



Blood and Money: The Classic True Story of Murder, Passion, and Power

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Edgar Award Winner: The “gripping” true story of a beautiful Texas socialite, her ambitious husband, and a string of mysterious deaths (*Los Angeles Times*).

Joan Robinson Hill was a world-class equestrian, a glamorous member of Houston high society, and the wife of Dr. John Hill, a handsome and successful plastic surgeon. Her father, Ash Robinson, was a charismatic oil tycoon obsessed with making his daughter’s every dream come true.

Rich, attractive, and reckless, Joan was one of the most celebrated women in a town infatuated with money, power, and fame. Then one morning in 1969, she fell mysteriously ill. The sordid events that followed comprise “what may be the most compelling and complex case in crime annals” (Ann Rule, bestselling author of *The Stranger Beside Me*).

From the elegant mansions of River Oaks, one of America’s most exclusive neighborhoods, to a seedy underworld of prostitution and murder-for-hire, *New York Times*–bestselling author Thomas Thompson tracks down every bizarre motive and enigmatic clue to weave a fascinating tale of lust and vengeance. Full of colorful characters, shocking twists, and deadly secrets, *Blood and Money* is “an absolute spellbinder” and true crime masterpiece (*Newsweek*).

Blood and Money: The Classic True Story of Murder, Passion, and Power Details

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Author : Thomas Thompson

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From Reader Review Blood and Money: The Classic True Story of Murder, Passion, and Power for online ebook

Learnin Curve says

Utterly compelling and well worthy of the hype. It's a story in three books but is a tragedy in five acts. Very well written, I especially like that the court cases, which could have been boring if allowed to dominate the book, are separated by the stories and people who lead up to them. No one is portrait as a saint, they are shown as real people with real flaws but it's very tactfully done. With the last most damning court case, the author allows the real events and words to do the talking.

One of the things I came away with was just how convoluted and binding the system at the time was for prosecution lawyers. For example It's ludicrous that it was not legal for the prosecution to show a jury police records of a defendant. Had this happened today we would be reading a radically different and much shorter book.

John says

This true crime book is chilling, particularly if you grew up in River Oaks like I did and went to Christmas parties in the house where everything happened. I'm not much into the true crime genre, but I highly recommend this book for people who are... and even people who aren't, now that I think about it.

Sandy James says

One of the best true crime books I've read. Highly recommend.

Joshua says

This bleak story is one of the best true-crime books around.

Joan Robinson, the daughter of Ash Robinson, a rich oil millionaire, dies mysteriously, and her husband, John Hill, is brought to trial for murder. It ends in a mistrial, and John is murdered by a contract killer before he can be tried again. The books then follows the people involved in the murder as the law attempts to bring them to justice.

Now, I don't believe John murdered his wife. If I recall the book correctly (and it's been a while), it was described as medically impossible for him to have intentionally given her that disease. The only way for him to be guilty is through "murder by omission", which strikes me as a bizarre legal quirk which allows someone to suffer as a murderer when all they've committed is involuntary manslaughter. And in all probability, John isn't even guilty of that. The book pretty much admits that the only reason this case became an criminal trial is because of Ash Robinson's influence. It's also very strongly implied that Ash set up John's murder.

You would think that John, having been harassed, wrongfully accused, and finally murdered by his crazed father-in-law, would be the most sympathetic person on earth.

And you would be wrong. He's a douche; everyone in this book is. No one is completely sympathetic, and no one is completely unsympathetic, either. Every character is carefully written so that they can have full personalities, and they all have huge character flaws. It really gives you a bleak picture of humanity.

But the picture this book gives you of humanity is nowhere near as bleak as the picture it gives you of the legal system. I don't think a single person in this book gets fairly treated by the law. We get to see John be railroaded at the grand jury, through the eyes of it's only unbiased member, whose concerns are pretty much ignored by the rest. Another person on trial has some defense, but her lawyer lazily pleads her guilty on the chance that she'll be released on appeal. A third person (she was almost certainly guilty) is convicted, but it is not so much on the evidence but rather because her well-meaning lawyer made a slip-up which allowed the defendant's daughter to testify that her mother had prostituted her as a child.

All in all, this a wonderfully written book. I recommend it to anyone who enjoys true-crime, or to anyone who feels too happy or optimistic about life and wants to put an end to that nonsense.

