



Kill Grandma For Me

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In December, 1994, 13-year-old Wendy Gardner convinced James Evans, her 15-year-old lover, to strangle her grandmother to death. Then she took her own little sister prisoner, stole her grandmother's money, and began a three-day orgy of sex and junk food.

From the heinous crime itself to the sensational trial, here is the graphic and shocking account of one of the most bizarre killings ever committed in the state of New York.

Kill Grandma For Me Details

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Sarah (Mood Reader) says

This was an alright book. I picked it up at a garage sale for 50 cents. I found myself gasping a lot as I was reading. I can not imagine doing this to my grandmother and the thought sickens me. The main question throughout the book is Why? and if I had to answer that I would say because of greed and selfishness. I am just thankful that the sister was able to get away before something bad happened to her as well. I really hope that these two are in prison for a very long time.

Anna Motteler says

If you're like me and the first thing you think about this book, is "Wow, what the heck?!" Then you're in for exactly what you would probably expect. A murder mystery. But, if you read the back of the novel & noticed the "orgy of sex and junk food" you will be surprised. Because I most definitely was. There is more sex in this book than you would imagine.

The girl, Wendy, is 13 and her boyfriend, James, is 15. And they are extremely sexually active. This is the first thing that makes this book weird. But really, I have heard my friends claim they hate their parents or their aunt or uncle or something, but Wendy REALLY hates her grandma. I don't even understand why, and I guess this is what bothers me most about this book. She wants her dead because she doesn't approve of James as her boyfriend. Heck, me and my parents have argued before about who I chose to date sometimes, but never to the point I wanted to KILL them.

Some readers might think the sex and the "offensive language" ruin the book, but I think it ties in perfectly. These are two "emotionally disturbed" kids and they murdered an elderly woman. When it gets to the court case, I began to get a little irritated because...well.. read for yourself and find out. But, I don't think justice was served like it should have been.

It really was a good book. Just... different.

Billie-jo says

Good book. Read it if you like true crime

Tara Jasmine says

I really liked how this true crime book was written. I find that with true crime the last half of the book can be so incredibly boring with the trial going on and on. This one however described the trial but quickly and efficiently, pointing out the key points and then moving on. This story is just so sad and I truly feel very sorry for all involved.

Kirsty Hopgood says

"If I kill her will you love me?"

What a disturbing story! Most disturbing to me is their ages, they're kids - babies! Wendy was 13.

To read this book is like a smorgasboard laid out for you of how easily neglected kids can just go from bad to worse. Though Wendy's grandmother, the victim, wanted the best for her, she also in a way gave her little to live for - comparing and cursing her turning out like her prostitute mother - her old school intentions good, but not a nurturing guide for this young girl. So no surprise when this troubled young man paid attention to her.

I've googled this as it was early 90's - apparently Wendy is now out, went to college, married etc. The thing that I found most bizare was how 'easy' this murder just came about. People forget kids are KIDS -tell them don't touch that hot pot, they probably will until burnt then they learn - they're sponges, they need guidance, teaching and love - both Wendy and James, both troubled broken homes - a scenario that just didn't need to, nor should have, happened.

Joanne says

True crime about Wendy, a 13 year old girl and James her 15 year old boyfriend who are accused of killing Wendy's grandmother in Saugerites, NY right after the Christmas holiday 1994.

Quick and easy read. Told the background and trial with enough detail, but not too much so it read very quickly. Some true crime gets so involved in the trial and all the legality it can be confusing.

Wendy's diary snipets and her dysfunctional family (Mom & Dad had their own issues) background doesn't really explain this teens' hate and emotions. She was really too young to be that involved with a steady and extremely sexually active. I don't think she liked Grandma's discipline and old fashion concern for her well being. It never really became clear to me whether James or Wendy was the one in control of the relationship that displayed an unhealthy fatal attraction.

Carol says

Not an easy story to evaluate and present a balanced review, due to personal circumstances and life's observations coloring my thinking. At what age should a "normal" child know right from wrong? Or an "abused" child? What is normal, and who defines it? How does one determine if the horridly devious behaviors were results of their environments... or plain inherent evil, unleashed? A cross-section look at our population has revealed to me that both good and evil resides in the most "healthy," and the most "dysfunctional," families. So, that said...am pleased the vast majority of children from abusive, dysfunctional homes avoid becoming abusers or killers. Also sad that some children from advantaged, loving situations are capable of unspeakable violence. I found nothing shocking in this book; just a fleshed-out timeline of facts that made me reflect on the human condition.

Eva Leger says

This is definitely an interesting true crime book - if only because of the fact that two kids murdered one of their own grandmothers. There aren't many mistakes in the book that I caught so that was refreshing. I don't know what kind of allowances the author took with the conversations and the "feelings" - because of the wording in some parts I think he possibly took a little more allowance than I feel is okay - but I can't be positive.

It bothered me that the author repeatedly referred to the girls grandmother as "the bitch" or "the old hag" or whatever else. He did it to make the reader aware of her granddaughters feelings I'm sure but that doesn't sit well with me. He could have gotten her feelings across without using his words to call her these things. I'd have done things a little differently there. This woman has sisters and family out there somewhere and even if she didn't it's just not right.

I didn't like the insinuation that rap music caused the boy to kill. It didn't. The boy caused the boy to kill. He could have listened to Olivia Newton-John and still killed. Irresponsible on the part of the author IMO.

