



## A Killer's Grace

*Ronald Chapman*

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For Kevin Pitcairn, the letter from a serial killer awaiting execution comes with implications he can't ignore. The writer's guilt is clear at least in a legal sense. But the questions he raises draw Pitcairn into a compelling journey of investigation whose profound psychological and spiritual implications hurl his life into upheaval. As he tries to determine and tell the killer's true story, Pitcairn plunges deeper into the pit his own demons have created and trapped him in. His journalist's curiosity becomes a compulsion as events bind him tighter and tighter, propelling him from New Mexico's stark high desert into an increasingly hostile wider world. Murder, mystery, and redemption shape Pitcairn's struggle to answer the moral questions left festering by the killer's horrible crimes: What is the nature of evil? What choices do any of us truly have? How can we reconcile with our most painful wounds and the people who have inflicted them?"

## A Killer's Grace Details

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Author : Ronald Chapman

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## From Reader Review A Killer's Grace for online ebook

### Bob Amick says

A book written to force you to reconsider your pre-conceived notions on guilt, responsibility and growth.

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### Nicole says

I have received a free copy of this book through a GoodReads First Reads giveaway.

Can I just write "Wow!" as a review? This is my fourth shot at a review because nothing I come up with feels like it does the book justice. (My apologies to the author, I'm no writer.)

I opened this book expecting, as it says on the back "... a tale of mystery, murder and redemption." and I wasn't let down, but that doesn't even begin to describe it. The story is beautifully written, touchingly bittersweet, at times even humorous. Most impressively, it challenges the reader as well as entertains.

Whether you consider yourself sinner or saint, this book has something to teach you.

See, there's more I could and want to say, but not wanting to give anything away as well as the fear of not doing the book justice... Maybe I should've stuck with "Wow!"

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### Kerstin Vollbrecht says

The day Kevin Pitcairn receives a letter from a serial killer, is the day his journey into the discovery of complexity that is human behavior begins, and also it initiates a self healing process for himself. As he gets involved in unraveling what makes humans do atrocities to their fellows, he begins to understand that humans are conditioned by their life experiences, biochemical disorders and their circumstances, so the issue of guilt and forgiveness acquires a new sense to him, what at the same time helps him to deal with his own violent past.

This is a wonderful book about human behavior and the implications that a violent environment during childhood has for the persons entire life. The plot is very well developed, showing clearly the discoveries and the processing that Pitcairn does and how he uses them in order to understand on one hand what moves the perpetrators, on the other hand society and the victim's families. It has been a very profound, interesting and also moving read.

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### Carrie says

I won this book from Goodreads Giveaways. Thank you.

I really enjoyed the story. It was well written and the characters were very vibrantly brought to life. I must admit, though, that the introduction of the priests caused me to lose interest toward the end. I think I would have rather seen how the stories of the victims' families played out. Overall, a good read.

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## Lee Gooden says

### FICTION

#### A KILLER'S GRACE

Ronald Chapman

Seeing TRUE PRESS

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A Killer's Grace begins when Kevin Pitcairn, a columnist and freelance journalist receives a letter from Daniel Davidson, a convicted serial killer on death row. In the letter, Davidson confides to Pitcairn about his former uncontrollable anger towards women. Chapman writes, "The urge to hurt women could overcome me at any time, at any place. Powerful, sometimes irresistible desires would well up for no apparent reason and no warning." While on death row Davidson maintains a med regime that lowers his testosterone and, "...rendered the "monster within" impotent and banished him to the back of my mind." He doesn't ask Pitcairn for forgiveness, but to only tell his story. Davidson takes accountability for his terrible murderous actions and knows that he must die because of his crimes. He accepts this fact with no rancor. But, he feels that his inevitable execution is big waste of time, money, and a great shame if his story isn't used to educate and help others. He wants experts to use him as an example for a way to end violence that begets more violence. He believes that his case study should be used as a template for a deterrent to more violence and killings when symptoms like his own are discovered in other young men.

Pitcairn struggles with his own inner demons of alcoholism and rages. AA meetings, long vigorous walks with his dogs, the love of his girlfriend and writing keep him precariously balanced. So, when Davidson beseeches him to investigate and write his story, Pitcairn is reluctant to stir up such a storm of controversy. Davidson's murder sparks Pitcairn's curiosity and he researches Davidson's life, his family, and the lives of his victims and their families. As he studies and investigates Davidson's situation, Pitcairn begins to question and suspect an inherent flaw in a system devised by society that only looks at Davidson's and other killers like him, in terms of good and evil and black and white. Pitcairn consults doctors, counselors, psychologists, and neurologists about the validity of Davidson's claims of his adverse reaction to testosterone which exacerbated his anger against women enough to kill them. He decides to write a piece about Davidson and has a philosophical and moral epiphany regarding his own past and the term "innocence," the idea of "being innocent" and its application to all humanity, including Davidson. When his piece is published the storm Pitcairn worried about starting turns into a massive maelstrom. Even his own girlfriend disagrees with his ideas. The article incites wrath as well as empathy in the media, religious groups and the average citizen. A revolution of thought occurs, not seen since a certain son of carpenter extolled the virtues of peace and love three thousand years ago.

