



I'll Be Gone in the Dark: One Woman's Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer

Michelle McNamara , Gillian Flynn (Introduction) , Patton Oswalt (Afterword)

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Features new material on the Golden State Killer's case and an updated afterword by Patton Oswalt.

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Winner of the Goodreads Choice Awards for Nonfiction | SCIBA Book Award Winner | Longlisted for the Carnegie Medal for Excellence

The haunting true story of the elusive serial rapist turned murderer who terrorized California during the 70s and 80s, and of the gifted journalist who died tragically while investigating the case—which was solved in April 2018.

Introduction by Gillian Flynn • Afterword by Patton Oswalt

“A brilliant genre-buster.... Propulsive, can’t-stop-now reading.” —Stephen King

For more than ten years, a mysterious and violent predator committed fifty sexual assaults in Northern California before moving south, where he perpetrated ten sadistic murders. Then he disappeared, eluding capture by multiple police forces and some of the best detectives in the area.

Three decades later, Michelle McNamara, a true crime journalist who created the popular website TrueCrimeDiary.com, was determined to find the violent psychopath she called "the Golden State Killer." Michelle pored over police reports, interviewed victims, and embedded herself in the online communities that were as obsessed with the case as she was.

I'll Be Gone in the Dark —the masterpiece McNamara was writing at the time of her sudden death—offers an atmospheric snapshot of a moment in American history and a chilling account of a criminal mastermind and the wreckage he left behind. It is also a portrait of a woman’s obsession and her unflagging pursuit of the

truth. Utterly original and compelling, it has been hailed as a modern true crime classic—one which fulfilled Michelle's dream: helping unmask the Golden State Killer.

I'll Be Gone in the Dark: One Woman's Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer Details

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From Reader Review I'll Be Gone in the Dark: One Woman's Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer for online ebook

karen says

oooh, goodreads choice awards semifinalist for best nonfiction 2018! what will happen?

fulfilling book riot's 2018 read harder challenge task #2: A book of true crime

no extra points this time.

there's almost no point in my writing a content-based review of this book - i'm late to the party and better folks than me have already admirably and exhaustively covered both what the book is about and the unusual circumstances occurring beyond its covers - michelle mcnamara's sudden death two years before the book's publication, and the arrest of the golden state killer two months after it hit shelves.

i'm not going to say much more than that this man was a monster (duh) and i'm glad he's finally been caught and i hope he lives long enough to suffer profoundly for what he's done. and, seemingly at odds with this unsavory part of me wishing bad things upon a bad person, that mcnamara's writing is vivid and empathetic and even though i am not well-read in the true crime genre, she seems to bring something extra to the table, which is better-articulated in gillian flynn's introduction:

I love reading true crime, but I've always been aware of the fact that, as a reader, I am actively choosing to be a consumer of someone else's tragedy. So like any responsible consumer, I try to be careful in the choices I make. I read only the best: writers who are dogged, insightful, and humane.

It was inevitable that I would find Michelle.

I've always thought the least appreciated aspect of a great true-crime writer is humanity. Michelle McNamara had an uncanny ability to get into the minds of not just the killers but the cops who hunted them, the victims they destroyed, and the trail of grieving relatives left behind.

she's empathetic and observant throughout, and it's so unfortunate that parts of this book had to be compiled and cobbled together from articles she published elsewhere or assorted notes, and (double, triple, quadruple duh) even more unfortunate that she never got to see it published, or to see the overwhelmingly positive response to it, or to see this man finally behind bars.

i'm just going to share a few passages that struck me while i was reading this, and you can go out and read the book for yourself and find your own striking passages, because there will probably be more than a few.

this one gave me chills and anger:

He was brazen. Twice he entered homes, pressing on undeterred when he knew victims had spotted him and were frantically dialing the police. Children didn't bother him. He never hurt

them physically, but he would tie up the older ones and put them in another room. He put Jane's toddler son on the bedroom floor during the attack. The boy fell asleep. When he awoke, he peered over the bed. The EAR had left. His mother lay bound in strips of torn towels and was gagged with a washcloth. He mistook the ligatures for bandages.

"Is the doctor gone?" he whispered.

this one made me feel awe and admiration:

It was a little after four a.m. when the first officer entered the opened rear patio door, hesitantly making his way toward the woman calling out to him. She lay face down on her living room floor, naked, her wrists and ankles tied behind her with shoelaces. A ski-masked stranger had just spent an hour and a half terrorizing Fiona and her husband. He brutally raped her. Fiona was five two, 110 pounds - a wisp of a woman. She was also a native Sacramentan, in possession of a dry, matter-of-fact manner, a clear-eyed resilience that belied her petite size.

"Well, I guess the East Area Rapist is the South Area Rapist now," she said.

and this long one made me really appreciate that empathetic, observant part of the author. people like her should really be consultants for writers and actors and employed as "perspective coaches," if that is such a thing. it should be a thing.

After spending enough hours with them, I've noticed a few things about detectives. They all smell vaguely of soap. I've never met a detective with greasy hair. They excel at eye contact and have enviable posture. Irony is never their go-to tone. Wordplay makes them uneasy. The good ones create long conversational vacuums that you reflexively fill, an interrogation strategy that proved to me through my own regrettable prattle how easily confessions can be elicited. They lack facial elasticity; or rather, they contain it. I've never met a detective who pulled a face. They don't recoil or go wide-eyed. I'm a face maker. I married a comedian. Many of my friends are in show business. I'm constantly surrounded by big expressions, which is why I immediately noticed the lack of them in detectives. They maintain a pleasant but vigorous blankness that I admire. I've tried to imitate it, but I can't. I came to recognize subtle but discernible shifts in the blankness - a narrowing of the eyes, a jaw squeeze, usually in response to hearing a theory they've long since eliminated. A veil comes down. But they'll never tip their hand. They'll never tell you, "We already looked into that angle ages ago." Instead they'll just absorb it and leave you with a polite "Huh."

