



Similar Transactions: A True Story

S.R. Reynolds

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Larry Lee tightened his grip on her throat and pressed the heel of his left hand against her forehead. Amanda couldn't breathe... "I can break your neck in three seconds," her captor hissed, "and I will if you don't do what I say."

"Similar Transactions" is a gripping memoir about the author's determination to solve a murder and to bring the perpetrator to justice.

Former social-worker S. R. Reynolds has never forgotten the mishandled case of fifteen-year-old Michelle Anderson, a vibrant beauty who went missing from Reynolds' Knoxville, Tennessee, neighborhood years earlier. Aided by her old professor, famed forensic anthropologist Dr. Bill Bass-founder of the University of Tennessee's "Body Farm"-Reynolds picks up the trail of this cold case.

As she presses neglected pieces of the puzzle into place, Reynolds unearths a string of heinous kidnappings and rapes across the South, crimes that span decades. She talks to the victims. A picture begins to form. Patterns appear. And all evidence points to one man: convicted sex offender Larry Lee Smith.

As a result of Reynolds's efforts, the Knoxville Police Department reopens the cold case of Michelle's disappearance, but Larry Lee is about to be released from a Georgia prison, where he served time for a related crime-a "similar transaction." What transpires in this story is amazing on many levels. Larry Lee is every parent's worst nightmare. In addition to fans of True-Crime genre, "Similar Transactions" will appeal to people who have interests in criminal justice, forensic anthropology, criminal investigation, clinical social work and related fields.

Similar Transactions: A True Story Details

Date : Published December 22nd 2015 by Simpson Point Press

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Author : S.R. Reynolds

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From Reader Review Similar Transactions: A True Story for online ebook

Guin says

Engrossing read

This was hard to put down and being told in two parts made it feel like two different books. Definitely recommended for true crime buffs

Sheryl says

This is one of the most startling and unique true crime books I've read - and I am a voracious reader of the genre. S. R. Reynolds documents her investigation of the disappearance and murder of a neighbor, which involves years of detective work, networking, and research. Kudos to S.R. and the "Band of Sisters"!

Cris Egger says

Compelling

As a True Crime reader this rates up at the top. Compelling, concise and compassionately written. The Band of Sisters are an amazingly strong group of women!

Marianne Arpe says

This book is extremely well written and a fascinating story. I could hardly put it down. Congratulations Sasha, and especially for helping solve this long ago murder.

♥ Marlene♥ says

Finished this morning. I can't be as positive as some other reviews though. To be honest I thought it was sometimes a little bit boring and a tad repetitive.

Beware Spoilers coming up!!!!

There were supposedly twists and turns but in reality the only twists were that the perpetrator messed up again. Here I was expecting more. It says in the book description 8 known victims? I do not get that because there are 4 rape victims of whom one was murdered. So here I thought something outstanding would be done

and Michelle would get justice but none of the sorts.

It was not a book I could not stop reading. To the contrary. It felt like a choir but it is well written so I cannot give it 2 stars. Because the book was well written I'll give it 3 stars.

ETA: Update March 1 2016 It was explained to me by the author that the other victims were the rape victims I had forgotten. His cousin and his ex wife for one. So all in all 8 victims.

Update 3. Lol I have been wondering, perhaps I was too harsh. I think many of my fellow true crime friends will enjoy this book. As I said before definitely not a bad book at all. I think I went in with wrong expectations and that if you go to read about what happened with some girls and their families you will enjoy the book. So please do not dismiss this book because of me.

Celeste' says

The real life events that took place in order for this book to even be possible are heart breaking and sickening. The book, however, is so well written that it catches your attention and keeps you wanting to find out what happens next from the first page to the last, you can hardly put it down until the book is finished. Definitely worth reading!!

Ronnie Cramer says

A unique true crime book in that the author takes it upon herself to keep tabs on a serial rapist (and murder suspect) when he is released from prison. She writes about herself in the third person--which takes some getting used to--and it's not a complete success, but it is a VERY interesting personal journey.