Colin says

"Some men steal and kill...because they think they are too ugly to do anything else."

I expected more from this. I loved the first two acts, but the third left me wanting. The courtroom drama just wasn't dramatic. Or maybe I just didn't care enough about Bobby, Lilla, and Marcia. It wasn't their story.

Jill Meyer says

One of the benefits of the e-book publishing boom is the reissuing of old, out-of-print books. Several books by the late author Thomas Thompson have been published in e-form and I just reread two of his classics, "Richie", and "Blood and Money". I had read both books when they were originally published in the 1970's and I found they have both stood the test of time. I'm going to review them together; both are true crime books but they differ in scope. One, "Richie", is a very personal story of one family, which is torn apart by one son's use of drugs and his death at the hand of his father in a final horrific scene. The other, "Blood and Money", is a sprawling tale, set in Houston, and is the story of many people who are touched by a woman's death and the murder of her husband a couple of years later.

I've read three classic true-crime books. They are Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood", Norman Mailer's "The Executioner's Song", and Tommy Thompson's "Blood and Money". All three books feature the crime in the first part, and the after-events in the second part. In "Blood", the first part is the life and death of Joan Robinson Hill, a legendary Houston society beauty and equestrian. Adopted as an infant by oilman Ash Robinson and his wife, Joan had been through two short marriages before meeting and marrying Dr John Hill, a young plastic surgeon just establishing a practice in Houston. Rarely has there been a more mismatched couple and the marriage soon soured after the birth of their only child, Robert. Joan Robinson Hill died in very murky circumstances - possibly abetted by her estranged husband - and her father, who

adored her more than anything else in his life, vowed revenge on Dr John Hill. The book's second part is about the murder of John Hill, in front of his third wife, his son, and his mother, and the cast of characters involved in that murder. It is this part that Thompson's writing shines.

The plot and execution of the Hill's murder involved some of the strangest "characters" you'll ever read about. From Marcia McKittrick - the proverbial prostitute with a heart of gold -, to her sometime boyfriend, Bobby Vandiver, who carried out the murder, to Lilla Paulus, the Houston matron with the bad, bad past who set up the assassination, and to the lawmen who worked the case and the lawyers that defended and prosecuted McKittrick and Paulus, Tommy Thompson brings the characters to life. The reader feels as if he's there, with Dr Orrin Staves, who loses his pistol to Marcia McKittrick in a funny scene and then tries to walk off with the weapon when he's testifying in court. The man just wants his gun back...even if it now evidence in a murder trial!

But if Thompson's characters are beautifully written, so is his writing about the city and society - high and low - of Houston, which almost becomes a character. Thompson's book is about people - good and bad, high and low, moral and immoral - who find themselves bound together in the death of a woman and the aftermath of that death.

Christopher M Simonton says

I've been long infatuated with this story and finally got around to reading this book. Lilla Paulus was my Grandfather's adopted cousin (she was adopted as an infant by his aunt and uncle), so I grew up hearing about this saga. I thought I had an idea of how crazy this story was, but this book provided many more details I had never heard. Some of the family stories about Lilla and her wild and crazy early-adult years put another interesting twist on the tale and made it that much better for me to read.

Dennis Nehamen says

I notice that my average rating on books is almost a perfect five. There's a reason. I only rate books I finish and I only finish books that thrill me. Blood and Money, similar to Serpentine, is not a complex story but it is a great way to spend a couple days sitting out by the pool on vacation. I'm not giving it a 5 for it's deep meaning or stylistic presentation. It's just a great story of a little too much parental love.

Renee says

The story was very interesting with a lot of twists and crazy turns. The book dragged a little bit and I found the author to drone on about details that didn't matter to the story. He probably could have told the same story in a lot less pages.

Sherry Haning says

Great true story!

Very much worth reading. Tedious in places. I remember parts of this trial in my early teens. Ash Robison was a great father!

Trin says

A compelling, if overly long, look at a Texas family's descent into tragedy and murder in the late '60s/early '70s. Lots of larger than life characters and a story so bizarre, it has to be true. By the end, though, I was just exhausted: at some point the narrative had begun to feel like misery porn. I'm off to cleanse myself with a novel about chefs.

Jim Thomsen says

One of the best true-crime books of all time, in my opinion. Which feels odd to say when the ending is so ... unsatisfying. I walked away from "Blood And Money" thinking "I hung on for some 500 pages ... for ... THIS?"

