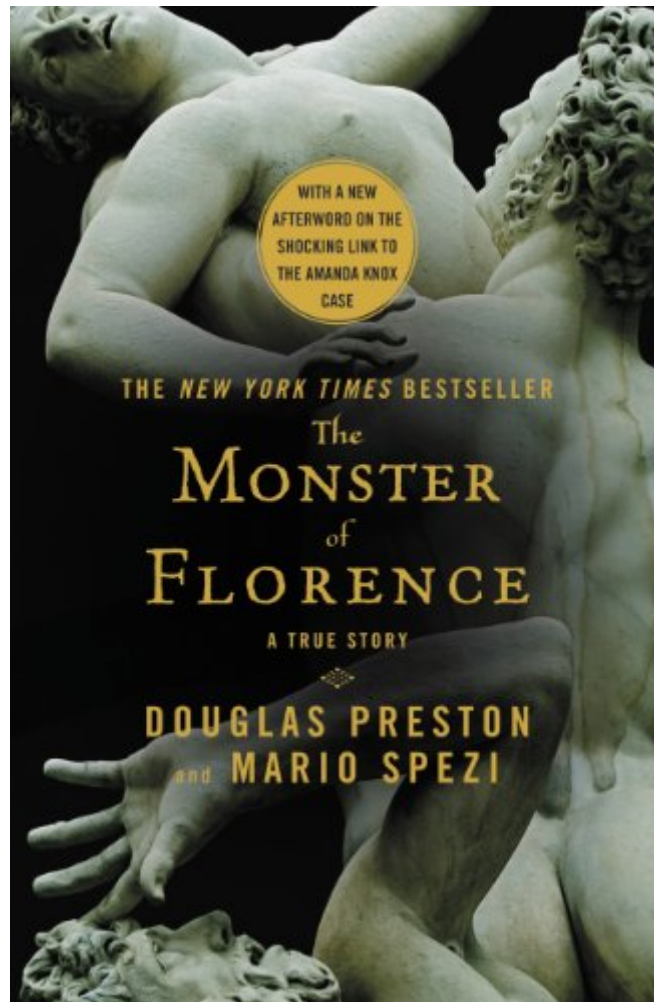


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The Monster Of Florence



Synopsis

In the nonfiction tradition of John Berendt ("Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil") and Erik Larson ("The Devil in the White City"), New York Times bestselling author Douglas Preston presents a gripping account of crime and punishment in the lush hills surrounding Florence, Italy. In 2000, Douglas Preston fulfilled a dream to move his family to Italy. Then he discovered that the olive grove in front of their 14th century farmhouse had been the scene of the most infamous double-murders in Italian history, committed by a serial killer known as the Monster of Florence. Preston, intrigued, meets Italian investigative journalist Mario Spezi to learn more. This is the true story of their search for--and identification of--the man they believe committed the crimes, and their chilling interview with him. And then, in a strange twist of fate, Preston and Spezi themselves become targets of the police investigation. Preston has his phone tapped, is interrogated, and told to leave the country. Spezi fares worse: he is thrown into Italy's grim Capanne prison, accused of being the Monster of Florence himself. Like one of Preston's thrillers, *The Monster Of Florence*, tells a remarkable and harrowing story involving murder, mutilation, and suicide--and at the center of it, Preston and Spezi, caught in a bizarre prosecutorial vendetta.

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Customer Reviews

In the annals of crime, the case of the "Monster of Florence" (the name Italian journalist Mario Spezi, one of the co-authors, and one of the key players in the case and this book, gave the killer) is truly one of the strangest. Starting in 1974, and continuing through 1985, seven couples were brutally murdered in the secluded lovers' lanes located in the hills surrounding the city of Florence, Italy. Still unsolved to this day, the crimes captured the horrified attention and imagination of the Italian people, and consumed enormous resources--nearly one hundred thousand men were investigated and more than a dozen arrested during the course of various inquiries into the crimes. Per Douglas Preston's introduction, the investigation "has been like a malignancy, spreading backward in time and outward in space, metastasizing into different cities and swelling into new investigations, with new judges, police, and prosecutors, more suspects, more arrests, and many more lives ruined." Not merely a recounting of those grisly crimes and endless investigations, *The Monster of Florence* (hereafter TMOF) is also an engrossing biographical piece, detailing the toll the case took on both its authors, who, in one of the stranger twists in a case replete with strange twists, become the focus of the ongoing police investigation. Thus, in a plot complication worthy of Alfred Hitchcock, the reporters became part of the very story they are covering--after his home is ransacked in a search, Spezi is subsequently arrested, and his collaborator, American crime novelist Preston, is harshly interrogated by the authorities. In a movie, the protagonists would have been able to clear their names by dramatically unmasking the real killer, unearthing a piece of key evidence at the last moment.

Recently, I seem to be reading a lot of books centered in and around the Italian city of Florence, treasured for centuries as the birthplace of the Renaissance. Everywhere there is art to behold, from paintings, sculpture and to architecture, and tourists crowding the city for the galleries and shopping. To the casual observer, it may just seem like a slice of heaven on earth. But long-term residents know better. Between 1968 and 1985 eight double murders occurred, all of young lovers, with the female member of the pair brutally mutilated. One of the first reporters to hear of the crime was Mario Spezi, and through the years, he followed the crimes and the many stories of just who the Monster could be. He carefully assembled his notes, and wondered along with everyone else as to just who the killer was, dubbed *The Monster* by the press and the authorities. American author Douglas Preston traveled to Italy with his wife and two of his children in 2000, living in a farmhouse

near Florence. He was busy working on a new mystery novel, but kept getting sidetracked by the mystery of the Monster. A mutual friend introduced him to Mario Spezi, and very soon both men were good friends and investigating the riddle of the murders. Over the years they kept at the mystery, and soon they were discovering that the truth was very different than what the police and the carabinieri were saying what happened...The narrative is broken up into two parts, the first half of the book centered around Spezi, and the general investigation, and the trials and suspects that well, weren't that credible.

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