In their reserve and in virtually every other way, detectives differ from show-biz folks. Detectives listen. They're getting a read. Entertainers get a read only to gauge their influence on a room. Detectives deal in concrete tasks. I once spent an hour listening to an actress friend analyze a three-line text that hurt her feelings. Eventually I'll see the cracks in a detective's veneer, but in the beginning their company is an unexpected relief, like fleeing a moodily lit cast party loud with competitive chatter and joining a meeting of determined Eagle Scouts awaiting their next challenge. I wasn't a native in the land of the literal-minded, but I enjoyed my time there.

so, although you don't need one more review from a stranger telling you that this book is worth reading, i have written one anyway.

come to my blog!

Emma Giordano says

A very enjoyable read!

TW: graphic depictions of rape/assault/murder

Though true crime is a great field of interest to me, I haven't read many books of this variety. I was pleasantly satisfied with my time reading *I'll Be Gone In The Dark*. The narration was vivid and engaging. I appreciated the feeling of it being almost like a memoir from McNamara's perspective rather than just stating facts about the case.

My only struggle with the book was that it was hard to keep track of EACH victim and EACH detail of their individual cases. The order of them became muddled as I delved deeper into the book, but it's possibly not due to the writing itself but factors of my personal experience, such as choosing to listen to the audiobook version or my lack of knowledge of true crime novels in general. Though, I did see another review claim the events are not revealed chronologically throughout the book, so that's also a potential factor!

Overall, a great read and a great listen! Would definitely recommend to my fellow true crime fans. This books is full of detail and great value towards closing this case.

viktoria says

ETA 4/25/18 in the most holy crap, hopeful, bawling kind of way:

I hope you got him, Michelle.

I hope THEY got him. #IllBeGoneInTheDark #MichelleMcNamara #stepintothelight
<https://t.co/ewq3NyCz56>

— Patton Oswalt (@pattonoswalt) April 25, 2018

I'm not crying. You're crying.

Original Review, 11/16/17:

Confession: I'm what you would call a murderino.

I listen to My Favorite Murder religiously, I watch the hell out of Investigation Discovery (City Confidential is amazing), and I listen to a few other podcasts. Sadly, I never read Michelle McNamara's work until after her death. After reading a few articles, I saved reading the rest until after I read this book.

I'm going to try not to fangirl all over the place, but this was stunningly amazing.

It was such a personal story. McNamara shared so much of herself in this book without overwhelming it, and you really feel her dedication in the text. Her personal touch helps distract from the dehumanizing brutality of the crime very effectively. In a weird way, I almost felt like I had gained a friend during the book, like I was in the car driving with her or scanning through text-filled databases in the middle of the night, too, and that's a difficult feeling to evoke, especially in this genre.

Likewise, the story focuses on the many of detectives (both law enforcement and less official sleuths) who worked the case and the victims as much as it does the killer. While you get to know McNamara and her story, you also get to know the generations of detectives and their tenacity, frustration, heartbreak, and courage. The suspense builds and falls as the investigators chase leads, then stall, and all the while, you hope for the big break in a way they've learned to not bet on so earnestly.

The ending, however, is a little bittersweet. You know going in that the GSK remains uncaught and about McNamara's death, but both still hit me hard. Yet, throughout both McNamara's text and the ending by follow-up authors, there's an unwavering conviction that they'll catch the responsible one day, and when I finished the final page, that sense of resolve was the strongest emotion I felt.

A few random things I loved worth mentioning:

1. McNamara's unmistakable empathy for the victims, the detectives and LEOs, and the communities;
2. She was never gratuitous describing the rapes or murders, yet she didn't sacrifice attention to detail or suspense;
3. Likewise, she acknowledged the complexity of the crime and how difficult it's been to catch the GSK because of it, but never fetishized him, either.
4. (This might sound weird, but I've heard and read some accounts where they make rape sound like erotica or it's uncomfortably detailed and you want to throw the book across the room and clean it in bleach);
5. She had such truly excellent, beautiful, and suspenseful writing.

tl;dr: Seriously, I'll Be Gone in the Dark shows such exceptional, suspenseful writing and beautiful dedication. I cried at the end in the best of ways.

pre-read: Of course, when I have four freaking books with a holds list that I have *obligations* to read, you, my beautiful love, come into my life, after I've been pining after you for *months*. You're only the book I've been most looking forward to ALL YEAR.

Larry H says

Since its publication earlier this year, some have asked whether Michelle McNamara's utterly engrossing true crime book, *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*, would be as popular if McNamara, the wife of comedian and actor Patton Oswalt, hadn't died suddenly while writing the book in 2016. While that tragedy certainly raised the book's profile, the fact is, this is a tremendously well-written and compelling book, worthy of every bit of

acclaim it's gotten. It's just sad McNamara isn't around to appreciate the response to her years of hard work.

"Violent men unknown to me have occupied my mind all my adult life—long before 2007, when I first learned of the offender I would eventually dub the Golden State Killer. The part of the brain reserved for sports statistics or dessert recipes or Shakespeare quotes is, for me, a gallery of harrowing aftermaths: a boy's BMX bike, its wheels still spinning, abandoned in a ditch along a country road; a tuft of microscopic green fibers collected from the small of a dead girl's back. To say I'd like to stop dwelling is beside the point."

