



Playing With Fire: The True Story of a Nurse, Her Husband, and a Marriage Turned Fatal (St. Martin's True Crime Library)

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A beautiful nurse. A lethal injection. A gruesomely charred corpse. Nothing could have shocked the sleepy community of Morgantown, West Virginia, more than the lurid details that surfaced after a house fire claimed the life of Shelly Michaelâ€™s husband Jimmy. Local authorities suspected possible arson. Then they discovered that Jimmy had been dead before the fire even startedâ€”paralyzed by a fatal dose of muscle relaxantâ€!

Did Shelly Michael, a respected nurse and mother, kill her second husband and torch her own home? Were the rumors true that sheâ€™d had an affair with her husbandâ€™s employee only two weeks before the murder? Or did she kill Jimmy simply for the insurance money? Charged with first-degree murder and first-degree arson, Shelly would never stop claiming her innocenceâ€”even to this day

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From Reader Review Playing With Fire: The True Story of a Nurse, Her Husband, and a Marriage Turned Fatal (St. Martin's True Crime Library) for online ebook

Amy says

Three stars for the quality of writing, but four stars for being SO INTERESTING since it was a true story that took place in my hometown--Morgantown, West Virginia. I knew all of the locations, and the judge in the case was none other than Judge Stone--who my mom worked for as his secretary for years and years. And the case itself was interesting!

Caitlin says

This was an interesting read simply because of the fascinating case--it was not a very well written book. I decided to read this book after a friend of mine pointed out the now empty space at 545 Killarney Drive a few months ago as we drove past. She has family just a few houses down from where the Michaels lived, so she told me the story of Shelly Michael. I became intrigued and found this book. It was especially interesting for me to read since I do live in Fairmont, WV and am greatly familiar with several of the places and areas mentioned around Clarksburg, Fairmont, and Morgantown in this story. I found myself growing frustrated with the writing, however. Obviously, the author chose to approach the crime by stating the facts and quoting those associated with the occurrence. It's not a bad idea, but I feel like he could have made it more appealing with more descriptive word choices, etc. It got a little repetitive when he kept writing, "he recalled" or "she remembered" after every quote. Also, I don't think all of the history behind the towns of Clarksburg and Morgantown, etc. were necessary.

Kimberly Hicks says

This story just broke my heart because it's hard to believe someone would actually do this to their spouse, but Michelle Michael, committed the unthinkable--she murdered her husband. It was bad enough that she set fire to their home, but she drugged her husband, first, then set him on fire. The drug she used paralyzed her husband whereas he could still see and hear everything going on around him, but he wasn't able to move. Eventually, the drug stopped him from breathing, but according to the forensic experts, his brain still lived 13 minutes which means he knew he was being set on fire. What a cruel way to die!

Throughout this book, it was constantly being stated that Mrs. Michael was super intelligent, but how intelligent can you be to commit such a heinous act by murdering your husband? She was stupid and a habitual liar! I don't want to give away why she did it, or the theories behind it, but I'm glad of the outcome. Once again, John Glatt did an outstanding job outlining all the details and putting in just the right information to leave you turning the pages and never wanting to put it down. I finished this book up in two days. If you are a true-crime lover, such as myself, you will definitely be mesmerized by the story of Michelle Michael. This is a jaw-dropping good read.

One note, I noticed quite a few typographical errors, some of which were stated by witnesses (which the

author noted), and some missed by the editor of the book. That disturbed me a bit, but being a writer myself, I know how these things can happen. Trust me, it won't hinder your reading or take away from the story.

Brandi says

This was an interesting book to read! This story took place in my hometown of Morgantown, WV. I was actually working one block away when all of this was taking place! It was a sad story to read what Michelle Michael did to her husband! How can somebody do that to their spouse! How could Michelle be on home confinement and only worry about getting her nails done! She still pleads she is not guilty, However after reading this book, it all adds up to her as the killer! Great book to read but a shame this had to happen to a husband, Spouse, brother and son!!! I drive past the location that this took place about 3 times per week and cannot image what was going through his mind as he lay their paralyzed as his wife sets him on fire!

♥ Marlene♥ says

Well I finished this a few days ago and it is a very powerful book. I thought it was well written. If I think of how that man suffered I get so angry that there are still people saying he must have committed suicide just to get back at her. Crazy. She lied about where she was and so justice is done even though she is still claiming her innocence, I do not believe her. There is a 48 hours video of this case which you can watch online (If you have a good working computer which I don't at the moment, I was only able to watch half.) Her followers are pointing the finger towards the ex wife of Jimmie. The one she , Shelly stole the husband from, but that is just plain crazy.

Recommend this book.

ETA Update April 11 2015: It has been many years since I read this book but I am still sometimes thinking about this case so because of that this book deserves 5 stars. Does not happen much. I had that with Odd Girl out which is how girls are raised and how they are always supposed to be nice and that starts very early and there are other books but yes. This one was good.

Nancy says

An interesting true crime story about a nurse who killed her husband. The book covers the family's backgrounds through the murder, the investigation and through sentencing. It seemed like a pretty cut and dried case but still very interesting.

