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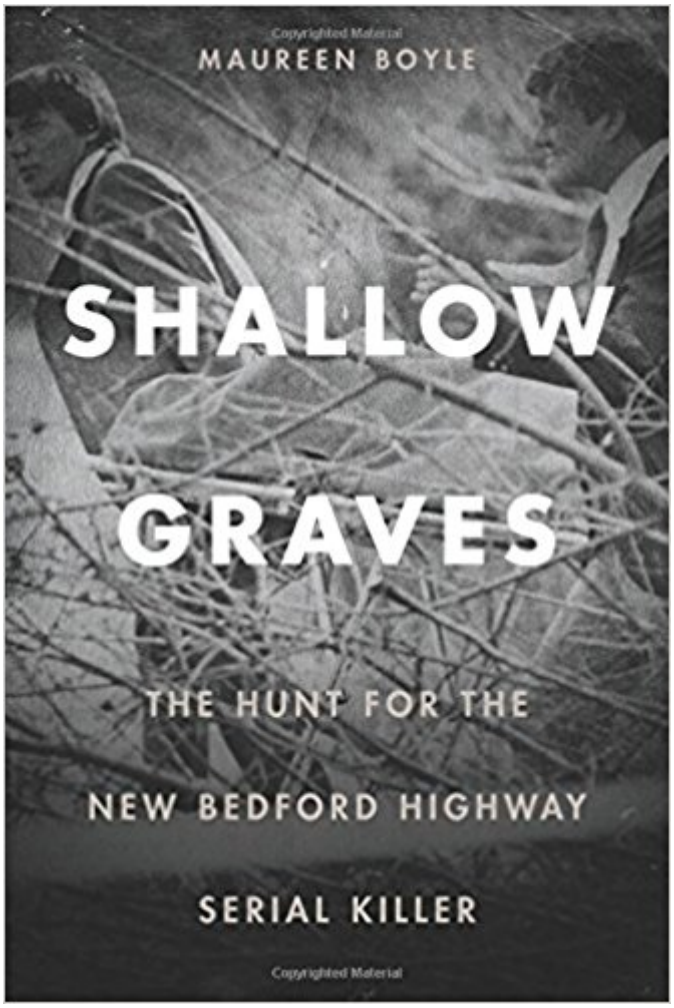
Shallow Graves: The Hunt For The New Bedford Highway Serial Killer



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Synopsis

Eleven women went missing over the spring and summer of 1988 in New Bedford, Massachusetts, an old fishing port known as the Whaling City, where Moby Dick, Frederick Douglass, textile mills, and heroin-dealing represent just a few of the many threads in the communityÃ¢â ¬â„¢s diverse fabric. In Shallow Graves, investigative reporter Maureen Boyle tells the story of a case that has haunted New England for thirty years.The Crimes: The skeletal remains of nine of the women, aged nineteen to thirty-six, were discovered near highways around New Bedford. Some had clearly been strangled, others were so badly decomposed that police were left to guess how they had died.The Victims: All the missing women had led troubled lives of drug addiction, prostitution, and domestic violence, including Nancy Paiva, whose sister was a hard-working employee of the City of New Bedford, and Debra Greenlaw DeMello, who came from a solidly middle-class family but fell into drugs and abusive relationships. In a bizarre twist, PaivaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s clothes were found near DeMelloÃ¢â ¬â„¢s body.The Investigators: Massachusetts state troopers Maryann Dill and Jose Gonsalves were the two constants in a complex cast of city, county, and state cops and prosecutors. They knew the victims, the suspects, and the drug-and-crime-riddled streets of New Bedford. They were present at the beginning of the case and they stayed to the bitter end.The Suspects: Kenneth Ponte, a New Bedford attorney and deputy sheriff with an appetite for drugs and prostitutes, landed in the investigative crosshairs from the start. He was indicted by a grand jury in the murder of one of the victims, but those charges were later dropped. Anthony DeGrazia was a loner who appeared to fit the classic serial-killer profile: horrific childhood abuse, charming, charismatic, but prone to bursts of violence. He hunted prostitutes in the city by night and served at a Catholic church by day. Which of these two was the real killer? Or was it someone else entirely?Maureen Boyle first broke the story in 1988 and stayed with it for decades. In Shallow Graves she spins a riveting narrative about the crimes, the victims, the hunt for the killers, and the search for justice, all played out against the backdrop of an increasingly impoverished community beset by drugs and crime. Drawing on more than one hundred interviews, along with police reports, first-person accounts, and field reporting both during the killings and more recently, Shallow Graves brings the reader behind the scenes of the investigation, onto the streets of the city, and into the homes of the families still hoping for answers.

Book Information

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Ã¢â ¬Å“Reads like a first-rateÃ Â novel, but enlightens like a detective's handbook.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Jack Levin, author of Serial Killers and Sadistic Murderers: Up Close and Personal

Ã¢â ¬Å“Riveting. Heartbreaking. Authentic. This impeccably researched chronicle of a terrifying chapter in history will keep you turning pages as fast as you can. Important, powerful, and compelling, this is true crime at the highest level.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Hank Phillippi Ryan, Agathha, Anthony, and Mary Higgins Clark awardÃ¢â ¬â œwinning author and EmmyÃ¢â ¬â œwinning reporter)Ã¢â ¬Å“Chronicles the killings and their aftermath with a novelistÃ¢â ¬â„¢s power and perceptivity. A compelling work of narrative nonfiction. . . . A great read.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Irene Virag, Pulitzer PrizeÃ¢â ¬â œwinning reporter and journalism professor at Stony Brook University)Ã¢â ¬Å“First-rate reporting. . . . It takes a master storyteller to weave facts into a work of art that makes readers both think and feel. Boyle has succeeded. Highly recommended.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Tom Hallman Jr., Pulitzer PrizeÃ¢â ¬â œwinning journalist and author of Sam: The Boy Behind the Mask)Ã¢â ¬Å“Boyle expertly captures a terrifying time in a compelling and entertaining narrative. . . . Nearly impossible to put down.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Tim White, coauthor of The Last Good Heist)Ã¢â ¬Å“The definitive examination of a case that continues to grip a troubled region. . . . Irresistible.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Chris Gonsalves, author of Haunted Love)

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