Unsolved crimes—particularly murders—were an obsession of McNamara's from when she was 14 years old. Growing up the youngest of six children in Oak Park, Illinois, in the mid-1980s, a young woman from her neighborhood was murdered one night while jogging. Even though some boys she knew might very well have seen the murderer shortly after he committed his crime, the murder was never solved, and from that act of senseless violence, a fascination which turned into an obsession and a career was borne.

"I was a hoarder of ominous and puzzling details. I developed a Pavlovian response to the word 'mystery.' My library record was a bibliography of the macabre and true. When I meet people and hear where they're from I orient them in my mind by the nearest unsolved crime."

McNamara created the true crime website TrueCrimeDiary.com, where she enjoyed rehashing unsolved cases with the police and others originally involved in them, as well as other armchair detectives. But nothing gripped her like the havoc wreaked by the man she dubbed the "Golden State Killer," a man who terrorized Northern California for more than 10 years in the 1970s and 1980s, committing 50 sexual assaults and 10 brutal murders, before disappearing without ever being caught.

In *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*, McNamara laid out the grisly, disturbing trail this killer and rapist left behind. Buoyed by painstaking research, she provides stories about his victims and those who got away lucky, the dogged police officers and detectives tasked with hunting down this criminal mastermind. It's fascinating but frustrating, in that without the technology used today in solving crimes, without the kind of knowledge about serial killers and serial criminals that exists today, this criminal was able to escape.

While that in and of itself makes for an interesting read, McNamara wasn't afraid to talk about herself as well, and how this obsession affected her life. Reading this book brought you closer to the mind of a fascinating woman, one who will never be able to tell her own story in greater detail, nor will she be able to see how people reacted to her book. She was a great writer, and her research and interpretation was top-notch. There was a reason that police detectives were willing to talk with her and rehash the crimes they couldn't solve—because they knew she *got* them.

In his blurb for the book, Stephen King said it best: "What readers need to know—what makes this book so special—is that it deals with two obsessions, one light and one dark. The Golden State Killer is the dark half; Michelle McNamara is the light half. It's a journey into two minds, one sick and disordered, the other intelligent and determined. I loved this book."

Yep.

See all of my reviews at itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com, or check out my list of the best books I read in 2017 at <https://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com/2018/01/the-best-books-i-read-in-2017.html>.

Emily (Books with Emily Fox) says

(3.5) An interesting topic, an impressive woman and research... but not my jam.

I would recommend the audiobook as I don't think I would have enjoyed it as much if I had read it myself!

j e w e l s says

FIVE STARS

My queen, Gillian Flynn, starts this book with a Midwestern twang and down-to-earth introduction; Patton Oswalt ends with a heart-rending final chapter and I was spellbound the entire time by Michelle McNamara's non-fiction novel.

A mind-blowing mountain of evidence to sift through and present in one novel only slightly frightened Michelle McNamara. What truly frightened her and kept her awake at night was the fact that the Golden State Killer has gotten away with his 10 year reign of terror and is possibly blending into society as someone's husband or dad now.

Yes, McNamara was obsessed with her search for the monster. If you read even a small item about this killer/rapist, I doubt you can remain content to leave it at that. It is impossibly frustrating in this day of DNA instant matching that the creep could still be walking the streets. She rightfully felt until the day she died that she was on the verge of identifying the killer, probably through an Ancestry.com like site.

A true-crime blogger, McNamara knew she was obsessed with GSK and does not hold back the introspective criticism. She knows herself and she understands people on a level that most of us don't. The seasoned and weary criminalists on the case came to appreciate, even rely on her skills. She, in turn, relied heavily on crowd-sourcing and advanced technology to help in the relentless search.

She writes impressively about the victims, the survivors and the detectives involved. She articulates the many (50) cases in bite-sized chunks and does not glorify nor hold back the details. It is a terrifying book, yet full of compassion and understanding for the victims.

My mouth continually fell open and my head was shaking NO as I listened to this moving account from one woman with an enormous investigation to relate to the public. It is simply a magnificent piece of work. The audio narration is AMAZING, but I still ended up buying the Kindle version to look at the maps and other evidence she has pictured.

If you are interested to check out a sample of the book, you can read her magazine article here.
<http://www.lamag.com/longform/in-the-...>

Chelsea Humphrey says

Incredible. It was a pleasure to listen to this following the capture of Joseph Deangelo, and it's excruciating to think that Michelle was so close to unveiling one of the most notorious serial rapists and murderers in US history. If you haven't managed to snag this one yet, I highly recommend listening to the audiobook if that's your thing; all the narrators were beyond excellent and audible has all the pdf downloads available to view alongside while listening. Highly recommended for fans of true crime and those looking to get a glimpse not only into the EAR, but also Michelle's personal life and struggles as well. All of the stars. <3

Christina - Traveling Sister says

5, well I'll be sleeping with a baseball bat forever now stars!!!

*?Everyday I'm feeling fine,
Drinking wine,
Forever reading true crime?*

This starts with an introduction by juggernaut thriller author Gillian Flynn and ends with a heartbreaking and beautiful epilogue by McNamara's husband and esteemed actor Patton Oswalt. What happens in-between was pure, unadulterated journalistic *magic*.

“Writing this now, I’m struck by two incompatible truths that pain me. No one would have taken more joy from this book than my mother. And I probably wouldn’t have felt the freedom to write it until she was gone.”

