three children (Christie Ann 8, Cheryl Lynn 7, and Stephen Daniel 3) in critical condition, lying in the back seat suffering from fresh gunshot wounds. Downs herself had been shot in the arm and immediately told authorities that a "bushy haired stranger" flagged her down on the side of a nearby deserted road and proceeded to shoot her three children, and then herself. She claimed she barely managed to get into the car and drive off, leaving the man behind. Two of Downs' children, Christie Ann and Stephen Daniel, were expected to make a full recovery, while Cheryl Lynn passed away shortly after arriving at the hospital. Downs' strange and cold reaction to this news was what immediately heightened the suspicions of the hospital staff and authorities, contributing to her becoming the lead suspect. As the investigation continued, her version of the story became more convoluted and new evidence against her led to her arrest.

In 1989 *SMALL SACRIFICES* was made into the popular TV movie of the same name starring Farrah Fawcett, which earned her an Emmy nomination.

"This searching analysis of the shooting of three children in Oregon by their mother devolves into a study of personality....Under police questioning she recalled her childhood with a cold, domineering father who abused her sexually, her weak mother, a rape by one of her bosses, her failed marriage and many men with whom she had sex. One of these men, whom she claimed to love, did not want children, and that may have prompted the crime, speculates the author. The greatest strength of this book is the exploration by ex-policewoman Rule of the aberrant personality of Downs, who is now imprisoned and not eligible for parole until 2020." -Publishers Weekly

"A harrowing pathological portrait, a nearly unthinkable triple-murder plot, a hold-your-breath police procedural and a tale of dedication and compassion all superbly combined to produce the most riveting true-crime account since *In Cold Blood*. From her heartbreakingly ironic rifle to her final satisfying "revelation," Rule guides her readers through a Middle American world of violence and shopping malls, of sexual obsession and pizzas "'to-go,'" of child abuse and music videos...Thus begins this true tale of a modern Medea. His suspicions aroused by Downs' apparent lack of interest in her children's survival and by glaring discrepancies in her story, Assistant District Attorney Fred Hugi investigates What he finds will not only have readers gasping in horror but pondering the dark irrationalities lurking in American society as well. What could have been in lesser hands merely a sensationalist 80's gothic becomes, thanks to Rule's painstaking research and more-than-considerable literary skills, a work of resonance and revelation. Paced with masterful assurance, incorporating verbatim trial transcripts and diary entries, probing the reactions of the Oregon townspeople, this narrative maintains its breath-stopping tension to the very end. Sure to be talked about for a long time to come." - Kirkus Reviews

Small Sacrifices Details

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From Reader Review Small Sacrifices for online ebook

Lyza says

Ah, pure candy and throwback.

I was the five-year-old elder daughter of a single mother, in Portland, Ore., at the time of the Diane Downs sensation. My mother was a journalist at the time, and I remember the story more clearly than I'd expect for being so young.

Still, I won't deny that true crime is my guilty pleasure and my personal connection to the era and the region added to my voracious consumption of this book.
