



## **Obsession**

*John Edward Douglas , Mark Olshaker*

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The authors of *Journey into Darkness* probes the minds of both the hunter and the hunted in this powerful exploration of human behavior. With a deep sense of compassion for the victims and an uncanny understanding of the perpetrators, Douglas exposes the chilling obsessions that compel the murderers, rapists, and stalkers.

## **Obsession Details**

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## From Reader Review Obsession for online ebook

### **Nancy says**

Douglas and Olshaker will convince you that some people should never be let back out of jail after their crimes.

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### **Kim says**

not nearly as good as his other books. particularly tough to read long chapters with long paragraphs without breaks in between. he quotes several other authors whose books I've read and that was kind of fun. chapter on robert chambers was interesting since I remember that case when it was in the news.

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### **Eduard Kutscher says**

I fully understand the point of this book, why such book was written and published. And I fully agree with the mission of this book. There are lot of interesting informations (the story of little Destiny completely broke me, I have a daughter in Destiny's age so it was really difficult for me to read this part of the book), but somehow I had to force myself in reading and that's never a good sign. I like Douglas' other books but not this one.

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### **XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

Not my kind of book unfortunately...

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### **Dagmar Belesova says**

#### **Just read Mindhunter**

This is an interesting book in isolation and there are some interesting insights. But either you have already read the Mind Hunter, which is a lot more focused and groundbreaking, in which case this book offers little new information or if you haven't that's where you should start. While it expands the scope from serial killers to other types of sex crimes, it just feels like more of the same.

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### **Paul says**

"Obsession" is the fourth book I've read from the John Douglas/Mark Olshaker partnership and I'm definitely grown less impressed. It's been several years since I read "The Cases That Haunt Us" (actually the next book

in the series after "Obsession") and I'm beginning to wonder what I saw in them. While I recall the first two as quite compelling, "Obsession" feels like it's treading some very old ground, indeed. The chapter where Douglas re-hashes the three serial offenders who were combined to form Thomas' Harris' "Hannibal Lecter" character seems particularly tired and repetitive.

There's no question that Douglas possesses an amazing understanding of the crimes and criminals which most captivate our collective psyche, but there really are only just so many times you can go over that type of carnage and depravity in the same half-clinical, half-tough guy voice and still be interesting. Absent a particularly compelling reason, I don't see myself picking up another one of his offerings any time soon.

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### **James says**

Excellent, moving, and both disturbing and inspirational. Dr. Douglas, with his co-author, presents articulate, organized accounts of a variety of crimes that were based on some form of obsession, either with a particular person - stalking - or with a type of victim and fantasy. He describes the offenders, but focuses more on the victims and their families, showing the impact of the crimes. The book's last section is a primer on how people can make themselves safer and a plea for the justice system to do a better job, once a person is identified as an ongoing threat to others, to protect society by keeping them contained either in prison or in psychiatric facilities as appropriate.

After my own experiences working with a number of similar offenders in a prison psychiatric hospital, and after seeing the impact of stalking and sexual assault on two family members (who, thankfully, survived those traumatic encounters), I can't agree strongly enough. There are some people who have clearly shown that they just can't be safely turned loose in society, and we have a responsibility to protect people from them. I saw some inmates like this committed to the state psychiatric hospital when their sentences ended, but at least one other very dangerous man was paroled despite all the warning signs being clear.

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### **Zoe says**

The writing isn't the most sophisticated but the stories are articulated clearly. The point of the book, essentially, is learning about criminal's obsessions and why they commit their crimes-- but its core message is one of solidarity with victims as well as preventative measures so people can protect themselves. The righteous anger is refreshing, as many stories of true crime are either sensationalized lurid without regard for the victim or cold and detached to make swallowing such horrible stories easier. However, Douglas (& Olshaker) artfully ties in why his experience not just allows but compels him to become so emotional over the fate of these victims.

An absolute must read for everyone, whether you casually watch Criminal Minds when it's on TV or if you own every Ann Rule novel and have them annotated with a unique color coding.

Only a few complaints: sometimes the storytelling became a bit jumbled (mentioning stories that had yet to be told and would not be for a few chapters) and several details that bothered me because of my "obsession": i.e., Ann Rule worked with Ted Bundy in a crisis call center, not a rape crisis call center. Any of these cons do not outweigh the pros.

