



The Old Man and the Gun: And Other Tales of True Crime

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Now a major motion picture starring Robert Redford and Sissy Spacek, *The Old Man and the Gun* is here joined by two other riveting true-crime tales.

"The Old Man and the Gun" is the incredible story of a bank robber and prison escape artist who modeled himself after figures like Pretty Boy Floyd and who, even in his seventies, refuses to retire. "True Crime" follows the twisting investigation of a Polish detective who suspects that a novelist planted clues in his fiction to an actual murder. And "The Chameleon" recounts how a French imposter assumes the identity of a missing boy from Texas and infiltrates the boy's family, only to soon wonder whether he is the one being conned. In this mesmerizing collection, David Grann shows why he has been called a "worthy heir to Truman Capote" and "simply the best narrative nonfiction writer working today," as he takes the reader on a journey through some of the most intriguing and gripping real-life tales from around the world.

The Old Man and the Gun: And Other Tales of True Crime Details

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From Reader Review The Old Man and the Gun: And Other Tales of True Crime for online ebook

Mike says

I thoroughly enjoyed the book. I have read some of the author's previous longer works. This one provided the reader with three vignettes on true crimes. I vaguely remembered the stories. Grann provides a factual look at the crimes with interviews with the perpetrators. I was looking for a light read and found a very short, well written book. It was exactly what I was looking for at the time.

This book is a great book for fans of quirky true crime. It is not an in depth look, but it is much deeper and more factual than what is published in the press and put out on the news. I recommend it for any true crime fan who is looking for a quick read.

Jo Cameron-Symes says

It was only after opening this book that I realised I'd read it before, as it contains three nonfiction stories about strange true crime events that were previously published in another book by the author called The Devil & Sherlock Holmes. These stories were also previously published as articles in The New Yorker magazine. David Grann is an excellent writer and where these stories lack the depth of one of his longer accounts (such as the excellent Killers of The Flower Moon) they are themselves interesting stories of the most bizarre crimes and strange criminals who perpetrate them. I'm looking forward to watching the titular story's film adaptation of an elderly but charming bank robber.

♥ Sandi ♥ says

3.75 stars

My search for the story of The Old Man and the Gun lead me to two separate books. This one and also The Devil and Sherlock Holmes. Both books are short stories analogies.

The Old Man and the Gun has just been released as a Robert Redford movie, said to be his last. After reading the story, I find it a fitting way for Redford to end his acting career.

Based on a true story, Forest Tucker ended his life of crime the way he started it years before, robbing a bank. He was a bank robber and an escape artist. For 50 years, until last caught in 1999, Tucker was either robbing banks or doing his time, and planning another escape. Having escaped 18 times, incarcerated at seventy-nine years old, frail and showing his age, he still indicated that he had one more escape in his future.

Two other short stories accompany The Old Man and the Gun in this book. I enjoyed one of them, the other one not so much. Reading this book did elevate the author, David Gann, in my eyes, for his work in non-fiction, and encourage me to read more by him.

Ian Allan says

It's fine. Fun quick read. I thought all three stories were interesting and well presented. In each case, the author traveled the world to interview some of the key figures involved.

But it's not really a book. David Grann is a staff writer for The New Yorker. Here (I think) he took three features that he wrote for magazines and re-packaged them in book format.

Janet says

This is a nonfiction collection by David Grann of several true crime perpetrators. Each individual is a study in criminal motivation. The first is Forest Tucker, a man who is so deep into his criminal identity that he just can't quit. The next is about a murderer who commits a crime and then recounts it in his novel. The third is about a chameleon of a man who passes himself off as a teenage child. All very interesting case studies.

Realini says

The Old Man & the Gun, written and directed by David Lowery
Seven out of 10

It is tempting to dismiss this motion picture – and this will probably happen in this note – in spite of a cast that includes Robert Redford, such a legend that we need not insist, Sissy Spacek, another giant, Danny Glover, Tom Waits and the recent winner of the Academy Award – but controversial nevertheless – Casey Affleck.

Now for the disadvantages:

The subject is more than familiar.

All the angles of bank robbery have been explored and it is hard – perhaps impossible – to compete with quintessential works like Bonnie and Clyde, Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid –wherein Redford has had a glorious contribution – and other such landmarks.

Furthermore, even the concept of robbing banks by “Over the hill” old criminals has been there before and the déjà vu feeling is made worse when the predecessors have had much more value.