S.R. Reynolds says

[This review—by "Book Case" from Illinois (someone whom I do not know)—can also be viewed on the Amazon "Similar Transactions" page, where that reviewer initially posted it on 2/18/16. I really like his/her in-depth analysis of my book, and it is voted the most "helpful" review on that page, so I'm sharing it here on goodreads.]

"5.0 out of 5 stars: A cleverly structured page-turner—Despite the unsettling subject matter, this is a gripping and exciting read. I was impressed with the lengths S.R. Reynolds went to to get this story. She proves to be a bold investigator, tracking down key documents like police and FBI files, forensic reports, court and interview transcripts, even a medical and psych evaluation (how did she get her hands on that?!). She interviews almost everyone associated with Larry Lee Smith and his crimes and gets them to open up and tell their side of the story, putting a human face on both sides of these crimes.

"When the author suddenly appears in her own book halfway through, I thought it was strange at first (certainly unconventional) but then I realized the story couldn't be told any other way, because as she was writing the story, she became a part of the story, so her appearance is quite natural. Then you realize, by distant associations, that she was on the periphery of this story the whole time. The more I think about it, the more I see just how cleverly structured this whole book is. I look forward to many more books by this author, though I fear it may be a while. Based on her involvement in this story, she seems to be the type of writer/researcher who immerses herself deep into a story before it can unfold on paper."

Margie says

A Riveting Read

Sasha Reynolds weaves an intriguing tale of tenacity and sleuthing in order to find closure and justice in an unsolved murder of a 15 year old child. Happily for us all her investigative skills helped incarcerate a monster. This is definitely a must read for all of us who love to read about true crime and wonder why and how such creatures exist or came to be.

directortuscarts.org says

Riveting!!

This is an excellent book. Once I started it I couldn't put it down. I found myself thinking about it during the day and anxious to get to pick it up in the evening. Congratulations to Sasha Reynolds for sharing this story with us and for fighting for Michelle and the other victims in this case. Thank you so much!

Miss Marple says

Judging by the summary of this book, I was expecting a story about a dogged amateur detective that managed to solve a long forgotten cold case. It almost sounded like fiction. I'd never heard of Larry Lee Smith or Michelle Anderson, and I was very intrigued about how the story would develop.

What I found in the book wasn't that, exactly. S.R. Reynolds (Sasha), the author, certainly has a big involvement in keeping the Michelle Anderson case alive, however the conclusion of this story and the direction it takes is largely out of her hands. And I'm ok with the reality shattering my initial expectations. Reynolds is generous enough not to put herself in the center of the story more than needed and to make the actual victims the real protagonists. In the end, that will always be a more satisfactory path for a true crime book, especially when the genre is often burdened by unnecessary sensationalism.

And in the wrong hands, this book could have gone in the too graphic direction. It made me think a little of Invisible Darkness and how the author there almost gleefully describes in great detail horrific rapes. Fortunately, Reynolds doesn't do that. This is a stomach churning story by itself: Larry Lee Smith is a serial rapist and possible murderer who also horribly tortured his ex wife and ex girlfriend. But the author threads carefully through the most sensitive parts of the story. She doesn't hide the horror these women went

through, but her descriptions of the actual rapes are very to the point and without any flourish or imagined sequences of her own (I assume she used the actual police reports/case documents for this purpose, because they sound very legalish, in a good way), and she never degrades a victim. Not only that, but she makes it so clear that there's no one to blame in their ordeals except their rapist (because unfortunately we live in a society that still blames rape victims), that I'm sure the women featured in her book were more than pleased by letting this author tell their story.