While on its surface, this is a story about an elusive burglar, rapist, and murderer dubbed the Golden State Killer - at its heart, it's really a look inside the life and mind of its author: Michelle McNamara. We're given intimate details about the crimes committed by GSK (whom we now know is Joseph DeAngelo) and are walked chronologically through the escalation and the atrocities he reaped upon the Sacramento area over a decade-long crime-spree.

Spliced in between these horrendous retellings we're given insight into McNamara. Who she is as a person, where her obsessive nature comes from, how it was ultimately refined to true-crime. Her passion for the work she does is evident throughout the entirety of this read and it's impossible not to be swept up into the sheer magnitude of research and dedication she put into this masterpiece.

“The victims recede from view. Their rhythm is off, their confidence drained. They’re laden with phobias and made tentative by memory. Divorce and drugs beset them. Statutes of limitations expire. Evidence kits are tossed for lack of room. What happened to them is buried, bright and unmoving, a coin at the bottom of a pool. They do their best to carry on.”

What really struck me here was the accessibility of McNamara's voice. When you're dealing in such raw, gruesome and heart-rending facts it's easy to get lost in the sensationalism of it all. So much of true-crime is this in-your-face, all about ratings, how many jaws can we get to drop type of business that the humanity of those affected is lost. McNamara did not falter in this regard even once. She dealt in pure facts and maintained a clear and deep respect for the victims, the police officers, and the communities this criminal terrorized.

“I don’t care if I’m the one who captures him. I just want bracelets on his wrists and a cell door slamming behind him.”

It is certainly very interesting having read this book *after* DeAngelo has now been caught and knowing how easy it would've been for him to just slip through the cracks and live the rest of his life a free man. I think it shows who McNamara was as a person that despite her deep obsession with this case she simply wanted him caught. She didn't need fame or fortune or to be involved -in the end, she just wanted justice. It leaves a sad aura around me knowing that she will not get to see the praise and reception she has received and that we've lost such a truly talented voice in investigative journalism.

I completed this as a Traveling Friends read and it is incredible how many people have their own stories of seemingly normal people we later find out have committed heinous crimes. This makes a fantastic buddy read as there are endless opportunities to discuss. However, if I can give future readers one piece of advice: **don't read this alone, at night or you'll be gone in the dark too.**

Cheers to Michelle McNamara and a true work of art.

Julie says

I'll Be Gone in the Dark: One Woman's Obsessive Search for the Golden State Killer by Michelle McNamara is a 2018 Harper publication.

No butler, no second maid, no blood upon the stair. No eccentric aunt, no gardener, no family friend smiling among the bric-a-brac-and murder. Only a suburban house with the front door open and a dog barking at a squirrel, and the cars passing. The corpse quite dead. The wife in Florida. Consider the clues: the potato masher in a vase, the torn photograph of a Wesleyan basketball team, scattered with the check stubs in the hall; the unsent fan letter to Shirley Temple, the Hoover button on the lapel of the deceased, the note: 'To be killed this way is quite all right with me.' Small wonder the case remains unsolved, or that the sleuth. Le Roux is now incurably insane, and sits alone in a white room in a white gown, screaming that the world is mad, that clues lead nowhere, or to walls so high their tops cannot be seen; Screaming all day of war, screaming that nothing can be solved- Weldon Kees, "Crime Club"

What a fitting epigraph!

This book sincerely scared the crap out of me. I grew up in the seventies, one of the creepiest decades, filled with terrifying serial killers and rapists, but I was not familiar with this case. This book reminded me of how taut the atmosphere was in those days, as the author details her hunt for a prolific serial rapist, which eventually escalated to murder, who went on a virtually unchecked rape and murder spree in California in the seventies.

The author dubbed the killer 'The Golden State Killer', as she slowly pieced together the evidence and the many victims, working tirelessly to put a face and a name to the moniker she'd give him. Michelle was a true crime journalist, who started the website, 'TrueCrimeDiary.com, as this case became an obsession with her.

The crime wave and the horrifying details sent chills down my spine and made the hair stand up on the back of my neck on more than one occasion. The rapist was smart, and planned his attack down to the smallest detail, having stalked the unsuspecting victims for a good while, knowing them intimately before making his move.

Eventually, the crimes ceased, but no one knows exactly why. The author has her theories, and I would have to agree with her assessment.

The disheartening thing here is the feeling that McNamara was closing in, making progress, despite the roadblocks, setbacks, and dead ends that comes with this type of investigation. As everyone knows, Michelle died before this book was completed, which adds yet another haunting layer to this book.

Her passion seeps through the pages, along with her single- minded determination, that did border on obsession. I can see how that could happen, as this case was never solved and there is a sense of urgency

about the book. The clock is ticking, and the feeling is one of being 'so close, yet so far', with time is running out for justice.

Michelle's private life musings, added a more personal touch, something that might not always come off so well in the true crime arena, but I think the author was attempting to share with readers how her obsession and desire to see the case solved influenced and bled over into her personal life, taking up her every waking thought. It lends a poignancy, and occasionally a little humor, to the book that does offset the gruesome revelations unearthed about the crimes and the victims.

One quick note about how the book was written, since it was published posthumously, and Michelle had not completed the book before her death. It is my understanding that her lead researchers pieced the book together using what Michelle had already written, along with her extensive notes. Unfortunately, the organization, and presentation, is not great. In true crime, disorganization is a huge pet peeve of mine and I would, under ordinary circumstances, have been more than a little exasperated and disappointed. In this case, I was a lot more forgiving, but I still think someone should have polished it up a little better. I would not let that deter you from reading this book, however, as, despite the bumpy ride, it is still quite an effective read.