Am I just naive or did everyone else believe that doctors who were felons could no longer be doctors? Well, apparently, in at least one state, they sure as hell can. That's a tad bit scary to find out.

The book is written okay and I'd read another of the authors t.c.'s sometime.

Devlina Deyanira says

First of all, this book:

The sources for the author's information largely included newspaper articles and transcripts. An interview or two may also have been sources. So it does contain a lot of factual information but much of what fills the in-between are speculative at best. I think in an attempt to make it read more like a novel and less like a news article he compromised the accuracy of it. The book over-simplifies the complexity of all that was going on in the minds of these two teenagers, though it is truly impossible for anyone to know that much. I did find myself laughing at a few of his attempts to recreate/dramatize some aspects of their relationship only because of it's sheer ridiculousness and inaccuracy. Wendy, and/or her wife, has expressed frustration with the author for not stressing the abuse she endured which allegedly brought her to ask James to kill her grandmother. However, I find he spent more than adequate time on the subject; honestly more than should have been devoted to it as there really wasn't much factual evidence to support her claims to begin with.

Overall, I didn't think the book was terrible but I didn't really enjoy it either.

Being that I have a close relationship with one of the subjects of this book I wanted to throw in an update:

Justice was served. Both James and Wendy completed their sentences. In the end, James served 19 years. He was sentenced as a minor but this is nearly the time he would have received if sentenced as an adult because of parole rejections (for reasons that the Supreme Court later determined were unjust). Wendy served only 10 years.

The justification for James' denial for parole release was always cited as "Nature of the crime". Though, it was the same nature of crime of which Wendy was convicted yet it seemed to matter less when her parole decision was being made. Again, the parole board was found to be making these rejections unjustly in 2013 and it led to several appeals.

James was evaluated on 4 separate occasions by psychiatrists prior to his release, as well as once after, to

ensure he was not mentally ill (including sociopathic) and for risk assessment. He was found to be a very low risk for recidivism (relapse into criminal behavior) and they determined he is not suffering from any mental illness and therefore deemed him fit for release into society.

Additionally, his prison records reflected only excellent behavior and attempts to further himself educationally and otherwise, yet the parole board continued to deny him with each appearance before the board.

Now he is living his life happily and as fully and peacefully as he can with his fiancé, the love of his life. His family and friends comprise the strongest support system he could have hoped for.

James was young when this horrific event transpired. Though he wishes, more than anything, he could reverse his actions that resulted in Betty's death, it is not humanly possible. Still, he has matured considerably over 20 years' time. James is exceptionally kind, intelligent and a decent person that should not be hated or feared because of what happened 20 years ago. He has paid and continues to pay the price for that mistake.

****Note:** I purchased this book from in 2005. I re-read it before writing this review. Additionally, I have read the court transcripts from the trials of both James and Wendy******

Amy says

I could not pass up buying a book with this title. Thank you Bucket O'Blood!

It may be one of the trashiest books I've ever read, but we're at Pitchfork this weekend and I needed something that requires little concentration and also doesn't matter if beer gets spilled on it. I feel a little self-conscious reading it in front of all the hipsters, but the good thing about being in your thirties is that you give less of a shit. I'll write more of a review when I'm done!

Done! Poor book is also done, because it got soaked during the scary thunderstorm at Pitchfork today. It was actually better/more substantive than I thought it would be. It wasn't just a timeline of events - there was also some relatively astute commentary that I agreed with. Namely, the author posits that you can't point to one factor as the prevailing motive for the murder; it was a combination of a whole slew of things that made these kids act the way they did. I was glad the author didn't just paint them as horrible teenagers. That would have been easy to do, but it certainly doesn't tell the whole story. Instead, DeFelice holds society largely responsible, saying that other people/institutions should have stepped in when it became clear that Evans and Gardner were slipping. There was a good quote towards the end about how we're all responsible to each other, but I can't copy it since the book is too waterlogged.

I guess true crime books are the Amy equivalent of a "beach read," and as such, it served me well!

Tinamarie says

I read this book for a criminal justice project in college on juveniles. Having grown up in saugerties, this story was a true shocker since saugerties for the most part is a quiet, small community. It was well written, appeared factual and does draw the reader into the twisted and demented thoughts of the young teenagers

involved in these horrific acts.

Kelly Kelly says

For anyone who enjoys True Crime novels - this is an addiction from start to finish. Some parts made me cringe, while others made me curious and inquisitive into the minds of young adults and those in need of psychotherapy. I've always loved True Crime and Non-Fiction. I wouldn't, however, recommend this book to a first time reader of True Crime.

Kittiya says

I would have to say this was well written.

Even though I didn't like the way the story was portrayed doesn't mean all the much. I've read quite a few books like this. This one was just a bit... different then the others I can't put my finger on it.

That being said, It was about a girl (barley a teenager) pays her boyfriend to kill her grandma. Which he does. Then it goes on to describe what they did the day of and after. Come to think of it I can't remember what her sentence & punishment was. Weird, I guess it's been to long since I last read it.

Shirley says

This is the story of a young girl who thinks the only way to be happy is to kill the one person who loved her most. It is the story of youth being in a hurry to "Live their own life". Gripping yet heartbreaking as more than just the one life is lost.

Jeannie says

It's been some time ago that I read this book but I do remember being horrified that a child this young could be so cold-hearted as to arrange the murder of her grandmother and with no remorse. Well written and easy reading true crime.