Similar Transactions is divided in two parts. The first part tells about Larry Lee Smith, his first rape and jail time. There's some background about him, but not much, probably because the author couldn't find many people on his side willing to talk that actually knew him well. In this story, Smith is not exactly one of those complex criminals who had redeeming qualities. There's also not a very deep exploration of what could have turned him into a sociopathic predator, except showing how his mother did a very poor job at raising him. Even though Reynolds tries to be objective and mostly sticks to the facts when it comes to his crimes, and she also ponders at the end of the book about how things could have been different for Smith, the man that comes out of this story is a man underserving of any pity or respect, and one that certainly can't be rehabilitated.

The first part also goes in detail in the case of Michelle Anderson, a 15 year old who disappeared after going to a party in 1987. One of the last two people who saw her alive, other than her boyfriend, was Smith, but because of a shockingly bad initial investigation (if you can even call it that) by the detective in charge, he was never properly questioned about it. Her remains were found two years later and even though the case was then taken by more competent investigators, it went cold.

Book two introduces Sasha to us. The author explains at the start that she decided to put herself in the third person so she wouldn't mess with the narrative and confuse the readers. I understand this choice, but I have to admit that I could never get rid of the weirdness of seeing someone refer to herself in the third person. I just couldn't see her as just a character in the story. This is just personal preference, of course, but I don't think it would have been that bad if she'd narrated in first person. It worked in *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders* after all.

Sasha had a faint connection to Michelle's family, had worked with the detective that botched the case and by coincidence had studied with the man that eventually analyzed Michelle's remains. She really gets involved mostly out of her own personal interest in the case, but she does a great job of reviving it by contacting the people involved in the investigation, the family of the victim and even some people connected to Larry Lee. And Larry Lee unknowingly does his part too, by committing more crimes that will eventually land him in jail. So Reynolds work might not be what made sure this man is not out in the streets, but she does a remarkable job of framing the story rightly, on keeping Michelle in everyone's minds and in showing how important it is to respect victims and not giving up.

As a side note, I wish this book had a different cover. It looks so fiction thriller and even cheap, it doesn't do justice to the seriousness of the story inside.

Carolyn Breckinridge says

I'm not usually a reader of true crime non-fiction. But S. R. Reynolds 'Similar Transactions: A True Story' aroused my curiosity. This author devoted years of her life, so much time and energy, pursuing answers in the cold case murder of an adolescent female from Knoxville where the author once lived. Her passion for

hoping to solve this case and bring the murderer to justice radiates through each chapter. The book reads much like a novel, smooth in presentation, and I was soon caught up in her quest for answers. As she delves into the lives of Larry Lee and his known victims, the crimes, as horrendous as they are, were not as frightening as the apparent lack of follow-through on more than one occasion by law enforcement related to DNA, maintaining criminal file security and evidence security, and the lack of a clear trail of his criminal record following him as he moved from state to state. S.R. Reynolds' significant contributions in connecting the dots in this regard are inspirational.

An excellent read!

Bettye McKee says

The life and progress of a serial predator

Ms. Reynolds has given us a meticulous account of a serial predator named Larry Lee Smith, enabled and protected by his mother. Smith repeatedly abducted, assaulted and raped young girls, ranging in age from 14 to 18.

In addition he brutalized and raped young family members, wives and girlfriends. Prison terms meant nothing more to him than having to wait until he could repeat his actions.

Central to the story is the disappearance of 15-year-old Melissa Anderson who was last seen in his company. For two years, her body lay on the ground before it was discovered. No police agency was searching for her during this time because the responsible officer concluded she was a runaway and took no action whatsoever.

This is not a fast read because the author details each step of the progress toward putting this predator out of reach of future victims.

20

Carol Carmichael says

A compelling true story that begins with a missing Knoxville teenager and leads to the discovery of a serial rapist. It also reveals the total ineptness of the initial non-investigation by KPD and the continuing ineptitude in managing evidence which went untested and was eventually lost.

Cindi Bean says

Intriguing

I gave Similar Transactions a five star rating because it is very well written. The events were written in an easy to follow format that drew you into the lives of those involved. My heart broke with the telling of each victims story. Although Justice was not served for Michelle- knowing the perpetrator will never be able to scar another life is a small consolation.

