



# **Vulgar Favors : Andrew Cunanan, Gianni Versace and the Largest Failed Manhunt in U.S. History**

*Maureen Orth*

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Vanity Fair special correspondent Maureen Orth offers a work of investigative journalism - a riveting account of a charming sociopath, his savage crimes and the mysteries he left along the way. Revealing the explosive story of Andrew Cunanan and his cross-country killing spree in its entirety, *Vulgar Favors* is a tale of lurid sex and family secrets, extravagant wealth and exploitative greed, international celebrity and overnight infamy that exposes underworlds all around us while dramatizing the human tragedies that brought them to sudden, shadowed light. Maureen Orth had just filed a major Vanity Fair story on Andrew Cunanan and his four murder victims when Gianni Versace was murdered in July 1997. When Miami detectives implicated the suspected serial killer in Versace's death, Orth made news with the startling revelation that the killer - already on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list - wasn't a stranger to the superstar murder victim. As the world struggled to understand how the focus of a national manhunt could have gunned down a beloved celebrity in broad daylight, Cunanan continued to elude authorities despite steadily mounting pressure from both law enforcement and media. Cornered in Miami Beach, he escaped captivity only by taking his own life, never revealing what drove him to commit five murders in four states. Drawing on hundreds of interviews, unreleased records, and her own incomparable experience in the center of the media maelstrom, Orth now tells the complete story of a twisted killer, his unwitting victims, the moneyed, hedonistic worlds in which they lived and died, the failure of the nation's law enforcement agencies to apprehend the killer, and the mysteries that remain unsolved - if not suppressed - to this day.

## Vulgar Favors : Andrew Cunanan, Gianni Versace and the Largest Failed Manhunt in U.S. History Details

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# **From Reader Review Vulgar Favors : Andrew Cunanan, Gianni Versace and the Largest Failed Manhunt in U.S. History for online ebook**

## **Stu says**

An excellent book which has served as the basis for the quite good FX show The Assassination of Gianni Versace.

It's an in depth look at the crimes of Andrew Cunanan. You get his mindset, his issues, his blooming problems. It humanize his victims.....and brings them to life. It deals with the mishandled investigation and the law enforcement communities problems in dealing with the gay community,

An most important of all, it brings context to the show

A great and worth it read.....

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## **Jules Goud says**

I found this book disappointing. I originally picked up this book because it was the material for the second season of "American Crime Story". However, I had 3 major problems with this book.

Problem #1: The Title.

I realize about halfway through that this title is not on the original book and I can see why. The title to me is very misleading, because it makes you think that you are getting a book on the assassination of Gianni Versace. However, this is not what the book is about. The book is about Andrew Cunanan, the serial killer responsible for Versace's death. Therefore, I think that titling the novel like this is almost using the name to buy the book, which is very disappointing.

Problem #2: The Organization.

I didn't agree with the way that this book was organized. I thought that we got information about certain people and places at the wrong time. I did not understand the significance of the information that we were getting into later on into the book. I wish that Orth had given us the background information on certain things when the significance came into play.

Problem #3: The Sources.

It is quite obvious that Orth has done her research. There is lots of evidence of this. However, my problem with this is that she has so many sources to comment on behavior or eyewitness accounts. Some of those people are only really mentioned once. My issue comes with the idea that with all of these people, how I do know that these are reliable sources to comment on these things.

If you are looking for information on this crime, Orth definitely provides a thorough background into the life of Cunanan and the murders that he commits. however, those 3 problems I had with this book made it take a long time for me to read, and I did not enjoy reading it (I hate saying that, especially with true crime, but I don't know another way for me to say that). Definitely shines a light on the awful crimes of Cunanan and potentially how he escalated to them.

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## **Sarah Lang says**

Many pages about a psychotic narcissist can be wearying, and Maureen Orth does a lot of pearl clutching about some fairly benign gay sex stuff.

Only OK.

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## **Laurie Hoppe says**

Andrew Cunanan's story is compelling in that he's not a Charles Manson. He's not a loner -- I don't think he could stand being alone. He's bright and had an easy time making (if not keeping) friends. He had natural gifts: intellect, looks, imagination, and a photographic memory. And yet, his life went spectacularly off the rails and he destroyed five very nice men on the way down.