Unless you have nerves of steel, I don't recommend reading this book alone at night, because it will certainly give you the heebie jeebies. But, I do hope the book generates enough attention that someone might come forward with new information or will pick up the torch and continue the search for the elusive 'Golden State Killer'.

4 stars

Erin says

UPDATE: An arrest has been made, 72 year old Joseph James DeAngelo a former police officer.

This book is easily one of the best True Crimes books I have ever read.

The first time I remember hearing about Michelle McNamara was on an episode of 48 Hours and the only reason I watched that episode was because I recognized her husband Patton Oswalt. His first name is my last name and for that reason I've always liked him. The 48 Hours episode was about his wife Michelle and her dogged pursuit of a prolific serial rapist/killer which she named The Golden State Killer. I had never heard of this killer but I was instantly intrigued. Unfortunately by time the episode aired Michelle had tragically passed away but what she left behind may one day lead to the capture of one of the most vile serial killers in history.

I'll Be Gone In The Dark is part True Crime, part memoir and in my very very humble opinion it is a masterpiece. Michelle spent nearly a decade intricately researching and playing amateur detective trying to weave together 40 years of evidence in an herculean effort to discover the true identity of The Golden State killer. A killer who's crimes weren't even connected until the early 2000's. His were originally thought to be separate crimes. From 1976-1979 he was in parts of California known as The East Area Rapist. From 1974-1975 in parts of California he was known as The Ransaker, from 1979-1986 he was The Original Night Stalker. It took DNA to connect all the cases back to one offender. This book ends with a cliffhanger, we don't know who the killer is but we are much much closer. As I read this I wondered if the killer himself had read this book.

After I finished I'll Be Gone In The Dark I felt sad that this wonderful woman isn't here to reap her rightful praise for this amazing piece work. I couldn't help but feel GSK had taken Michelle as his latest victim. I hope he's caught not just because of the vile crimes he's committed but as tribute to the life of Michelle McNamara.

A Must Read!

2018 Around The Year In 52 Books: A book rated 5 Stars by at least 1 friend.
2018 Popsugar Reading Challenge: True Crime.

Tammy says

This one didn't quite do it for me. I found the story interesting because I knew absolutely nothing about this killer that got away (not a spoiler). The development of the methodologies to apprehend criminals was fascinating and many of the terms are commonplace today. It's an uneven book and I found myself mentally re-writing sentences for clarity. The messy sentences (in places) may be the result of piecing together a book from the deceased author's notes and trying to retain her voice. It's worth reading if you are a fan of true crime.

Diane S ? says

4.5 captivating and incredibly creepy. One would have had to have been in a news blackout, at least here in the states, to have not heard about the long overdue capture of the rapist and murderer, called the Golden State killer. This book is do well researched, an in-depth expose of all the incidents, the evidence collected and the many areas in California where this killer roamed. It was presented in a clear, concise and very interesting way. Yes, there is repetition, but it would be hard not eliminate that, as Michelle talks to many different law enforcement personnel as well as others, going over what she found, what they found, and what do far had been concluded. That for so long he was able to go without capture, it both unbelievable but yet understandable. There were no data base sharing information, nor was there dna profiling back then.

I chose to listen to this and the narrator was outstanding. In fact I believe listening to this increased the creep factor quite a bit. You see, the rapist/killer whispered to his victims and the narrators whispering and thd rords spoken were chilling. Actually went to bed with bear spray on my nightstand. Years ago I was a true crime fanatic, read Helter skelter, all of Ann Rules many crime exposes, but this is the first one I have read for s long time. It was part of a sisters read and it helped, talking to oyhers, able to share our thoughts.

It is terrible that after sll her work, Michelle died, way to young, before she saw this book published, nor the man who had been here obsession so long captured. Her husband narrates the end of the sufio, talking about his wife, and her work.

Kemper says

Update 4/26/2018 - When this book was published it was an unsolved mystery. It got a happy ending yesterday.

I'd heard about Michelle McNamara before I even knew her name or that she was a true crime writer. She was married to comedian/actor Patton Oswalt, who I'm a big fan of, and several of his bits over the years have involved his wife. Per Patton's descriptions in his routines she was a brilliant woman, far smarter than him, who was always operating at a whole other level.

Now I know what he was talking about after reading this book. It's about a pure monster that should be one of the best known unsolved crime cases in American history, but many people have probably never heard of the Golden State Killer. It began in 1976 with a serial rapist terrorizing the suburbs of Sacramento. His MO was to break into homes in the middle of the night and surprise sleeping victims who he'd threaten with knives or guns. He often targeted couples or families and would rape a woman while her husband or boyfriend was tied up helpless in the next room. He's also believed to have shot and killed a couple who had the misfortune to encounter him while out walking their dog.

His attacks spread to communities outside of San Francisco, but seemed to stop in mid-1979. Unfortunately, GSK had just moved south to the LA area where he started up again, but his first known attempt was thwarted when the couple fought back, and he narrowly escaped capture. Instead of scaring him off this triggered an escalation after which GSK would kill those he attacked until stopping in 1986, ten years after he began.

The full extent of the damage he'd done wasn't known until DNA typing of cold cases was done in 2001. This confirmed what several detectives in various jurisdictions had suspected for years. The man called the East Area Rapist (EAR) during his crime spree in northern California was the same man who'd become known as the Original Night Stalker (ONS) in the southern part of the state. The statistics of his victims alone are staggering with 45 women sexually assaulted and 12 murders, and those are just the ones that are confirmed. He may have also been responsible for a series of break-ins in Visalia a few years earlier, and if so there's another murder to hang on him there for shooting a man who stopped an intruder from abducting his daughter in the middle of the night from their home.