And yet, it worked in its way, because I was pretty I knew who did what to who, even if those people were never going to get a fair day in court. And that wound up being good enough for me, largely because everything that had built up to that feeling of squirmy justice was simply incredible. The characters are larger than life, drama kings and queens in the mode of the true Southerner of the upper classes in the time. (There's a great bit in the book about how being dainty and fainty and hysterical was considered in Southern blue-blood circles to be a sure sign of good breeding among their women.) The things they do, and against, one another are deliciously outrageous. And every over-the-top scene is rendered in detail so incredible that I find myself incredulous at the idea that so many image-conscious people would spill their spleens to someone who wanted to preserve their indiscretions forever in the public eye through the power of print.

For getting all those riotous details of affairs and seductions and abuses and corruption, and being able to make sense enough of them to weave them into a nearly seamless narrative, Thomas Thompson must have been one of the greatest interviewers of all time. And his other journalism skills are on keen display here too — it's obvious he got his hands on private records he probably should have been denied as often as he got the public records that he should have gotten. It's equally obvious that he knew Houston — and indeed all of Texas — as well as Dominick Dunne knew Manhattan, Long Island and Connecticut. And he knew how the law-and-justice system worked every bit as well as he knew how it DIDN'T work.

"Blood And Money" is exhaustively thorough, and exhaustively long, in the way that the best true-crime books of the 1970s were ... and in the way true-crime books are no longer allowed to be. As an unrepeatable phenomenon that stands up long past its time, it deserves to be celebrated with the best works in its genre. And, happily, many of today's true-crime authors routinely hold it up as just such a classic.

I don't care about the South, I don't care about the upper crust and I didn't like a single character in "Blood And Money." But none of that mattered because I like a good story, and "Blood And Money" is one of the best.

Russell Sanders says

The Houston newspaper recently said that Thomas Thompson's *Blood and Money* was the quintessential book about Houston. I had read the book in 1978 when it was first released, and I found it fascinating. With this new accolade, I decided to read it once again. And I wasn't disappointed. Reading like a novel, rather than the non-fiction it is, Thompson captivates his readers with a story of devotion, greed, treachery, prostitution, and guile. The book opens with the death of socialite Joan Robinson Hill, the daughter of crusty wealthy oilman Ash Robinson. Both she and her father were firmly entrenched in the River Oaks set—the area of Houston where the fabulously wealthy live and play. Ash is convinced that Joan's philandering plastic surgeon husband John Hill murdered her. And thus begins a tangled web that doesn't unravel until the final word, 475 pages later. Ash Robinson is a J.R. Ewing as he uses his influence and money to pursue an indictment against his son-in-law. What takes place would today—and probably even then—be considered illegal, but this was 1960s Houston, Texas, and rich men could get away with a lot more than perhaps they can today. Before the story is over, there is a trial, a murder-for-hire, a crazy heroin-riddled prostitute, and a woman, who wants us to believe she is a simple society matron, who is accused of master-minding a heinous crime and put on trial as well. A fiction writer who made up a story of this complexity would be hailed a master storyteller, but Thompson worked from interviews, research, and trial transcripts and made up nothing, yet he spins a story that is compelling and revealing of Houston in the 1960s—or at least of one segment of Houston society, presided over by a smothering father who felt he could control his tiny world, at least where his daughter was concerned.

Stephanie says

It's a classic. I re-read it, and somehow had forgotten EVERY freaking detail. Except of course how totally bizarre the rich Texans are. That stuck with me from decades ago when I read this for the first time.

The crime of the murdered wife/daughter was all resolved by halfway through, then the obsessed old rich guy (the original victim's father) just basically went out and hired people and made sure that the murderer paid.

Wonder what ever happened to the kid? Time to google. It was the first time I had read about Racehorse Haynes, the attorney for the original murderer. Wow, and attorneys wonder why people think they are totally willing to sell themselves for money.

Anthony Whitt says

This true crime story covers the typical elements that precede the act of murder. The hunger for power and control is fueled by greed, lust and revenge that drives desperate people to unimaginable acts. It's a detailed analysis of the motives of a troubled family and prominent businessmen sinking to the level of gangland reprobates to satisfy their insatiable desires. The twists and turns along the way deliver surprising results all the way to the last page in this Edgar Award winning tale.