This book is very sympathetic and respectful of Jeff Trail, David Madson, Lee Miglin, William Reese and Gianni Versace. I appreciated Orth's decency in the way she handled the victims and their stories.

The book is also exhaustive and brutal in its treatment of law enforcement. The last two murders may not have happened if the authorities had coordinated and been more focused in their handling of the first three. That's a tragedy that tugs at the heart as Andrew makes his way down south.

While highly readable, it's a far from perfect book. Orth is very hard on those who exploit Andrew's tragedy, all the while reminding us that she was first on the story, even before he murdered Versace. She wants it both ways: she wants to establish this case as her career-making story while sitting in judgement of others who profit from it.

And the book is ultimately frustrating because there's no real explanation as to why he did all this. Until he went on his murderous spree, there is no real evidence that Andrew had a penchant for violence. Orth breathlessly keeps returning to his fondness for porn and drugs. Even in the pre-internet 1990s, porn was easily accessible. So were drugs. And yet somehow, South Beach wasn't crawling with serial killers.

There was one passage that stayed with me, that went further toward an explanation than any of her tsk-tsk-ing about gay porn and tweaking. His killing spree may have begun because his life of lies was about to be exposed. " ... the two men that he cared for most (Jeff and David) were turning their backs on him, banishing him to struggle alone, insecure, depressed and overweight. It was all their fault. They were forcing him to expose the sham of his grandiosity like a mangy peacock."

He had no faith, no sense of values, no sense of self. All Andrew Cunanan had was grandiosity. Perhaps that final, pitiless exposure was simply too painful for him to bear.

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## **Michael Armijo says**

A Story of a Guy who could NEVER get enough...

I remembered reading several articles about Andrew Cunanan when he was WANTED by the FBI. I was so

interested in the story that I was happy to stumble on this book to get all of the facts by such a devoted writer (who wrote the inside scoop article for Vanity Fair). It's a very revealing story and it is TRUE which made it all the more eyebrow raising. I never knew that Gianni Versace was HIV+ and that he & his boyfriend utilized the services of male escorts. It's sad that such a creative man, Versace, had to die in such a random & thoughtless way.

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### **Carol Storm says**

This is an incredibly well-researched and gripping story of a serial killer on the run. It held my interest to the very last page, even if Maureen Orth is a frightful prude and almost comically judgmental about celebrity culture and the gay lifestyle.

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### **Neri. says**

This book is AMAZING! The author explains, in great detail, how and why Andrew Cunanan did what he did and what were the consequences of his acts. Although, some parts were dragging for too long but overall its a great book for people who loves true crime stories and are interested in that type of stuff. Anyway, if you know who Gianni Versace was - go and read it. Right now.

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### **Barry Pierce says**

I wish there were more serial killers like Andrew Cunanan. You always hear of killers being described as loners or introverts or just weirdos, but Cunanan broke that stereotype. He was a preppy guy who loved reading Vogue. He'd make up amazing lies about himself and his past in order to impress those around him. In the midst of his murder spree he used to go clubbing and tell his fellow clubbers that he was a serial killer. They all laughed.

*Vulgar Favours* is a fairly in-depth account of the life and murders of Andrew Cunanan. Maureen Orth was the media's go-to journalist for all the info on Cunanan when he was on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list. She knows this case inside out so there was no better person to write this book. However, as much as Cunanan's murders were tabloid fodder, Orth's book reads as nothing more than tabloid journalism.

My main gripe with this book is the same gripe that every other reviewer on Goodreads points out. Orth is such a prude. There are pages and pages dedicated to descriptions of the 'gay lifestyle' and how (omg!) many people in the gay community take drugs. Orth also *goes on* about Cunanan's addiction to S&M and pornography, which was essentially nothing more than just a kink, never mind a motive for murder.

There are sections of this book which made me think, is Orth trying to make a connection between Andrew's queerness and his penchant for shooting people in the head? Many of her observations on the gay community are, at best, laughable and, at worst, staggeringly offensive.

At one point, Orth enters a gay bar and states that a man started grinding on her so vigorously that she could feel his 'protrusion'. That had me howling. It's like this whole book was written by your homophobic grandmother and Orth thinks she's some sort of queer John Howard Griffin.

