



## Dear Dawn: Aileen Wuornos in Her Own Words

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Between 1989 and 1990, Aileen Wuornos, a hitchhiking prostitute, shot, killed, and robbed seven men in remote Florida locations. Arrested in 1991, Wuornos insisted she had acted in self-defense, but the jury had little sympathy. Condemned to death on six separate counts, she was executed by lethal injection in 2002.

An abused runaway who turned to prostitution to survive, Wuornos has become iconic of vengeful women who lash out at the nearest target. She has also become a touchstone for women's, prostitutes', and prisoners' rights advocates. Her story has inspired myriad books and articles, as well as the 2003 movie *Monster*, for which Charlize Theron won an Academy Award. But until now, Wuornos's uncensored voice has never been heard.

*Dear Dawn* is Wuornos's autobiography culled from her ten-year death row correspondence with beloved childhood friend Dawn Botkins. Authorized for publication by Wuornos and edited under the guidance of Botkins, the letters not only offer Wuornos's riveting reflections on the murders, legal battles, and media coverage, but go further, revealing her fears and obsessions, her rich humor and empathy, and her gradual disintegration as her execution approached. A candid life story told to a trusted friend, *Dear Dawn* is a compelling narrative, unwaveringly true to its source.

## Dear Dawn: Aileen Wuornos in Her Own Words Details

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### **Stacy grissom says**

Good book...

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

I honestly can't say that I approve at all of what Wuornos did in her lifetime, but she wasn't always the monster she appears to be. As revealed within the pages of *Dear Dawn*, she was born into a broken family and was often severely abused. Turning to prostitution to survive, something eventually made her snap, and the end result was horrifying. Wuornos is dead, and it's too late to reverse the abuse and to reverse her horrible crimes, but this book might be a key to preventing the same thing from happening twice.

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### **KnoxnGnome says**

This was a very sad book to read, but it was interesting to read Aileen's correspondence to her best friend Dawn and get a more natural perspective on Aileen's life and point of view. Before this book was written the only perspectives available were those of the media and law enforcement.

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### **Melinda Tyler says**

#### **Amazing book**

Different than any book I've read. Reading AW's letters & her lifetime of suffering brought a new understanding to her story. Society let this woman down from birth to death. The book is made even more real by not editing the spelling errors (which weren't too much). Amazing research for my book.

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### **Blythe says**

I picked up "Dear Dawn: Aileen Wuornos In Her Own Words" Edited by Daphne Gottlieb and Lisa Kester at a poetry show I hosted with Daphne Gottlieb as the feature. I had no idea she was editing this book and it was a total surprise. I bought it on the spot and it has proven to be one of the most amazing reads I have taken on in years.

I cannot say enough good things about this book! I followed Aileen's case and have watched every piece of media I could get my hands on regarding it and this book is BLOWING MY MIND! It is truly an amazing exercise to read through this book and hear Aileen in her own written word writing to a friend from her childhood. I had seen the stacks and stacks of material Dawn had collected from correspondence with Aileen

over the years in documentaries. I cannot stress enough how harrowing the task would have been to cull through the sheer vast amount of material to put this book together and Daphne and Lisa make these missives jump off the page in a larger than life way. The body of work remains cohesive and retains a narrative the reader can follow even with all the twists and turns in Aileen's case and her mental state through the years the book encompasses.

Even if you don't know anything about Aileen Wuornos and her case, this book is a treasure trove of information that reads quickly and is thoroughly fascinating! But don't take my word for it! Buy this book, read it, and then tell everyone you know about it!! Reading it is like chasing a cat whose tail is on fire down a paranoid rabbit hole. Superbly edited and well annotated! Trust me, you will not be able to put this book down once you crack the spine for the first time. Thank you Daphne and Lisa for giving Aileen a chance to tell her story through Dawn's collection of letters. Her voice is ringing loud and clear, the contents finally surfacing to gain some semblance of shape and form in the light.

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### **Kelly says**

I can say with no uncertainty that this book is not what I expected. Aileen Wuornos never discusses the actual murders, but instead comes across as..dare I say it..almost likeable. DON'T misunderstand. Her crimes were horrible, but these letters when she's not doing interviews and just conversing with a friend are just amazing to read. She had some obvious psychological problems, but she never really had a chance in life. This certainly does not excuse in any way the crimes she committed, but these personal letters give incredible insight into the way her mind worked!!

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### **Margo says**

These are real letters from serial killer Aileen Wuornos to a childhood friend. Gripping book but it's like watching a car accident or train wreck - you don't want to look but can't help yourself and feel a little guilty afterwards. I felt compassion for Aileen but her letters were also chilling, scary and creepy at times. If you like psychology, this is a really good read. Not for the faint of heart.

