



Killer in the House

Ten Days of Terror in a Pennsylvania Suburb

Kathryn Canavan (Author)

KEY FEATURES:

- The minute-by-minute story of a killer who broke into a suburban home and shot six people to death one by one as they returned from work or school.
- It was an event so shocking that it inspired two episodes of TV's Criminal Minds and residents who lived through the ten-day search for the killer can still rattle off the exact date and the names of the victims fifty years later.
- It is also the inside story of how a fledgling township police force solved a mass murder in ten days without benefits of DNA, street cameras, cell tower pings, facial-recognition software or computer databases.

DESCRIPTION:

A gripping, meticulously researched account reconstructing the minute-by-minute murders of six victims in 1976 Trevose, Pennsylvania.

A meticulously researched page-turner about one of the Philadelphia suburbs' most shocking 20th-century crimes. A gunman broke into Jack and Peggy Abt's house moments after the last family member left for the day. He took a seat next to the upright piano in the living room and waited silently for 11 hours. He didn't eat. He didn't sleep. He didn't watch television.

People expect things to go bump in the night, but, in 1976, most adults never fretted a stranger would invade the sanctity of their home in the middle of the day. Six people walked through the kitchen door one by one that afternoon, all expecting nothing more than a Friday night fish fry. The killer leaped out from behind the living room wall over and over and over and over and over and over again. He fired at them at a distance of less than 18 inches, the width of a dining room chair. After each murder, he dragged the body to the basement. Then, to maintain the element of surprise, he sped back upstairs to tidy up for his next unsuspecting victim.

This first-person story from a news reporter who was on the scene 90 minutes after the killer slipped away is built from autopsy reports, prison records, IQ tests, trial transcripts, the killer's own eidetic confession, interviews with witnesses in 1976 and in the 2020s, and the author's experiences covering the case from the first night to the

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stunning courtroom moment when the announcement of six death penalties was met with loud cheers.

With that research, it was possible to reconstruct the six murders, minute by minute. Tension builds as the six innocent victims turn the kitchen doorknob at 3:30, 4:15, 4:40, 5:15, 6:10 and at 6:30. Readers know their fates, but they didn't.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

To get a story, journalist Kathryn Canavan has reported at gunpoint, lived with the Moonies, negotiated with a killer and joined Tug McGraw in the dugout. She has worked as a reporter or editor on daily newspapers in four states. She is the author of two other true crime books—*Lincoln's Final Hours* and *True Crime Philadelphia*. She has been featured on PBS, CSPAN-3 and the Discovery Channel. Her writing has been published in *USA Today*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Daily Beast* and the *History News Network*.

REVIEWS:

"Kathryn Canavan's *Killer in the House* is true crime writing at its best. Extensively researched and told with compelling insights and graceful writing, the book tells the story of the gruesome Abt family murders with humanizing details that give this decades-old crime new relevance in our increasingly violent America.

Revisiting a story she covered as a crime reporter in Trevoze, Pennsylvania, Canavan takes the reader to the crimes as they happen. Recalling her first-hand experience covering the murders, she follows the facts as they come slowly into the light. The innocent victims emerge as individuals as the story flows into the detectives' obsession with the case and, finally, the arrest of the perpetrator. The case—the pre-meditated shooting deaths of six family members and the family's Saint Bernard—made history as one of the most notorious crimes of the 20th century.

This true crime story unfolds with as much suspense as a fine mystery novel. *Killer in the House* made it hard for me to turn off the reading light and get to sleep."

Anne Hillerman, New York Times bestselling author of the *Leaphorn, Chee and Manuelito* mysteries