Yolanda says

This was a well told story with many facts and details. Michele (wife) did not have much of a heart or warmth to her. Very sad for the loved ones left behind. Great work from all the investigators, inspectors and all that helped put on a case for the state. I will read more from this author.

Judi says

Glatt delivers another first rate true crime story. His writing is clear, crisp, and the story compelling.

Jackie says

I liked the book I thought it was very well written and all the story flowed together so smoothly. can't believe Shelly micheal killed her husband he seemed like a great guy. her personality just changed so randomly that would of really freaked me out. she got what she deserve and I thank the author for giving us every little peice detail by detail

Maryellen says

Morgantown, West Virginia, home of the WVU Mountaineers, Ruby Memorial Hospital and Shelly Goots Michael, convicted murderer.

On November 28th, 2005, Shelly's husband, Jimmy Michael, breathed his last breath. And breathing that last breath will be the most horrific thing that Jimmy will have ever done. Jimmy was injected with a drug that would render him coherent enough to know that his body was about to fail him. He was living his own death.

And then fire broke out. Thankfully, Jimmy never breathed any of the smoke. He was already dead.

They were living the perfect life. They had a beautiful house. Jimmy founded a successful medical supply business. Shelly had recently furthered her degree and became a Nurse Practitioner. Between them they had four children blending their family together from previous marriages. They were very active in the community and in the church. For all those on the outside looking in, the picture was perfect.

Author John Glatt paints a different picture of this family on the pages of **PLAYING WITH FIRE**. Glatt introduces us to a cold and calculating Shelly Michael who loved money and attention. Shelly Michael definitely got attention~~she got the attention of then Detective Paul Mezzanotte who would help to build a case against Shelly. Laid out in chronological order, this book tells the story of Shelly's life and Jimmy's death. Ultimately you will have to decide for yourself if justice was truly served.

☆☆☆

Jill Lundquist says

Wow. I don't know what it was about this book but I found it fascinating. Compelling subject matter, yes, but it was laid out in a very readable way, and I am definitely a fan of John Glatt's after this (my first book of his).

Michelle Michael = shark eyes. I think it is quite telling that the defense called only seven witnesses to the stand. And one of the defense's character witnesses was the wife of the woman Michelle was sleeping with at the time of Michelle's husband's murder!!! Seriously?? You know you have some self-evaluating to do when the wife of your lover is one of only a handful of people you can find to say 'good' things about you!!!

Michelle is a cheerleader turned wife turned nurse turned ex-wife turned wife turned widow. She was sleeping with her husband's co-worker (and good friend's husband), Bobby. She continued to 'hold hands' and 'kiss on' Bobby after her husband's death. Michelle's late husband (James) had recently increased his insurance policy. Michelle didn't want to work anymore. Hmm... Did Michelle murder her husband because she didn't want to work? Because she wanted to be with Bobby? Because she didn't want to be divorced a second time? Who knows. But after reading this book, I am certain she did it. Never, aside from perhaps Scott or Drew Peterson, has the spouse of a missing/deceased loved one acted so cold and careless. Grieving widow, my foot!!

One thing in particular I liked about this book is the author did not try to paint the victim in a completely innocent hue. James Michael had his faults, and the author spells them out in plain and simple. I liked that. James Michael cheated on his first wife (with Michelle), was abusive to his child. He was not perfect and the author didn't try to portray him that way. I wish more authors would use that approach. Despite his faults, he certainly didn't deserve to die, muchless the cruel, cruel way in which he did.

All-in-all, a sad, quick true crime read with a diabolical villainess.

Kim says

It was a very good true crime book.

Maria Ulery says

I ordered this book after watching the 48 hours episode and talking with my mom about it since it took place in our hometown! Michelle Michaels had a great husband, wonderful kids, loving parents and in laws and a great job! She had a few friends and one great friend whom she grew up with and even though they lived miles apart they visited and kept up with each other. So why did she devise a plot to kill her husband who bought her dream home, was a hard worker and catered to her! I don't know either then and still don't now but I have to agree with what I read and there is a lot of detail in this book and everyone said she was "cold" and premeditated this horrid murder that changed hers and the lives of everyone around her! As a PICU nurse at Ruby Memorial hospital she has access to the paralyzing drug that killed her husband whom she cheated on with a close friend and again why? Well my opinion, she wanted the \$\$ and the man she was having an affair with and I think she thought if she had the \$\$ she could talk him into leaving his wife. This was a book with a lot of info not only about the case and all the people involved but also various important information about Morgantown, WV to boot. I lived in this town from birth to adult hood and still go there to this day and it amazes me that tragedy is this close to home. It proves never say "not me", not my family, not in my neighborhood! Yes bad things happen to good people and they can't be brought back. Jimmy Michaels died and his kids, parents, friends and family can never get him back even though Ms. Michaels is in jail no one wins! Great Job by the author as it's my first time reading a true crime book by John Glatt it won't be my last. 4.5 * Great book especially if you are connected to Morgantown in any way!

Indra says

Better than average grocery-store true crime book. I picked it up because I watched a TV show about the case and wanted to read something more detailed about it--this book delivered.

Julie Jividen says

Excellent book. Especially a great read for anyone with Morgantown, WV ties.