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### **Rebecca says**

One of the most powerful books I have ever read. Aileen Wuornos was one of those truly fascinating people, with so many layers and complexities. I could read about her forever and likely never come close to understanding her. The life she led was peppered with tragedy, violence, abuse and rejection. Really, given all she went through, it is no surprise that she wound up lashing out and fighting back. Some of the abuse she endured made me feel physically sick when I read about it. At times, when reading the book, my heart went out to her so much that I felt on the verge of tears. Aileen never had a chance to have a normal life. From the age of 14, everything went downhill from her and over time, things went from bad to worse to almost impossible to endure. Really, it is a miracle that she survived everything she did. I know I couldn't have made it, had I been in her shoes.

I find the friendship between Aileen and Dawn very heartwarming to read. You can tell that Dawn truly meant the world to Aileen and for all sorts of reasons. As she is being exploited by money-hungry "well-

doers" and let down time and time again by people she has dared to trust, Dawn remains the only constant, the only person who is true-hearted and not out to gain something from being associated with the legendary 'world's first female serial killer'. She is consistent, reliable and loving towards Aileen and really, that was all the poor woman ever needed - true companionship. The world was cruel to Aileen, but I am glad she had Dawn.

Surprisingly, the book made me laugh out loud in parts. Sometimes, Aileen could be extremely funny and she really did have a great sense of humour. Other times, the book is so shocking that it makes one want to put it down. I couldn't put it down. It's the first time I've read prison letters from any criminal, but it has given me a taste to read more, if any are in print in this sort of form. All in all, this was a harrowing but necessary read and I know I'll come back someday and read it all from the top. A very engaging and thought-provoking read in every way.

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### **Eman E. says**

Sad book.

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### **Amanda says**

I was very interested to read her story, but the letters are left intact as Aileen wrote them which honestly made it difficult to follow. Ramblings full of misspellings and foot notes placed at the end of the book explaining what the heck she was talking about (not good if you are reading a digital copy). Dawn explains she left the letters unedited for grammar and misspellings because she wanted Aileen's voice to shine through, but I think this could have been done by including a few examples of the letters, but making the rest a bit more coherent. As for the story, there really isn't one. A couple of the anecdotes were interesting, but other than that, it's just a mess that was hard to get through. I think that Dawn and the "editors" made a mistake publishing it the way they did (unedited).

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### **Debbie "DJ" says**

Never finished this book. It was chosen by a friend who wanted to start a book club. What I did read was very interesting as the actual letters between Aileen and her friend were printed. I had already seen the movie "Monsters", and also some real life DVD's. It is hard to get enough of her after watching "Monsters", and I think this book played into that.

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### **Stephanie Phipps says**

If you can read past the misspelled words, grammatical errors and not being able to use dictionary for help. Then you will see two Aileen's. One full of youth and innocence, the other a paranoid deranged killer. I understand that hooking for all those years, took a huge toll on not only her body but also her mind. That as a

hitchhiking hooker, she was probably raped several times but I also think she hugely overestimated that number greatly. As for her grandfather, whom she called dad, I am not sure whether or not his attitude and behavior toward her, affected how she turned out.

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### **Dorwenda says**

This book was challenging at its best because it's raw and real in the way that's sometimes hard to see/read.

The syntax in and of itself is not easy to get through but the very neurotic nature psychological issues deeply imbedded in each page forces you to see multiple sides of this story that even the writer may not been aware of.

Read each letter with an open mind me heart

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### **Kellyn Brooks says**

This was so fascinating. I'm not really one of those people who studies serial killers, but I do find them interesting to learn about--especially Aileen Wuornos. Like many of them, if she had been given a fairer chance starting out in her life, perhaps her legacy would have been a more constructive one. This book covers 11 years of Aileen's life in prison for the murder of six men (technically seven, but one of the bodies remains undiscovered). It covers all the tediousness and minutia of prison life, but often Aileen reminisces on her life and tells childhood stories. This was the reason I read the book. I wanted to hear her life experience. Who did she care about? What did she care about? What did she like? What did she dislike? Before long my questions got more specific. Why did she have such disdain for people of color? Why did she have such a hard time accepting her own homosexuality when she made frequent references to it in her letters? Why does she deny being abused as a child, when she was a frequent runaway from her home? Before anyone asks, no, of course I don't applaud her actions. She was a murderer; she confessed herself that all seven men were killed in the first degree. But I cannot write her off because of this. I honestly feel sorry for her; in some ways I kind of like her as a person. Her life experience and character is fascinating to me, and I would recommend this book to anyone who shares my view.

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### **Gladys Dela Cruz says**

I've always been fascinated by Aileen's story. This book is what I've been looking for.

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