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## **Julia says**

John Douglas is easily my favorite nonfiction writer. His books are always entertaining and informative, and *Obsession*, which focuses on sexual offenses spanning from rape to stalking, was no exception.

*Obsession* tackles the various psychological elements of sexual predators, from their rough backgrounds to deep-seated insecurity issues. Douglas illustrates the various components of what contributes to the creation of a violent sexual offender, and gives examples of some of these offenders potential styles of behavior, using in-depth, specific, real-life examples. He chronicles the process of criminal devolution with various serial rapists, explaining how and why the offenders were caught, often as a result of their own sloppiness as their cockiness progressed.

Douglas also dedicated a fascinating chapter on stalking, giving particular attention to the case of Laura Black being stalked by a coworker as an example. He emphasized the subtle, less well known emotions that victims of these crimes go through--he took time to explain why Laura was right to feel harassed when her stalker consistently brought her baked goods, even though at a first glance, those around her and the general public would be tempted to call this type of persistent predator "sweet."

And that's another thing that makes Douglas so fascinating to read. He presents the reader with tremendously difficult, heavy subject matter and approaches it with incredible sensitivity, compassion, and professionalism. He often dedicates whole chapters towards particularly heart-wrenching cases, with a focus on exactly who these bright young victims were, and how well loved they were and how much potential for good they had in the world. In *Obsession*, he chronicles 8 year old Destiny Souza and 19 year old Stephanie Schmidt. By introducing the reader to these cases, Douglas is also able to discuss the monumental efforts their families have gone through in creating and advocating for victims rights, a topic he spent considerable time on compared to previous books and was informative and delightful to read about.

Like many Douglas books, he spends a fair amount of time encouraging readers to stay safe, how to help others, and how to get involved in preventing future crime, as well as making practical, informed suggestions on how individuals, communities, and the government at large may enact meaningful change. An eye-opening and fascinating section of this book highlighted just how much is wrong with our justice system that many members of the public, myself included, didn't realize.

Douglas is hard and stern on the people who perpetrate these crimes, and its wonderful to see. He is coming from a place of knowledge and experience, and his stances on things such as criminal rehabilitation and the death penalty are refreshing and informative to read.

*Obsession* is unique in that it has a chapter dedicated to the three composite characters that inspired Buffalo Bill in Thomas Harris' *Silence of the Lambs*. John Douglas is often fictionalized, most notably as Jack Crawford in Harris' *Hannibal Lecter* books, so it was interesting to see his take on the villain his fictional team was up against. Moreover, the profiles he did on Ed Gein, Ted Bundy, and Gary Heidnik were downright chilling.

John Douglas' books are fantastic because they don't read like nonfiction; they pull the reader in. After, the reader is left feeling educated, informed, and entertained. And Douglas always seems to end on a note of hope.

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### **Nicole says**

My second outing with Douglas and this was definitely less engaging than "Mindhunters" but the topic is much more focused and the work itself is rather short. It mostly delves into the realm of rapists and stalkers by review of several poignant case studies and discusses the main premises highlighting the behavior behind these acts. While some of the information presented seems dated, this is probably more a reflection of how it has become accepted by mainstream society as well as law enforcement personnel since this novel's initial publication. And hopefully that is a good thing if it allows perpetrators to be captured sooner or allows potential victims to seek help before a nefarious act occurs. Towards the end, Douglas provides source material for potential victims on how to recognize possible stalking behavior and how to obtain assistance from police, law or social services. For the right person, this work of nonfiction could be lifesaving.

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### **Rebecca says**

Anyone who's followed my reviews for any length of time knows that I'm a big John Douglas fan, and that I'm steadily working my way through all his books. I enjoyed this about as much as I've enjoyed the others, although I think that *The Cases That Haunt Us* is still my favorite. This book had more practical application and advice for victims and people seeking to avoid being victims, so in that sense it's a little different from the others, but he illustrates his points with appropriately hair-raising and horrifying stories.