It was Michelle McNamara who branded him the Golden State Killer after she began writing about the case on her blog and in magazine articles. She had become interested in true crime as a teenager after an unsolved murder of a young girl happened near her home. A big part of this story is about how this case came to obsess her, and she does not make an attempt to gloss over how much it took over her life. She has one story of asking her husband to leave a movie premiere party because of a new lead she was given that she couldn't wait to get back to her laptop to start working on it. There's another heartbreaking moment when she describes an anniversary dinner with Patton where she realized that not only had he given her gifts two years in a row based on her on-going work on GSK, but that she had been so consumed that she'd forgotten to get him anything at all.

Unfortunately, Michelle died unexpectedly in 2016 while in the middle of writing this book. Two of her fellow researchers finished it at Patton's urging, and I'm incredibly glad that happened because it would have been a shame if the work she did on this hadn't been revealed so fully.

She was an incredibly gifted writer who can provide detail about GSK's crime in such a way that we feel the full weight of what he did, and how incredibly scary this story is. It's there as she details the evidence the police found that showed that GSK was a relentless night prowler who crept over fences, through backyards, across rooftops, and peeped windows from the shadows. It's in the way she tells us the stories from the victims who were very often sound asleep in their beds and were awoken by a man wearing a ski mask shining a light in their eyes, showing them a knife, and telling them that he'd kill them if they didn't do exactly what he said. While it never feels exploitive she conveys all the ways that the surviving victim's lives were changed by the attacks on them. When she describes a detective's years of chasing dead ends you can feel the frustration, and when she tells the story of a new lead you also start tapping into the hope that this might be the one to break the case.

In addition to being a great writer Michelle was a relentless researcher. I sometimes have issues with books or documentaries about true crime cases because I think it too often it shows confirmation bias or prefers wild conspiracy theories to more likely mundane facts and scenarios. She avoids those by imposing clear and logical standards to this which depended on fact checking and interviews rather than indulging in hunches or pet theories.

It's very clear from what she wrote here that Michelle believed that this case could be solved with technology. The cops have the DNA of the Golden State Killer to use as the ultimate determination of guilt or innocence. Geo-Mapping his crime scenes should give an approximate location of where he lived. Scanning old case files and using key word recognition and data sorting can bring previously hidden connections to life. DNA databases are growing all the time, and all it takes is one hit from a relative to narrow it down to the family.* Michelle was convinced that GSK's identity was in the existing evidence somewhere, and it's just a matter of sifting through all the clues to find it.

Because of her death there several parts that rely on her early drafts, notes, old magazine articles, and even a tape she made of the conversation between her and a police detective while showing her some of the GSK's crime scenes. That gives the book a bit of a disjointed feeling and makes you wish even more that she'd been able to finish it herself, but considering the circumstances it's unavoidable and doesn't prevent the full story from being told.

This will be going on my Best-of-True-Crime shelf, right next to *In Cold Blood*. And if they do ever catch the Golden State Killer I'll bet it's going to be due in no small part to the work of Michelle McNamara.

* *This is exactly how the police eventually tracked him down.*

Emily May says

"He loses his power when we know his face."

And, it seems, we now do.

I can see why everyone speaks so highly of this book. It is a very impressive piece of investigative journalism, whether true crime stories happen to be your cup of tea or not. What makes *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* stand out - and what you might have seen come up time and again in other people's reviews - is that the writer is perhaps as fascinating as the subject.

It is the late Michelle McNamara at the centre of this piece - an intelligent and particularly astute woman who dedicated everything she had to pursuing the Golden State Killer, a moniker which she herself bestowed upon him. It is her dedication that is truly astounding. The lengths she went to in order to uncover the truth are quite unbelievable.

As the subtitle tells us, this was indeed an *obsessive* search. That's not just a dramatic buzzword. Behind the scenes of her daily life with her high-profile family, Michelle was hunting. She was scouring the Internet and the past for clues. She was reconstructing crime scenes, talking with witnesses, analyzing the evidence and building her own psychological profile of the killer.

Gillian Flynn writes in the introduction:

"I love reading true crime, but I've always been aware of the fact that, as a reader, I am actively choosing to be a consumer of someone else's tragedy. So like any responsible consumer, I try to be careful in the choices I make. I read only the best: writers who are dogged, insightful, and humane."

And McNamara is definitely all those things. Her work and writing never seem sensationalist. Her reconstructions of the disgusting crimes are detailed, but not in a gratuitous way. She writes sensitively with a deep sense of empathy for the victims, wishing, it seems, to paint them as more than just a list of victims from decades ago, but as three-dimensional human beings who lived through unspeakable tragedies.

This book is so popular that I know most of this has been said already, but I'm just really glad I finally gave in to the hype and read *I'll Be Gone in the Dark*. It is especially satisfying to know this man has finally been caught, and my only lingering disappointment stems from the fact that Michelle didn't live long enough to see it.