Going in Style, the 1979 classic, not the recent flop, was an extraordinary example of the Perfect Job, with George Burns in scintillating form, as were his partners in crime, Art Carney and Lee Strasberg.

Critics seem to have loved this Old Man & his Gun, so you can very well discard this evaluation, if you have not done it yet.

It is always a question of “Merit Finder or Fault Finder” or as Shakespeare has said it in Hamlet:

“There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so”

You could look at Robert Redford and say wow, what a tremendous actor he has always been. Or think about what the recently deceased, regretted, outstanding winner of two Oscars, writer of masterpieces like All the President’s Men, Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid, The Princess Bride, Marathon Man and other great movies has said about Redford.

In his marvelous Adventures in the Screen Trade, William Goldman, mentions how easy it was to find someone like the acclaimed actor – just throw a pebble on the Malibu or some other Californian beach – and then the embarrassing attitudes he had after his Sundance role. Redford had initiated a project of making a film with Goldman, but after the release and success of Butch Cassidy, the actor calls the writer to say that he does not want to continue...

Why?

Because he felt that the image that the fans now had of him as legendary, macho hero would not match what was about to take place in the new, would be film that the screenplay author had worked so much on...

And this is not the end, although the arrogant, self-important, precious, superior, selfish take is not unique – there are two cases where Dustin Hoffman, on the set of Marathon Man and Al Pacino come out as ruthless, to say the least.

William Goldman had worked on the script for All the President’s Men – due to the circumstances explained in the book, a very difficult task – talking to Redford through his secretary...

The writer would call the assistant, she would call the actor and then back, in a complicated, preposterous communication, and later on, after months of toiling laboriously, the star invites the author to his flat in New York, only to take the project away...at least for some time.

Goldman says it was the worst moment of his life – or one of them anyway.

As for The Old Man...well, there is not much to say, in my opinion, except that it is just common, not out of the ordinary.

The Old Bank Robber is somewhat more interesting than the usual malefactor, criminal type, but not the ultimate role model...

Or is he?

Yes, there is perhaps a lesson that he can give us, in the sense that he did what he liked in his life, flawed as it certainly was.

This is one of the rules of Happiness – find your calling and make that your job, thus getting paid, making a living from what you enjoy doing anyway.

To find that calling you need to identify – what you like, what you are good at and what has meaning for you and where these intersect, that is where you can decide and take one of the possibilities...

Not if you find you would like to rob banks and The Old Man has the most important lesson to teach...

Jane says

I have never read true crime book's. This author was recommend by a friend, so I decided to give it a try. Three different tales are in this book, and each one interesting. I read this book in one day, it is not a thick book, at about 130 pages. I enjoyed each of the stories, and was enthralled by the lives and choices of the three criminals. I don't know if I will ever become a true crime fan, I prefer to comfort myself that a terrible story is just a story, but I enjoyed this book and gladly recommend it.

Ann says

This book consists of a handful of articles about true crime. A bank robber with a talent for escaping from prisons (usually only for a very short time), a French man who made a career out of pretending to be an abandoned teen in order to receive services from child-care departments in various countries, a Polish writer-wannabe-philosopher, whose only published work seems to corroborate the circumstantial evidence linking him to the murder of a businessman, those are the themes. The topics are interesting, but the writing is no more than OK. These seem to be journalistic pieces dashed off on a deadline, when it was more important to get the reporting straight (these criminals love to be mysterious about their past) than to buff up the writing.

Kartik Dadwal says

The book leaves the stories hanging without a touch of a smooth ending. Out of the three stories that the book contains I read the first two. They didn't leave me begging for more from the author or from the book. I didn't get a thrill out of the two stories I read. The first one, whose name is the book title is based on, ended abruptly with a feeling of incompleteness, well, so did the second story. These are accounts of true stories so there is little to no embellishment that author should do, however, smoothing the edges with what the author thought of his encounters with these criminals at the end of the story would have been great.

Tothg20hsnet.Ahsd.Org says

In just 133 pages, David Grann unveiled three criminals and their honest criminal histories. The Old Man and the Gun and Other Tales of True Crime includes three stories written in the perspective of a reporter. The first story is the main focus of the book's title, telling the life of a man named Forrest Tucker. The story is only told in a brief 36 pages of the book, but David Grann's is able to indulge the reader in the fast pace format and fully develop the character of Tucker as well as explain his crimes in more than enough detail. Grann employs an exquisite talent in descriptive writing, for his precise retelling holds no need for examples and redundant explanations. He gains the trust of the reader by including loads of information about the crimes from outside sources and from the criminal themselves, which showcases the substantial amount of research and effort Grann must have invested in his work. This also holds true in the latter stories of the book. The second story tell of a homicide in Poland, which is one thing I really enjoyed about this book; the author does not submit to only one country or part of the world, instead he spreads his knowledge to crimes across the Atlantic that the reader may be less familiar with. The meticulous details and processes that David Grann explained in this story entice the reader to really ponder the actions of characters and the unexplainable functions of their minds. Lastly, Grann tells the story of a French man, who, for the sake of avoiding spoilers, commit crimes of fraud through his identity. This story was a perfect ending to the book because of its insanity.