Looking past Orth's prudishness, if you can, she also could have benefitted from a good editor. Sometimes you find yourself deep in a chapter and you realise that what you're reading has absolutely *nothing* to do with *anything*. Even many of the interviewees are, at best, stretches at relevancy. A lengthy chapter on the ins-and-outs of the exclusive gay club that Andrew was briefly a member of was the icing on this bulging cake.

What this book is actually good at is showing the sheer incompetency of the entire investigation. There's a reason why the book's original title referred to the attempt to find Cunanan as the 'largest failed manhunt in U.S. history'. Cunanan was always ten steps ahead of the FBI and they essentially did nothing. The most basic of mistakes such as failing to even hand out flyers with Cunanan's picture and details on them just shows that everything that could have gone wrong with this investigation eventually did go disastrously wrong.

It is not egregious to say that if the FBI had actually did their job, Versace would not be dead. The fact that after killing four people, Cunanan was able to stay in a hotel, make friends, go clubbing, and do all this for *several* weeks just shows what a mess this all was.

Orth's book isn't great. But the absolute outrageousness of the Cunanan case almost makes you forget that. Earlier on I said that this book is nothing more than tabloid journalism, but in many ways, that fits. Cunanan was a tabloid murderer. He used to buy all the newspapers and magazines that wrote about him when he was on his killing spree. He loved the attention. And he probably would have *adored* this book.

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## **Leslie says**

This book is a true crime narrative about the ugly underbelly of gay life as told by the journalist for Vanity Fair, Maureen Orth. Orth wants the reader to know how the seamy gay culture in Southern California and South Beach, Florida led to the deaths of the five people murdered by Andrew Cunanan.

To start, the cover is annoying, depicting the lavish mansion of Versace and the title, *Vulgar Favors: The Life and Death of Gianni Versace*, both lead the reader to believe that the book is about his death. This book is not about Gianni Versace; who is barely mentioned until the end, so if you think you're getting the scoop on him, you will be disappointed. The book is an in-depth look at the very tragic, "vulgar" life of Andrew Cunanan. A neurotic mother and a narcissistic father, Andrew's parents expected him to become a wealthy leader in society. Andrew spent his whole life trying to live up to this ideal, though not for his parents, but for his own pathological needs. He was a sociopathic liar, a leach, and a male prostitute. At the end of his life, he was a drug dealer and abuser. In the beginning of the book, Orth connects Andrew's early life to his later problems, but she goes much more into detail about the ugly side of gay culture: men who prostitute each other, abuse drugs, ignore warnings about HIV and deliberately participate in S&M with blood and urine. She discusses it so much, that she makes it seem as if all gays participate in it. For example, Orth states, "Drug use is commonplace throughout various sectors of gay life--a dark secret not much publicized in the community," however, the gay men Andrew killed were not into drugs. In fact, David, the man Andrew wanted to marry, tried to help him. Jeff, the other gay man Andrew killed, didn't even want to be around marijuana or any other drugs. Many people tried to help Andrew get off drugs and get a "real" job, including the wealthy, millionaire who "kept" Andrew. Unfortunately for them, Andrew's victims, the men who befriended him and loved him, become lost in Orth's descriptions of the gay swamp of pornography, drugs, and prostitution. In addition, Orth makes much of the media hype surrounding the murders. She seems to forget she is also part of the media. She makes a big deal about how all the people "secondary" to Andrew tried to make money off him. Really? How much money is she making?

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## ALLEN says

You know those police shows like LAW AND ORDER or C.S.I. where early on, one of the investigators says of the deceased: "Since he was a cop (gay man, immigrant, rich European), I wonder who remembers him down at the Seventeenth Precinct (local bar scene, barrio, Gold Coast) . . . I've got a contact there; let me check it out." Well, this is exactly what did NOT happen in VULGAR FAVORS, an engrossing if at times overwrought true-crime story about what happens when one of Europe's most celebrated and "hip" fashion designers is shot in cold blood and local law-enforcement just can't seem to get a handle on it.

Miami and Miami Beach, even in the 1990s, were no strangers to rich and media-aware celebrities from Europe, but what the cops could not take in stride was an out gay Italian man -- they just didn't know what to do about investigating his death. So they went through the motions and looked every place but the right one. They seemed to be barely aware that the rich and successful Versace, slain at age 50, was not only a renowned designer but friends with the likes of Duran Duran, Eric Clapton, the late "Lady Diana" and other such influential types. The irony (spoiler alert!) was that almost anyone who frequented Miami's numerous gay bars could have given the cops insightful leads to the likely assassin.