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Will Byrnes says

That summer I hunted the serial killer at night from my daughter's playroom. For the most part I mimicked the bedtime routine of a normal person. Teeth brushed. Pajamas on. But after my husband and daughter fell asleep, I'd retreat to my makeshift workspace and boot up my laptop, that fifteen-inch-wide hatch of endless possibilities...I rarely moved but I leaped decades with a few keystrokes. Yearbooks. Marriage certificates. Mug shots. I scoured thousands of pages of 1970s-era police files. I pored over autopsy reports. That I should do this surrounded by a half-dozen stuffed animals and a set of miniature pink bongos didn't strike me as unusual. I'd found my searching place, as private as a rat's maze. Every obsession needs a room of its own. Mine was strewn with coloring paper on which I'd scribbled down California penal codes in crayon. - from the prologue

I'll Be Gone in the Dark is not just a tale of a decade-long crime spree, of a maddeningly elusive peeper, burglar, rapist, and murderer. It is not only a tale of obsession, as the author, and others with her particular inclination, bury themselves in the forensic, statistical, genetic, and geographical trail left by this relentless offender. It is a story as well of how some dedicated active and retired police, and private citizens worked hand in hand to try to track down a homicidal monster. It is also a story of the impact that monster had on the communities he terrorized and on how advances in technology over several decades shortened the distance between suspicion and apprehension.

Michelle McNamara hard at work - image from *The Times* - provided to them by Patton Oswalt

McNamara had always wanted to be a writer, but she gained some focus on *what* to write as a teen.

[Her] fascination with the grisly began when she was just 14, when a young woman named Kathleen Lombardo, whom McNamara knew from church, was murdered while jogging a block and a half away from McNamara's home in Oak Park, Illinois. The man who slit Lombardo's throat was never found. McNamara would be forever haunted by

what she'd later describe as “the specter of that question mark where the killer’s face should be.” - From Vulture article

She takes us along with her, introducing readers to three general groups of people, the victims, the professional investigators, and her small band of amateur sleuths. These are not deep profiles, but we are given enough about each to understand their roles in the ongoing drama, and their motivation.

Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office sketches of a masked man who had fled a crime scene in 1979 and an artist's impression of the killer – image from *The Times*

The first crimes took place in the 1970s, the last known GSK crime was committed in 1986. He began with simple burglaries, dozens of them, enough to earn a tabloid name, *The Ransacker*, then moved on to rape. One of his victims was thirteen. The tabloids called him the *East Area Rapist* (EAR) and the *Original Night Stalker* (ONS), often merging the two to EAR-ONS. He was nearly caught after one couple resisted, so, to ensure not only compliance, but that there would be no witnesses, he moved on to homicide. His home invasions were well planned, professionally executed, and particularly cruel. It was not enough to rape women. He made many of the women tie up their husbands or boyfriends, and forced them to watch him commit the rape. He had a signature technique for monitoring whether the male victims moved. Movement, they were told, would get their partner killed. And sometimes he killed them anyway, both of them. During her research, McNamara coined the GSK tag for him, the *Golden State Killer*.

Attacks attributed to the GSK – image from the Sacramento County DA's office by way of the NY Times

McNamara takes us through not just the clues that accumulated over the years, but methodologies for looking into them. There is some very surprising information here on what happens to old police files. We follow along as new methods are added to tried and true shoe-leather investigation. There were two major technological breakthroughs over the four decades of the investigation. DNA fingerprinting was the first. And even once it was put into widespread use there were still problems with local police departments coordinating with other PDs. She walks us through how that changed. The other major item is what you are using right now, the internet. All the information in the world is useless without the ability to connect a fact here to a crime there. The internet, McNamara predicted, was what would eventually allow for the apprehension of the GSK. It is quite cheering when McNamara begins to connect with other cold-crime obsessives across the country, and they begin sharing theories, and sometimes actual evidence. It was an incredibly long investigation, and such projects come with some built-in risk.

falling for a suspect is a lot like the first surge of blind love in a relationship. Focus narrows to a single face. The world and its practical sounds are a wan soundtrack to the powerful silent biopic you're editing in your mind at all times. No amount of information on the object of your obsession is enough. You crave more. Always more. You note his taste in shoes and even drive by his house, courtesy of Google Maps. You engage in wild confirmation bias. You project. A middle-aged white man smiling and cutting a cake decorated with candles in a picture posted on Facebook isn't celebrating his birthday, but holding a knife.

As with the infamous Kitty Genovese incident in 1964, how people react not just to crime but to neighborhood security in general comes in for some scrutiny here.

That's what we all do. All of us. We make well-intentioned promises of protection we can't always keep.

I'll look out for you.

But then you hear a scream and you decide it's some teenagers playing around. A young man jumping a fence is taking a shortcut. The gunshot at three a.m. is a firecracker or a car backfiring. You sit up in bed for a startled moment. Awaiting you is the cold, hard floor and a conversation that may lead nowhere: you collapse onto your warm pillow, and turn back to sleep.

Sirens wake you later.

People did react in some ways. Sacramento saw a spate of residents trimming trees and uprooting bushes to deny cover to the GSK, installing floodlighting, reinforcing doors, sleeping with hammers under pillows, and buying thousands of guns. Victim support groups formed, some of the victimized men joining neighborhood patrols. Community safety meetings were packed. There were some positive impacts from GSK's dark deeds, though.