Since writing the above synopsis, I've read A Killer's Grace at least six times. I'm sure I will read it again. With each read there seemed to be something vital missing from the book, something elusive and intangible. It wasn't the plot, pacing or characterization. On the contrary, those were exemplary. It wasn't syntactical, grammatical or punctuation errors in the narrative, either. A Killer's Grace shows evidence of being scrupulously edited. I couldn't figure out what was disturbing me, so I read it again, took notes and underlined some passages. I still couldn't find out what was disturbing me. I put A Killer's Grace down and decided to go pursue a different track. Chapman's idea of innocence reminded me of some other things I've read before. I perused some philosophy, like George Santayana's Interpretations of Poetry and Religion and Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil. Even though I am luke-warm agnostic on an atheist's cusp, I read through some of Psalms and Proverbs in the Old Testament, as well as Mathew, Philippians and Luke in the New Testament. And then, I decided to consult A.A's Big Book, which

plays a big part in Chapman's novel. Chapter 1 Bill's Story made me uncomfortable. Paragraph two of Chapter 4. "We Agnostics," spoke to me. It reads, "To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic...To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face."

After I did my research, my heart was hardened and I still poo-pooed the novel's ideology. I looked for flaws. I was desperate to find something wrong with the book, something that I could harshly criticize. At first, I thought I could rip it apart as a self-help book disguised as a novel, a blatant attempt to glorify AA. I have issues with AA, because of their belief in surrendering to higher power. As a humanist, I believe in accepting responsibility for your own actions and not surrendering to higher power. But, there is also a contrary part of me that thinks, "Hey, whatever works for you works for you, as long as you heal." Like I said earlier, I am a wishy-washy Agnostic that wants to embrace atheism, but I was raised in Christian values that part of me hates to admit are still seething away in my core.

I could not find anything wrong with the prose dialogue or ideology. Chapman's writing combines the best of lyricism and realism. The magic of his prose is spectacularly shown when he describes the harsh beauty of the sky and landscapes.

For example, Chapman writes, "Monsoon clouds hung low over the open expanse of mesa, desert flushed green from record-breaking rains. Moisture blended clouds to the ground and muffled sound. The mesa held depth and substance almost foreign to its arid nature; torpor hung heavy, poised to embrace those with willing hearts. At times this sacred land was a crucible, a place of transformation. Always the mesa delivered, though rarely as expected."

Each vivid description of landscape and sky is more than just Pitcairn's surroundings. They're are brilliant snapshots of the human psyche going through periods of pain, madness, fear, fury and exultation, all stages on the journey to acceptance and healing. But, I didn't see this until later, because I refused to allow the novel to guide me through my own damaged psyche's healing process. After each reading, something inside me wanted to open. I wanted it to stay closed. At the conclusion of my seventh reading of Chapman's masterpiece, I had a cathartic experience, like a levee breaking inside my head. I was swamped over by tears. I felt like a raw bleeding wound and I didn't like it and I did like it. I tried to withdraw and move forward at the same time. I was a contradiction, living a duality, one part of me was firmly planted in jaded skepticism and the other side of me sought a spiritual cleansing. I was tearing myself apart with guilt for not yet coming to terms with the abuse in my past and my stringent belief that I should have learned to live with it and or move beyond it. I held on that I was too strong to let my dysfunctional childhood dictate the man I am today. I called myself a hypocrite and a coward. And then, I took a deep breath and let my mind, heart and soul commute and all hell broke loose as my walls that I erected forty something years ago crumbled and fell.

Ronald Chapman's novel, *A Killer's Grace* is a rare work of art, wherein, it entertains with the pace of a thriller and is as thought provoking as a philosophical treatise and as button pushing as a theological study. It knocks on doors in our hearts, minds and souls that we might not want open, that we're not ready to open. But, once those doors are ajar, they cannot be shut. We cannot hide nor run from what Chapman's book makes us see and feel. The novel forces us into confrontation with ourselves, as truth's painful gale force wind slams the doors open. Huddled in the doorways and straddling threshold fences; we try to find our comfort zones again, such, as, our heads plunged deep in conformity's muck and complacency's mire. *A Killer's Grace* pulls no punches and pelts us with icy realism and jagged spirituality that beats against and then breaks our thick skin, leaving bloody indelible marks. In the long run, we are better for it, blessed in our pure innocence.

