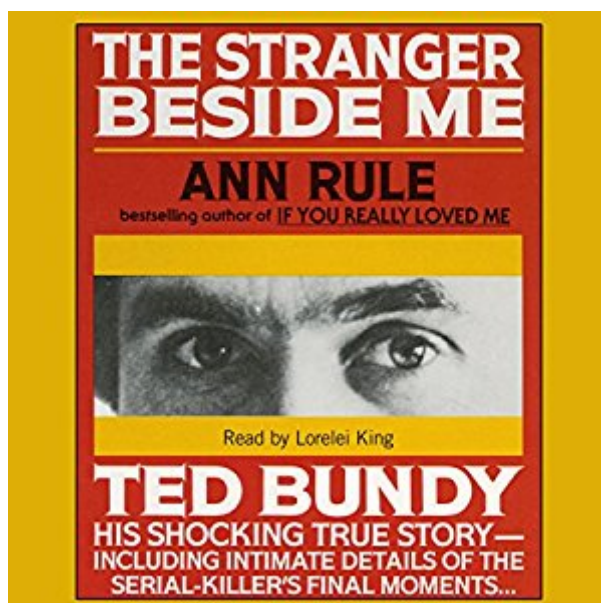


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The Stranger Beside Me: The Shocking True Story Of Serial Killer Ted Bundy



Synopsis

Ann Rule was working on the biggest story of her career, tracking the trail of victims left by a brutal serial killer. Little did this future best-selling author know that the savage slayer she was hunting was the young man she counted among her closest friends. Everyone's picture of a natural winner, Ted Bundy was a bright, charming, and handsome man with a promising future as an attorney. But on January 24, 1989 Bundy was executed for the murders of three young women - and had confessed to taking the lives of at least thirty-five more women from coast to coast. Ann Rule, who kept in constant contact with Bundy throughout the investigation, tells his story as no other person can, capturing the essence of his magnetic power, unholy compulsion, and demonic double life. Available for the first time on audio, this shocking true story is an unforgettable listening experience. In an emotional reading, Rule tells us about Ted Bundy - the man she thought she really knew...the stranger beside her.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had heard of this book, of course; had wanted to read it for years, so when this 20th anniversary edition came out, I decided to give it a go. I had a pre-conceived notion: OK, this is going to be a really interesting biography of Ted Bundy, with the added attraction of having been written by a former dear friend. Fast, easy crime reading, I thought. I was wrong. This story is so chilling, so frightening, it grips you in the gut. Ann Rule has simply stated the facts. No sensationalism, no gratuitous gore, no psychobabble. Just the facts. As they happened. And even though the reader

might think of Ted Bundy as "old news," and even though he was executed in 1989, this book makes one check to see that the doors and windows are locked. There are actually two stories here: one describes the gradual disintegration of a seemingly normal, affable, brilliant man into a sexual psychopath so evil, so methodical in his vicious killings, that one wonders if he was at all human. The other story is that of Ann Rule herself, a decent, hard-working, middle-aged mother of four who meets and befriends a nice young man working beside her in a crisis clinic. A man she regards as a younger brother; a man she views as a close and trusted friend. The slow but inexorable realization on Rule's part that this man is in fact an unspeakably violent serial killer is as painful to read as it was for her to experience. Each victim is described in terms of such respect and such anguish that even a family member, I think, can feel that his or her daughter has been given a chance to shine, a chance to be more than a victim, more than a nameless number (8th girl killed, and so forth). The poignancy of these girls' very human preoccupations and lives serves to outline the contrasting horror in even more detail. That is why Rule does not have to defile the victims with intricate detail. The contrast between their young lives and their terrible deaths is enough in itself. Rule's new *Afterward*, written in 2000, is fascinating. She has not "recovered and moved on"; there is no real "closure." She has come to accept that the incomprehensible contrast between Ted the Dear Friend and Ted the Monster will never leave her, and will never be fully explained, no matter how many facts she sifts, no matter how much progress has been made in understanding the sexual psychopath. It is her fate to have known Bundy in all his skins; it is our privilege to read her account of it.

This is an excellent true crime book. It has an unusual twist in that the author and the subject of the book, serial killer Ted Bundy, had a platonic relationship that arose from the time they were co-workers for a Seattle, Washington crisis center. Quite frankly, the author initially had no idea that Ted Bundy was anything other than what he appeared to be: a handsome, intelligent, charismatic, and articulate young man, who was, at the time, involved in local politics and later became a law student. When he became the suspect in the disappearance and murders of a number of very young, pretty women, the author was in total disbelief. As the evidence mounted against her friend, the author, who is a former police officer, could not shut her eyes to the reality that Ted Bundy was actually a very disturbed individual who was guilty of all of which he was accused and probably guilty of other such crimes for which he was not accused for evidentiary reasons. Consequently, the author would suffer some angst for many years, as she struggled to reconcile the Ted Bundy that she thought she knew with the fiend who was compelled to commit so many vicious abductions,

assaults, and murders. It is believed that at least thirty-five young women, and probably a good number more, died at the hands of Ted Bundy. The author details the abductions, assaults, and murders of his victims from coast to coast, which crimes were ultimately to make Ted Bundy a nationwide household name, and an entity to be feared. The investigative efforts of law enforcement officers in the states of Washington, Utah, Colorado, and Florida are revealed, as are Ted Bundy's arrests and his trials. She also details his two escapes from custody in Colorado, the last of which would find him heading to the sunshine state of Florida. Florida was an interesting choice of state for Ted Bundy, as it is a death penalty state in which convicted felons, who have been given the death penalty, are actually executed. Notwithstanding Florida's stance on capital crime, Ted Bundy went on to commit a slew of shocking assaults and murders in Florida for which he was ultimately arrested, tried, and convicted. Considering the fact that Ted Bundy could have chosen to relocate to a state other than Florida after his last escape from custody in Colorado, it almost appears as if he had a death wish by going to Florida and continuing to give in to his sick compulsion. Unfortunately for him, Florida was quite happy to make his wish come true, and on January 24, 1989, Ted Bundy was executed, and his reign of terror was finally over. Those who like the true crime genre will enjoy this well-written and well-researched book. It is highly detailed and contains a great deal of information, some of it quite personal due to the author's relationship with Ted Bundy. She paints a very intriguing, intimate portrait of him, one that is three dimensional and complex. He was definitely a man whose benign and compelling external visage was at odds with his many internal demons, as he was a prolific serial killer. Externally, Ted Bundy was the sort of man towards whom women gravitated, and there was no dearth of Ted Bundy groupies once he made headlines. In the updates at the end of the book, the author theorizes as to why Ted Bundy, a young man of so much promise, would end up the way that he did, and she provides some interesting and personal familial information from which the reader may draw his or her own conclusion. All in all, aficionados of the true crime genre will find much of interest in this book.

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