The stories in this book are some of the most absurd and yet amazing crimes ever committed, and Grann's

style of retelling made it even more captivating. One hundred and thirty-three pages is already short, but after reading the book it felt even shorter as I longed for more. Learning about such bizarre events opened my eyes to the creativity of crime. For future reference, as soon as you think you've heard it all, stop thinking and read.

JZ says

I found all three stories fascinating, not because they were new to me, (none were) but because of the amount of detail that they covered.

It's difficult to hit a happy medium between the briefness of a story designed for consumption by young adults, something longer for busy people who like the facts, and those who have all the time in the world to pursue every fact ever found about a criminal, a la Ann Rule's books.

I personally don't want a list of every band that Forrest Tucker robbed, or every date. I don't need more detail on how he broke out of the easier jails. As with "Dark Waters", when I felt that the details of the Christmas party in the submarine went on just about 20 pages too long.

This was a pleasant read: well-written, concise, with no purple prose or needless repetition. (See my recent review of Michael Capuzzo's "The Murder Room.") What a relief. Bravo!

Ellison says

Features three stories, the first on the cover about a guy that stole a car at age fifteen and continued a life of crime, his favorite being bank robbery. Upon capture he resorted to being an escape artist. Shattered lives. Final capture at age...SEVENTY EIGHT!

Second story is about a POLISH policeman who studies a cold case and determines that the author of a violent book may have done a murder and then wrote about it in a book. Swearing.

Final story is about a pathetic little Frenchman who has NOTHING better to do than pose as other people. Sad, swear. Originally published in a magazine as short stories.

Rod Brown says

I enjoyed the Robert Redford film, so I was happy to see this movie tie-in collecting the original *New Yorker* article on the shelf at the library. In addition to the story about bank robber and escape artist Forrest Tucker, the book includes two additional true-crime tales about Krystian Bala, who was fingered for a murder because he seemed to write a confessional novel of the crime, and Frederic Bourdin, a French professional imposter who went too far when he pretended to be a missing boy from Texas.

All the stories are engaging in a magazine article sort of way, compressing a lot of facts, details, and people into very small spaces. They are tantalizing, leaving you wanting a deeper dive on the subject, so I can see how the movie producers were easily able to embellish and develop a two-hour film out of a mere 30 pages.

My main problem is that reading true crime sometimes makes me feel uncomfortable. While Forrest Tucker's outlaw ways seem almost innocent, the other two stories of missing persons and murder verge on feeling a bit lurid and unseemly by not focusing more on the victims and their survivors.

Marina Kahn says

Frankly I needed a very short book to read so that I could make my goal of reading 40 books by December 31, 2018 and the first story was used to create the movie *The Old Man and the Gun* with Robert Redford so I wanted to read the book before seeing the film. Overall, the book was ok, it was like a newspaper report really no depth or imagery. All three stories seemed to lack continuity and ended rather shortly, the stories just hung there. I realize that these are stories about true crime so maybe that is all the material the writer had at his disposal but they were all very sad stories. A bank robber who spends most of his time in jail because he escapes all the time and so at age 79 he is incarcerated with no freedom in his future. I got the feeling Forest Tucker the robber just wanted to live in jail. The other two stories were just as sad, the second one about a wannabe writer who seems to have been a murderer and wrote about his murders, and saddest of all a Frenchman who made a career pretending to be an orphan teen-ager so that he can obtain social services from welfare agencies. I guess truth is stranger than fiction.

Mariah says

Three strange-but-true stories of unusual criminals. *The Old Man and the Gun* had more of a romantic flair to it than the other two stories, but don't expect it to resemble the Redford movie. Grann doesn't write to glorify such ways of life or make an existential metaphor of the sum or its parts. The story about the twisted Polish author was vulgar and held little surprise. The story about the impersonator did have an interesting plot twist. I especially liked this book because almost 2/3 of it involved Texas or Texans.