-Lee Gooden

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### **Angela says**

If you're debating on whether to buy this, it's a MUST read. I loved everything about this novel and it left me thinking for a long time afterwards.

This isn't a light-hearted read (obviously from the title), but instead it's pretty intense and you'll run through a range of emotions throughout. Since it's inspired by true events, the story absolutely comes even more alive. And I used to live in New Mexico, where the story takes place, and if you've never been there, you'll feel like you have after you've read this. It's a very spiritual, magical place.

I struggle with forgiveness, admittedly, and have learned to think so much differently now. This kind of forgiveness...well. I can't even imagine.

While it's definitely a powerful book with so many important messages, it still has the suspense as do all crime novels, but this one is just so different. I will read this again and again, and have already suggested it to a few friends who will benefit from the messages.

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### **Merv Jersak says**

An intriguing, suspenseful story with a parallel exploration of the human psyche. Even as the story unfolds, the reader is often led to contemplate his/her own philosophy regarding some of human kind's most perplexing behaviors and actions.

The story is fictional, but it was inspired by a real letter from a serial killer. Set in Albuquerque, NM, journalist Kevin Pitcairn receives a letter from a death row inmate who does not deny his heinous criminal acts of rape and murder; and in fact, asks that his death sentence be carried out quickly. He does, however, seek to prove that his crimes were the result of a mental illness that drove him. He began receiving a medication in prison that over time diminished his deviant impulses. In the letter he wonders how many lives would have been saved had he had this treatment years earlier. He implores Pitcairn to take up the cause of ensuring this treatment would be provided to others with this mental illness.

Pitcairn is torn, believing that the inmate was not an evil man given the mental illness, but at the same time knowing that if he wrote about what the inmate requested, he would stir up trouble for himself and his paper. After all, society wanted such despicable people either dead or locked away, and would likely not be sympathetic to providing treatment for them. He took on the challenge against the wishes of his significant other, Maria Elena, by beginning research into the inmate's life and circumstances.

As he begins his quest, his own past surfaces as he recalls killing a drug felon in an alcohol or drug induced rage – he wasn't sure how, only that he had done it. He had escaped pursuit by the law, but not by his own feelings of guilt.

The book weaves together several stories in parallel – Pitcairn's AA involvement, Pitcairn's and Maria Elena's relationship, Pitcairn's research and writing about the inmate's mental illness and the firestorm that

he created, Pitcairn's eventual release from his own inner demons, and additional minor plots that add interest.

Both fiction and, in some ways college textbook, this is a fascinating read.

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### **Ivan Hecimovic says**

Things are not always, how they look. To be honest, there are many times in our lives when we react and behave according to something that does not necessarily had to be true. How many times have you heard one side of the story and then made your opinion on the entire situation according to that one side or one person's story? We do that and unfortunately, we do that quite often. Is that good thing? Of course it is not.

Similar thing happened here. We have a man, a convict. He had committed a crime and everything says that this is it. There is not anything that there is to say about the whole thing. However, things are not always the way they look. Knowing and discovering the whole truth that is actually- the truth requires many things from us. It requires intelligence, effort, swift mind, and patience. These traits are something that most of us lack. The same goes with this novel. If you want to write a novel about a crime case, which will show us something a lot more deeper than just the usual "a perpetrator did a crime and thus he is responsible for it" rule than you got to have something that other maybe do not have. This novel has that "other thing."

I love intelligent authors that know and want to write about things that people do not talk about because they are too unpleasant to talk about. This author did precisely that and so many more. So, I am giving this novel a thumb up and 5/5.

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### **Dan says**

Another fine offering by (former) New Mexican and friend Ron Chapman. A story of forgiveness and psychology, Ron seems to be carving out his own literary niche I'll call transcendental crime fiction. Think "Silence of the Lambs" meets the "Bhagavad Gita." Download now for a heady read.

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### **Vicki says**

A Killer's Grace is so gritty I actually found it an uncomfortable read. Not exactly a bad thing, that means to me it was well written with enough grit and details to get under my skin. I found Kevin Pitcairn to be a man that was plagued by his own conscious and memories. His past unfurled through the story and his search for peace within himself is a struggle.

The book begins with an unexpected letter from a convicted serial killer that while accepting blame for his part, also shares the history of himself before and after a drug called Depro-Lupron which lowers his testosterone to a level that changed his lifelong behavior. When Pitcairn gets this letter he is intrigued and begins to look into the implications that this could stop the depraved behavior.

Like I said, engrossing and yet uncomfortable. Ronald Chapman knew exactly which buttons to push to make a work of fiction feel probable. Pitcairn was likable enough until he revealed his own ugly past. Then

you felt dirty knowing his secret and his secret shame. For all his human fallibility, he was likable. I can say if you like deep and thought provoking novels, you need to pick this one up and read it. It will make you question how you feel about getting away with a crime while others pay the ultimate price for a similar crime.