We used to talk about American "success stories," and among true-crime accounts I'd consider IN COLD BLOOD a success story on the part of author Truman Capote for his excellent reportage and writing. This even though the Clutter murders were relatively easy to solve and it was the murderers who seemed doomed to failure. HELTER SKELTER, although written by Vincent Bugliosi, lead prosecutor and by definition showing his point of view, proves that skillful detection and, later, extensive trial prep can pay off. In the bestselling MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL, the question is not what happened (a tweaked-out hustler was shot to death by Savannah's leading "bachelor" socialite), but why -- and what exactly happened -- and why it may not have constituted murder.

VULGAR FAVORS is of a newer subgenre, one that unfortunately has taken its place alongside "Success" true-crime stories: the "Fail" story. The story of how, if law enforcement doesn't know or care much about the victim, it isn't likely to stretch itself outside of its normal procedures unless it has to, or unless there is some ramrod boss who insists that his detectives get out of their comfort zones and "look under every stone." But at that point, we may be back into the realm of pulp fiction and TV fantasy rather than the province of the average beleaguered big-city police force. I think VULGAR FAVORS should be read, and not because the story is over 20 years old (Versace was murdered on July 15, 1997 in fact), but because it forms kind of a sorry template of what happens when the established law-enforcement structure just does what it is used to be doing, sending a signal, whether accurate or not, that it cannot be bothered to be innovative, much less determined, in its methods. (For the record -- and here's another spoiler alert! -- let me state that although the Wikipedia article about the murderer has the police "hot on his trail," he was never brought to justice and in fact killed himself eight days later.) *Vulgar Favors*: Andrew Cunanan, Gianni Versace, and the Largest Failed Manhunt in U.S. History is too long, but is reasonably well-written. I expect the new paperback re-release, timed to coincide with a cable-TV presentation of the story, to sell well.

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## Wendell says

Maureen Orth's *Vulgar Favors* is trash. Not the provocative hilarity-inducing trash of a John Waters film or

*AbFab*, but rather the kind of slimy, mean-spirited, exploitative, contempt-for-the-reader trash that you'd expect more in a supermarket tabloid than in a nonfiction title that purports to tell the true story of a series of puzzling murders.

In fact, though Orth never lets the reader forget she was on the Cunanan beat for *Vanity Fair* even before Versace was killed, the quality of her prose, the toxic levels of lead in nearly every paragraph, the repetition of catch phrases and clichés all belong to the style of *The National Enquirer* and not to serious crime journalism, which is where Orth appears to believe her book should place her.

To put it more bluntly: what is true in *Vulgar Favors* comes largely from newspaper clippings and the public record, and what is false is the other 9/10 of the book.

For those interested in a badly plotted novel starring a character based on Andrew Cunanan, *Vulgar Favors* may do the trick. But Orth has virtually no independent knowledge about the case (though it must be admitted that she solicited an astonishing amount of gossip), or about Cunanan or Versace, which leaves her to her powers of fantasy. To be sure, sustaining invention, even at the dilute level of *Vulgar Favors*, is a challenge, and yet Orth is so singularly bad at it.

Given that all but nothing is known about why Cunanan did what he did, his motives and motivation can only be ascribed. Orth, however, demonstrates no detectable ability to enter into the psychology of her main character (or any character, including Versace), leading her to populate her book with cardboard cutouts painted with the deft hand of a Jerry Springer or a Maury Povich.

One of the most spectacularly galling features of *Vulgar Favors*, however, is Orth's fulminant, reprehensible homophobia. Or perhaps that is the second most galling aspect of this book, and the first is Orth's habit, just as she is about to serve up some distasteful, titillating "truth" regarding "homosexual culture," of announcing that the tidbit in question came from a gay journalist or a gay informant, or a gay friend of Cunanan's. In other words, Maureen Orth wants you to know that she is an objective reporter of inconvenient truths and has certainly not included such details in her book solely for the pleasure of insinuating something too deliciously filthy to leave out—or because her credentials (such as they are) as a journalist provided the ideal cover for a low-tech gay-bashing.