The case had a profound impact not just on fear and public safety in California, but also on the way that rapes were investigated and how rape victims were treated, said Carol Daly, a detective in the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office at the time...Rape victims were seen and cared for faster, and pubic hair, scratches and other evidence were examined and preserved, she said. Rape kits were standardized. "Every victim went through the process," she said. - From 4/25/18 – NY TIMES article

When my wife was reading this book, some time ago, she became a bit paranoid safety conscious, jumping at small unexpected sounds, then wanting to investigate (in a house with as many cats as we have, unexpected noises are abundant) making extra certain that our windows and doors were locked, watching a tick or two longer than usual at people passing by (living next door to a pizzeria, they are legion), keeping the lights on a bit longer than usual when going to bed. Point being that the book, while hardly a horror novel, can indeed induce a serious case of jitters. And why not? The nutter of which McNamara writes was not caught during the decades investigators private and professional worked the case. He was still on the loose when McNamara passed away,

McNamara's writing skills are considerable. She keeps the narrative moving, slickly evading the potential peril of death by excessive detail. She reports on some of the gore the GSK generated, but not too much, not nearly as much as she might have. She has an ability to clarify the forensics, while keeping us in touch with the terrors experienced by the victims, and the hopes and frustrations of the diverse posse on the GSK's trail. Occasionally a particular passage or turn of phrase will make you sit back and sigh in appreciation, but the narrative chugs on and each particular gem is allowed to please, then recede into the rearview. The pair who took on the task of completing the book when McNamara died retrieved some fine samples from her notes. For example,

He was a compulsive prowler and searcher. We, who hunt him, suffer from the same affliction. He peered through windows. I tap "return." Return. Return. Click Mouse click, mouse click...The hunt is the adrenaline rush, not the catch. He's the fake shark in *Jaws*, barely seen so doubly feared.

McNamara died in her sleep, in April, 2016, at age 46, from a combination of drugs interacting with an undiagnosed medical condition that caused a blockage in her arteries. She had been stressed out from working on this book, putting in long hours and suffering anxiety and nightmares that kept her from sleeping. Her husband engaged researcher Paul Haynes and investigative journalist Billy Jensen to complete the book McNamara had worked on for so long, and with such dedication.

A week after Michelle's death, we gained access to her hard drive and began exploring her files on the Golden State Killer. All 3,500 of them. That was on top of dozens of notebooks, the legal pads, the scraps of paper, and thousands of digitized pages of police

reports. And the thirty-seven boxes of files she had received from the Orange County prosecutor, which Michelle lovingly dubbed the Mother Lode.

The GSK burglarized more than 120 homes, raped dozens of women, killed at least ten people, and at least one dog during the 1970s and 1980s. We do not know how many people he drove mad in their decades-long inability to find him, or how many lives were ruined as a result of his crimes. The good news is that in April 2018, only a few months after the publication of Michelle McNamara's book, a 72-year-old man, Joseph James DeAngelo was arrested, based on DNA evidence. The Golden State Killer is finally in jail. He had not killed anyone in thirty years, as far as we know, but it is in the nature of such sprees to have a strong impact long after the events themselves. Meg Gardiner, who grew up in Santa Barbara, in one of DeAngelos target neighborhoods, tells of the experience of terror during the period of the killer's mayhem.

Yesterday my brother texted: "I have a different feeling driving around the neighborhood today. It was always in the back of my mind that he could still be living around here. In a weird way it feels safer."

It does. The fear is gone. But the shadows remain.

So does Michelle McNamara's work, her legacy, a major contribution to finally locking up a long-sought monster.

HBO has bought the rights and plans to develop *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* into a documentary mini-series.

Joseph James DeAngelo, 72 – believed to be the Golden State Killer – image from Sacramento County Sheriff's Office

Review posted – June 15, 2018

Publication date – February 27, 2018

December 2018 - *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* wins the 2018 Goodreads Choice Award for non-fiction

=====EXTRA STUFF

An excerpt of the book, from *The Times*

----How to catch a serial killer from your bedroom: DIY detective Michelle McNamara pursued a notorious murderer without leaving the house

McNamara includes as an epigraph the poem Crime Club, by Weldon Kees, a paean to amateur sleuths

Before she took on this book project, McNamara's ran a true-crime blog, True Crime Diary

Paul Haynes at Twitter

Articles you will want to read

----October 26, 2016 – NY Times - Patton Oswalt: 'I'll Never Be at 100 Percent Again' - an interview - on how he is coping with the loss of his wife – by Jason Zinoman

----February 28, 2018 – Vulture - My Friend Michelle McNamara, the Crime Writer Gone in the Dark - by Kera Bolonik – a beautiful remembrance by a long-time friend

----April 25, 2018 – NY Times - Michelle McNamara Died Pursuing the Golden State Killer. Her Husband,

Patton Oswalt, Has Questions for Him. - by Alexandra Alter – hours after the GSK is arrested Oswalt, the two people he'd hired to complete her book, along with members of Ms. McNamara's family were together at an event for the book in Chicago

-----April 25, 2018 – NY Times - Search for 'Golden State Killer' Leads to Arrest of Ex-Cop

-----April 25, 2018 – Slate - How Did Police Find the Golden State Killer Suspect? Michelle McNamara's Researcher Has a Hunch. - by Laura Miller

-----April 26, 2018 – Sacramento Bee - Relative's DNA from genealogy websites cracked East Area Rapist case, DA's office says - by Sam Stanton and Ryan Lillis

----- May 3, 2016 - Time Magazine - Patton Oswalt Remembers His Wife, Michelle McNamara: 'She Steered Her Life With Joyous, Wicked Curiosity - By Patton Oswalt

-----May 4, 2018 – Signature Reads – by novelist Meg Gardiner - Growing Up in Santa Barbara While the Golden State Killer Was at Large

-----June 27, 2018 - NY Times - Genealogists Turn to Cousins' DNA and Family Trees to Crack Five More Cold Cases - by Heather Murphy

-----August 29, 2018 - NY Times - She Helped Crack the Golden State Killer Case. Here's What She's Going to Do Next. - by Heather Murphy - on Barbara Rae-Venter, a lawyer with expertise in genetic sleuthing, whose work was crucial to the work that identified the killer

Harper has a series of **podcasts** for this book on Soundcloud that are very worth checking out

-----Preview

-----Episode 1

-----Episode 2

-----Episode 3