Part of what has always bothered me about his books, even to an extent about this one, is the "So what?" factor, or maybe it's more appropriately called the "What now?" factor. Really, what do we do with sex offenders or child molesters or rapists? Do we lock someone up indefinitely because of what they might do? Or do we keep them locked up forever after the first offense? As Douglas asks, what is the acceptable failure right if we don't keep someone locked up, and they kill or rape again? Are we a country that sticks someone in a dungeon for the rest of their life at the first opportunity? Or are we a country that lets people that WE KNOW will rape, molest, stalk or kill again back out on the streets for new victims? Douglas doesn't answer the questions because there are no real answers, sadly, and any blanket decision you make is going to be the wrong one at least some of the time, and what price then?

Also, as someone who's been stalked twice, I can say with absolute authority that his comments on how to deal with stalkers and what life is like for the victim, and how difficult it is to get any kind of assistance, are 100% accurate.

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### **Kerri says**

This book felt very disjointed to me. Parts of the text seemed to flow, discussing obsessions, how to identify danger, and how to protect oneself. Then suddenly the topic shifted. There were some very well known cases thrown in for seemingly no reason aside from filler. This is definitely not his best book.

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### **Fishface says**

This one focuses on understanding why killers, stalkers and rapists do what they do and makes suggestions

on how these situations might be best handled. Apparently meant to play on the fears of a public beaten daily over the head with the idea that there is a criminal lurking behind every tree, but ultimately empowering and sensitive to the needs of crime victims.

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### **Rita says**

A very informative book that every female at least should be aware of for the information it contains on rapists, stalkers, domestic abuse, etc. I think that the part that was the best information was to make the reader to come to the understanding that there needs to be more rights for victims. Discusses many different supports that are available to not only the victims but the friends and families of victims that go through the whole crisis also.

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### **Brenna says**

To live in a state of fear, according to retired FBI profiler and author John Douglas, is to live with a sense of heightened awareness. Although, he goes on to say, victims of such crimes of stalking did nothing to deserve their perpetual state of terror. But living with a moderate dose of common sense *fear* is a precursor to living a safer life because that is the way our world and justice system does (or maybe *doesn't*) work.

"There is no conflict between civil liberties and victim's rights," he writes. And yet, a crime victim can realistically expect to have his or her image mud-raked by the defence while not having the same "luxury" themselves (on fear of having a case thrown out due to mistrial, or perhaps appealed on those very grounds). Douglas presents various examples from real-life in which it is the accused (and, oft-times, previously convicted felon) whose rights seem to supercede the wounded party.

Douglas makes it clear through his writing that victims cannot always rely on the good sense of law enforcement - in fact, he attributes the syndrome of repeat offenders to the lenience of the American court system and the lack of expedient capital punishment. Victims also cannot dependently judge a person by using the same set of socially-set values that they themselves live by - a stalker, or serial rapist or murderer, or spousal abuser, etc. has a particular *obsession* that does not abide by any logical standard or legislation. A protective order, while a positive step toward self-protection from a potential attacker, is essentially just a scrap of notarized paper which may even exacerbate feelings of hostility in said victimizer.

And so, Douglas devotes the bulk of *Obsession* to detailing the basics of self-protection through personality profiling. If a person can only fully depend on their own wits, then best to begin the needed education to fulfill this skill. Though a rape, or attack, or even murder is *never* the fault of the victim (a point which Douglas makes extremely clear, in so many words), it is every person's responsibility to learn how to best prevent such an attack.

Through tragic anecdotal (and much-publicized cases), Douglas delves into the particulars of a variety of situations, using such tactics to startle a reader into seeing how the criminal mind can work. Each case is different, he says, and deserves individualized attention - but the ultimate goal is to have a library of essential knowledge in one's head which could ultimately protect one's well-being. And the well-being of loved ones.

Certainly, *Obsession* relies heavily on shock value. The stories given within are genuine articles which have

appeared in newspapers all across the country (with the occasional change in details to protect privacy, in certain cases). And the level of detail spares little from the more sensitive reader. However, such examples are necessary (Douglas feels) in order to fully illustrate his points, and to give some level of credibility to his views and suggestions. He was directly involved in many of these cases, and therefore has brought away something which he wishes to share with the rest of the public.

Though arguments can be made against several of his points in this book (particularly his less-than-optimistic view with regards to criminal rehabilitation), Douglas himself presents decisive and pointed evidence to back up his views and concerns. It is a book written with both real-life experience as well as factual evidence - and that alone helps to make his points that much stronger.

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