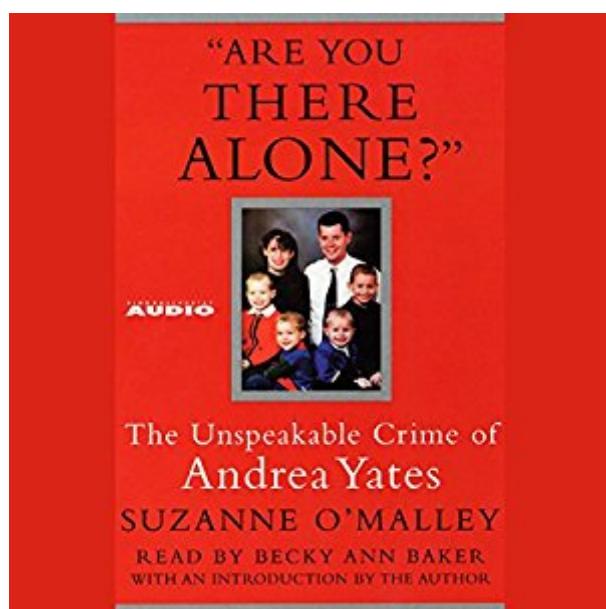


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Are You There Alone?: The Unspeakable Crime Of Andrea Yates



Synopsis

In the tradition of *In Cold Blood*, *The Executioner's Song*, and *A Civil Action*, Suzanne O'Malley exposes the human mystery of the most horrifying crime in recent history and the legal drama surrounding it. As a journalist, Suzanne O'Malley began covering the murders of Noah, John, Paul, Luke, and Mary Yates hours after their mother, Andrea Yates, drowned them in their suburban Houston home in June 2001. Over twenty-four months, O'Malley interviewed or witnessed the sworn testimony of more than a hundred participants in this drama, including Yates herself; her husband, Rusty Yates; their families; attorneys; the personnel of the Harris County district attorney's and sheriff's offices; medical staff; friends; acquaintances; and expert witnesses. O'Malley argues persuasively that under less extraordinary circumstances, a mentally ill woman would have been quietly offered a plea bargain and sent to an institution under court supervision. But on March 12, 2002, Andrea Yates was found guilty of the murders of three of her five children. She is currently serving a life sentence and will not be eligible for parole until 2041. O'Malley's exclusive personal communications with Andrea Yates and her interviews with Rusty Yates allow her to offer fully realized portrayals of people at the center of this horrifying case. In "Are You There Alone?" O'Malley makes a critical contribution to our understanding of mental health issues within the criminal justice system. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

this is a fairly well-written book. I have two problems with it though. First off, quotes from Andrea Yates are dropped in the text willy nilly w/ no rhyme or reason. They are inset from the text but don't

appear to have anything to do with what is being talked about. Quotes from Andrea could be very interesting if they were within some context but that is not the case. The bigger problem to me is how pro-Rusty this book is. On the one hand, I do think he loved his children and he did try to get his wife some psychiatric help (e.g., he administered meds, took her in for visits) but overall I think he bears a good bit of responsibility for the following reasons....Rusty is the one who introduced Andrea to the holy-rolling street-preaching couple who taught that women should not be the wives of their husbands, but instead their servants- who taught that women are all to blame for Eve's sin- and who taught that bad mothers are "Jezebels" who should kill themselves rather than lead their children astray (i.e., resort to violence). These people became Andrea's mentors and Rusty introduced her to them. Also, Rusty moved his family into a bus to "live light"- Andrea was raising four kids in trailers and buses w/ no running water and the kids had to sleep in the hold. No doubt this contributed to her stress and psychotic break. And long after she gave signs of being depressed, suicidal and psychotic, Rusty kept impregnating her (at least two of the kids after she started having issues). In short, Rusty, the sane one in the relationship, does bear some responsibility for this whole situation but the author is at pains to demonstrate what a "nice guy" he is. Meanwhile Andrea's doctors are nailed to the wall and held responsible! So yes, I think this book is a bit biased.

ARE YOU THERE ALONE by investigative reporter, Suzanne O'Malley, is a well-written, comprehensive look at the Andrea Yates case. I remember when Yates murdered her 5 children but did not read this book until 14 years later. So the facts of the case were mostly unknown to me. Therefore, I found the book to be fascinating and well-paced given the breadth of the detail provided. It is heartbreaking to recognize that this tragedy could perhaps have been avoided if only Yates had been diagnosed accurately sooner. She ends up being Bipolar I (which often gets misdiagnosed when manic phases don't present as extreme highs) instead of having Major Depression with psychotic features or Schizophrenia. So antidepressants without a mood stabilizer could have exacerbated her condition throughout initial treatment. It ends up that lithium has served to better stabilize her condition-but sadly not until it was too late for the Yates children. Therefore, this is a very candid look at mental illness and treatment, noting all providers are not created equal. Neither are mental health facilities, as Yates is mostly treated at a hospital specializing in chemical dependency. For goodness sake, in addition to carelessly diagnosing Yates is daily sent to chemical dependency group sessions and aftercare. This for a woman who already kept getting off her meds. In addition, there's a lot of food for thought given with regard to the mental illness issues vs. knowing right from wrong at the time of the crime as a result of Yate's insanity

defense. Unfortunately, the crazy religious teachings of the Woronieckis are thrown into the mix, which served to feed Yates delusions about salvation and saving her children. In addition the vagabond living conditions the Yates attempt to emulate from the Woronieckis heaps stress on an already volatile situation. So this was a disaster on many levels. ARE YOU THERE ALONE ends up being a cautionary tale about not only mental illness and the managed care system but also spiritual abuse. Both issues beg a person to use their gut instincts and change direction if things don't feel right. Finally, there are small issues I don't like about this book. The way the material is structured seems a little awkward and/or confusing at times. However, I overlook it due to the breadth of material included. In addition, quotes by Andrea Yates are randomly interspersed throughout with no direct connection to what's being discussed. Plus the comments don't give any additional insight into Yates, as there's plenty of direct quotes already included. So that's why I give this book four stars instead of five.

This book was written well and a quick read. I finished it in less than a week. From the time I started reading this book until I finished it I just had the hardest time coming to terms with how this woman killed her kids. I mean this woman killed all five of her kids with her own hands. She did this five times...five times. One by one in the bathtub. I just still can't believe she didn't think after the first or second drowning that this is not right and stop there but she kept going. You know those kids struggled especially the oldest one. He had to have fought back but she had the strength to overcome his strength. I also had a hard time with not blaming her husband Rusty. She showed clear signs of post partum depression after the first child. I can't believe he just kept supporting the idea of getting pregnant over and over again. By the time I finished the book I was most sad because it could have all been prevented and those kids could still be alive. Mental illness is much more understood and accepted than it was 50 years ago but bottom line is no one wants to admit their own family member could actually be this ill to kill her own children. This book was very eye opening regarding mental illness, post partum depression and even religious groups. I have a lot of opinions about all of these issues but I won't get into all of them here. I would recommend the book but just know up front that it is a very sad, real life story and you won't walk away feeling happy when you are finished.

Harrowing to read, but written well; fairly and honestly. I feel very sorry for Ms Yates, and think Mr Yates is equally to blame for the events. Andrea was symptomatic after the birth of her 1st child, and she killed him when he was 9 years old, along with her other children. No more children should

have been conceived, in my opinion, and that they were is Rusty's fault.

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