Her credulousness about gay men's lives in the United States, and in particular in cities like San Francisco and Miami, would be painful if it reflected naïveté, but this is no act of naïveté.

Rather, it is Orth's deliberate, malicious, all-engulfing desire to draw every raunchy, seamy detail out to the limits of the fervid homophobic imagination, embellish it, and repeat it at studied intervals as a strategy for reinforcing the idea that there was something insidiously, darkly "queer" about Cunanan's murder spree—and to imply that all but one of his victims, and especially his most famous victim, were, if not deserving of their fates, at least (amorphously) complicit.

The fact that Orth continuously harps on a supposed seconds-long meeting between Cunanan and Versace in a San Francisco club at some ill-defined moment in the past, which Orth manages to parlay into "met several times," is an important example. Of course, Orth allows no one to forget it was she who "confirmed" this "fact," although, in fairness, what she calls confirmation is little more than hearsay. Even if Cunanan and Versace had met, it isn't clear what relevance that would have to the murders—unless the reader believes, as it is quite clear Orth wishes the reader to believe, that Cunanan was provoked to murderous fury because Versace had infected him with HIV.



Now, Cunanan did not have HIV at his death (though he may have thought he did at one point), and it remains a point of controversy whether or not Versace was HIV-positive, a question that will never be resolved thanks to the legal shenanigans of a flotilla of high-priced lawyers mobilized by Versace's bloody-minded, image-besotted siblings.

Having introduced the concept, however, it becomes possible for Orth to hint, both subtly and not—that the murder of Versace was a revenge-motivated assassination. (Note the book's subtitle.) If it wasn't HIV, then perhaps it was that Versace had involved Cunanan in some sort of circle of boy- or drug-procurement that turned sour, or perhaps it was that Versace had promised Cunanan fame and fortune and then reneged, or maybe it was just that Cunanan was psychopathically jealous of Versace's success and ostentation and needed to murder the designer as the symbol of everything he desired but could never attain.

Yes, the analysis is just that deep.

*Vulgar Favors* was written twenty years ago, which still provides no excuse for Orth's delight in salacious detail and sexual innuendo, nor for her distorted pronouncements regarding gay men's lives, which she delivers with anthropological, Meadian certainty. Perhaps at this distance, she has developed the strength of character to be ashamed of her book, but one tends to doubt it.

In any event, what becomes clear is that delivering these dispatches from the exotic, repellent—and yet endlessly fascinating tribe of the sex-mad, fetish-driven, drug-addled homosexual underground, of the depraved and soulless super-rich—was Orth's real purpose in writing *Vulgar Favors*.

Because this is the space that Orth occupies as a writer—a world in which she deploys words like “lifestyle” and “jet-setting” in blissful ignorance that she is trite, unconscious of her evident envy of those who enjoy great fame and great riches even as she condemns them for moral corruption and shallowness. (For more examples of Orth's style, look no farther than the breathless, voyeuristic hack job she committed on Michael Jackson in her reportage for *Vanity Fair* between 1994 and 2005; or her most recent book, *The Importance of Being Famous: Behind the Scenes of the Celebrity-Industrial Complex*, Orth's slavering exposé of “the big room where the rules that govern mere mortals don't matter.”

*Vulgar Favors* is, to be sure, offensive and scandal-mongering, vacuous and devoid of insight, smutty and sneering, but what elevates the book to the level of tragicomedy is Orth's clear belief that, in writing it, she was practicing genuine journalism.

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## David says

I read this because it came up in a conversation with one of my bffs - he was reading it to supplement episodes of the Ryan Murphy-produced 'The Assassination of Gianni Versace'. I don't lean toward books of this sort - in fact, I don't think I've read one like it since Capote's 'In Cold Blood' (which I got around to reading about 15 years ago). Basically, I read it so I could talk about it with said bff.

Maureen Orth's book has received some unfair criticism at this site. She has, for example, been accused of being homophobic (as well as prudish about gay-related issues) when the book shows zero evidence of that. The book has been called "dated" simply for taking place in the late '90s (some people should look up the definition of "dated"). At least one person bemoaned the fact that the book isn't lighter in nature (like the work of Armistead Maupin) - but how light is a book about a serial killer supposed to be? There is also the

charge thrown that the book is full of typos (when it isn't; I didn't find any).