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### **Joy says**

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

This book has an interesting theory that it sets out. It's well written and thought-provoking. I don't necessarily agree with the innocence theory the book holds, but it's a beautiful idea and I will likely contemplate it from now on regarding news stories and events. I really liked the lead characters and their personal journey through the books story. I especially liked Maria Elena and the depth and realness of her character.

It starts a little slowly, and ends a little abruptly, which is the only reason I didn't rate it 5 stars.

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### **Ally Swanson says**

This book kicks right off with the main character, journalist, Kevin Pitcairn, receiving a letter from convicted rapist and serial killer, Daniel Davidson. In the letter Daniel asks Kevin to help him determine if he suffers from mental illness and to help him tell his story.

This book is full of mystery, intrigue, and suspense! This book has engaging characters and a captivating storyline! This book examines good versus evil and the choices we all make. This book also focuses on guilt, forgiveness, faith, and redemption.

Throughout the book we also learn that Kevin is dealing with his own demons and is haunted by his some of his past choices. Although Kevin's dark past is far less evil than Daniel's it does show connections with self-guilt, and how important every choice we make is.

I don't think anyone actually grows up wanting to become a serial killer. Most serial killers due suffer from mental illness, or a genetic disorder like Klinefelter Syndrome, or a disturbing and difficult childhood. I have always thought there is usually some type of mental, emotional, or physical cause for someone becoming a serial killer. This book offers insight into that formula and creates a better understanding of how someone can become a killer.

I really liked that this book wanted to better understand what caused Daniel to become a rapist and killer. This book examined those characteristics and went one step further to not only understand, but also wanting to treat those symptoms.

I hate that we often only treat problems after it's too late. This is why I really enjoyed this book wanting to help understand the problems and treat them so that other Daniel Davidson's out there could be stopped before they harmed others or themselves.

I liked that the convicted rapist and killer, Daniel Davidson wasn't making excuses or looking for sympathy or denying the guilty verdict. He just wanted answers before he was to be executed. In prison he received medication that helped diminish his obsessive thoughts and fantasies and he had said if only he had received this treatment earlier how many lives could have been saved. As more and more serial killers keep popping up these days I am curious if these treatments would help them. One thing is for sure, serial killers don't seem to be going away. It seems like one gets arrested and two more pop up. Perhaps we need to start looking at more proactive treatments like this book acknowledges.

I would absolutely recommend this book as I found it to be a very intriguing, insightful, and engaging book. This book asks the tough questions and makes you consider answers from all sides. This book will definitely challenge you and maybe even make you re-think some past choices or at least to spend a little longer before making a choice.

\*\*Disclaimer: I received a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.\*\*

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### **Amanda says**

Chapman's A Killer's Grace grabbed me by the gut as I read the letter from Davidson. You don't follow a beginning like that up with some mediocre cheap thrills and thankfully this author knew that. A Killer's Grace is thought provoking, forcing the reader to dig deep into the judgements and preconceived ideas we all try to convince ourselves we don't have.

The premise is simple; Serial killer reaches out to journalist to expose a fatal flaw in the system. Our serial killer is the worst kind of monster and you think to yourself, here's our antagonist. Well, yes and no. Davidson is the epitome of your nightmares, by his own account, but there remains a spark of humanity within him and he is determined to prevent others like him from inflicting the same sort of damage to society. Some might say Davidson is an anti-hero. Enter Kevin Pitcairn, journalist and recipient of this letter. Pitcairn would be our protagonist, our good guy. Only we find out he's no choir boy and could pretty easily be sitting in a cell next to Davidson were it not for some dumb luck.

There is a lot going on in this book but the everything works to enhance the story rather than distract from it. I thought the relationship between Pitcairn and Maria Elena was a perfect contrast to the life Pitcairn led before he found her and AA. I was engrossed in the research into Davidson's past and mental state and then fascinated by the utter shit show that followed the publication of Pitcairn's article.

There aren't a few words one can use to accurately describe this book. It is complex to the 9th degree both literally and figuratively. I can't imagine anyone being disappointed in it nor can I fathom going untouched by the subject matter.

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### **Pam says**

Extremely thought provoking. I loved it!

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## **Linda Salzman Beyersdorf Juul says**

Don't think you're going to rush through this book as you watch the kids play. It is thought provoking: what is right? what does innocence mean? Is there a God? is it ok to kill a killer? Kevin Pitcarin, a journalist lives in the high desert; I loved reading the descriptions of the landscape. Pitcarin receives a letter from a convicted killer which has him rethinking innocence, his past, the victims of crime, the meaning of life.....

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