If anything, Orth's extremely well-researched document is pro-gay, in the sense that it realistically brings to light the difficulties this manhunt faced due to (at the time) the tendency on the part of police squads to be squeamish or standoffish or what-have-you about gay-related crimes. Orth makes a point of revealing that this crime spree resulted (at least to some degree) in the recognition of the need of better cooperation between the police and gay task forces.

As for the subject of the book...Orth (who obviously interviewed tons of people and as many as possible who were key elements) successfully answers just about every question laid before her in this endlessly frustrating labyrinth. Even though a significant number of truths are likely to never be unraveled, the author manages to connect enough dots for commendable closure.

Early on in the read, it's fairly evident that (in large part due to having volatile and unstable parents), Cunanan was a time-bomb with a long fuse. (The possibility also lurks that some people are simply born bad.) As he reached his 20s, the killer was often fairly sloppy about showing just how unhinged he really was - yet, with the largely-clueless environment he chose to inhabit, he was surrounded by people who were simply too superficial and too self-involved to really notice.

The book's subtitle looms large in a number of its concluding chapters; calling the manhunt 'disorganized' is putting it mildly. The search stretched over a considerable number of US states and each state had its own mandates for protocol - the result was chaos from lack of cooperation, with an unfortunate number of missed opportunities.

The professional aspect of the story aside, this mental-split tale of unbridled narcissism is one that overflows with envy, shame and secrets upon secrets.

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## **Erin says**

I probably would have loved this book more had it been updated. *Vulgar Favors* was originally published in 1999 and it shows. The way "The Gay Lifestyle" (its actually placed in quotes like that in the book) is discussed in this book is very dated and insulting. Maureen Orth seemed to be obsessed with the fact that gay men have sex with other men and that some of those men even have wives and children. She just seemed fixated on the sexual aspects of the gay community. Maybe in 1999 this was shocking information that was deemed important to understanding Andrew Cunanan. It just seemed a little obsessive to me but that's just my opinion.

Now on to the actual review.

I don't know what it was about the 1990's but to me looking back on it, '90's crime cases just seemed more "fun". We obviously had The O.J. trial and JonBenet Ramsey. The 90's just seemed built for cases like that, but strangely enough the murder of Versace has always been kinda ignored. I mean its understandable since just a few weeks later Princess Diana died in a Paris car accident and that really sucked all the air out of the room.

But..

The Versace murder case is the craziest case maybe ever. It had everything love triangles, drugs, prostitution, mental illness, fake identities, money, fame, and incompetent law enforcement.

Andrew Cunanan probably never had a chance. Raised by a mentally ill mother and a con man father. Andrew never learned right from wrong. The only things he was taught were how to lie to get money without actually working. Andrew lied about his families background, where he lived, where he went to school, what he did for a living, what celebrities he knew, and what he's name was. Andrew spent his life living as a prostitute and grifter and when he could no longer maintain that lifestyle he snapped and went on a multi state killing spree, that took the lives of 5 men including Gianni Versace.

After reading this book I'm left with more questions than answers, I still don't understand why Andrew started killing. The official version is what I stated in the previous paragraph, he couldn't maintain his lifestyle and snapped, but that doesn't make sense because he totally could have maintained his lifestyle. I don't know maybe there is no reason. Maybe he just wanted to kill. Maybe the first murder(a love rival) was planned and everything after that just got out of control.

Vulgar Favors is almost too researched I at times felt like I was in information overload. Maureen Orth does detail in frightening fashion the ways in which all levels of law enforcement from the local police up to the F.B.I completely bungled the cases and manhunt. Andrew Cunanan may have shot Gianni Versace but the F.B.I is responsible for his death.

Despite the problems I had with it I would still recommend Vulgar Favors since it is the definitive book on the case.

P.S. The entire time I was reading this I was picturing Darren Criss as Andrew Cunanan and not the actual real Andrew Cunanan.

Book-Riot 2018: A Book of True Crime.

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### **Jesse says**

It's well researched but the homophobia is a tad distracting. Also jumps around quite a bit which is distracting considering the timeline is important.

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### **Dorie says**

Very detailed and in depth look at the sick monster named Andrew Cunanan. It is well written and researched and really shines on the emotionless and drug fueled murders by this spineless creep.

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