



The Misbegotten Son

Jack Olsen

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The bestselling author of Predator and Doc dissects the shattering life of a charming, ruthless, and twice-convicted serial killer. Olsen delves into the psychology of Arthur Shawcross, who had characteristics of a pedophile, paraphile, misogynist, necrophile, and philanderer, yet still managed to charm a release out of a parole board.

The Misbegotten Son Details

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From Reader Review The Misbegotten Son for online ebook

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

This is an appalling crime story. However nothing made me shout aloud until I heard the medical testimony at the preliminary hearing.

Oh my lord, this criminal makes me want to vomit. He truly is a monster.

I take that back somewhat. By the end I at last am told why he has his urges. As a former special needs teacher, I am sadly reminded of a very young boy who may fit this same category. I hope I never see him in the news.

Jim Thomsen says

The late Jack Olsen was simply incapable of writing a bad book. First, few true-crime authors demonstrated such a stubborn insistence on chasing down every stray fact and every peripheral character as this former magazine writer from journalism's Golden Age. Second, his tender-tough-guy prose keeps what might have been exhausting expositions in the hands of lesser writers crackling along like ice cubes in a glass of whiskey.

And "The Misbegotten Son" is nowhere near Olsen's finest work. It's no less well-done than any of his other books, mind you. It simply lacks as compelling a central character as, say, Claude Dallas of "Give A Boy A Gun," Fred "Kevin" Coe of "Son" and Steve Titus and MacDonald Smith of "Predator." Arthur Shawcross, a sociopath from a small town in upstate New York, is more of a blank slate, a bland personality that he wore as a mask over a true face of relentlessly murderous rage toward women. His crimes are much more fascinating than he is.

Yet, Olsen dives right in, and comes up with a crackerjack third act — as Shawcross targets prostitutes in Buffalo, New York in the late 1980s, a survivor of one of his attacks teams with the cops, very reluctantly, to spread the word among the streetwalking set and smoke out the killer. The woman whose sense of self-worth — and justice — couldn't be beaten out of her by a near-fatal rape or numerous years on the streets near the bottom of the prostitute food chain becomes someone you can't help rooting for. And the whole cops-and-cornerwalkers-learning-to-trust-each-other-just-enough angle is ultimately what makes this book a good one ... if only second-tier by the lofty standards set by the man many called The Dean Of True Crime.

I can't say that "The Misbegotten Son" is a book I'll want to re-read, but that's OK. I've got plenty of great Jack Olsen books to page through all over again anytime I want. And I will. The man had the gift.

Andrew Vachss says

The undisputed King of True-Crime.

Carla says

Excellent, but...

Excellent cultural, ethnographic, and psychological study of criminal, victims, and communities. However, the Kindle edition has many odd typos: words cleaved in two by a space, and exclamation points repeatedly substituted for capital I's.

ANGELA says

The Misbegotten Son raises the hypothesis of XYY males being at higher risk of psychopathic behaviors with the lack of empathy.

Jack Shawcross raped and murdered 2 children and was released from prison before his sentence was served. Of course he continued to murder in cold blood.

I could have done without the foul language and details of the murders. I cried for the two children and became angry at the murderer, and police. I could not understand why parents could leave small children unsupervised to roam freely.

All in all the book was informative about the mind of a serial killer and the genetic profile of XYY male that probably predisposed Shawcross to become a murderer. He also had high levels of kryptopyrrole in his urine. High levels of kryptopyrrole have been associated with violent behavior. I hope to research this theory further.

Alisi ? wants to read too many books ? says

I picked this up not realizing the killer was a serial killer. That's what summaries are for, right? Pft. I just skimmed it. And I find myself listening to a book on a serial killer. I hate these kinds of true crime novels.
>.>;

Incidentally, I did recognize the killer from that Serial Killer Whisperer (or whatever) book.

The writing was standard for the genre. I thought there was a lot of stuff added in that shouldn't be in this book. I truly didn't need to know about a little girl who was murdered by a man who has absolutely nothing to do with this story. That's not really anything I want to read as a passing comment type thing.

This book reminded me of Bitter Almonds: The True Story of Mothers, Daughters, and the Seattle Cyanide Murders in the way that there was just sooo much irrelevant backstory and other things that shouldn't be in this book. It doesn't come close but it did make me look up this author to see if he'd written the aformentioned book. That's the worst true crime book I've read, hands down. I wonder if the two are related.

Anyway. I didn't really need to interviews that were in this book. They were all basically the same. News at 11! A serial killer blames his victims! Shock - Gasp - Not at all Predictable!

I thought the 'medical' information was a shot in the dark too. The pysch was trying to come up with the reasons why he did what he did and yet seemed so kind. Why, he confessed to several murders to protect Rose from the harassment! How could he be so kind and yet do this terrible thing?

Really? I felt like the doc was missing the forest for the trees. It's so completely obvious. He wasn't protected Rose. He just didn't want her to have any 'glory'. He has a girlfriend and admits to using prostitutes, and his wife knows this. He's not shielding her at all. All his confessions came when people were getting attention for his crimes. The detective, Rose, etc.

Bleh. My brain needs bleach.

Rick says

One of the most well-documented, well-written, and sympathetic true crime books I've ever read.

Susan McReynolds says

Interesting for sure, but the manuscript has serious problems. Riddled with typos and formatting issues. It's almost as if the paper document was scanned in and was never reviewed and corrected before publishing (OCR is just not accurate enough). The author should be embarrassed by these problems as it reflects on him -- although I like this author.

Beth Donaldson says

A fascinating read compiled of what must have been untold hours of interviews with a wide circle of people connected with Shawcross. This killer was active in my city right around the time I graduated from college, and though I heard a few things here and there through the news I did not follow the case or the trial. Come to find out he lived about a half-mile from where I lived back then!

Phil Travers says

Well, wow this is quite a read/listen. This story of a serial killer is graphic and intriguing. Told from several different perspectives: the perpetrator, the perpetrator's mother, the perpetrator's wife, police, psychiatrists, and so on this book is both hard to read and hard to put down at the same time. The audiobook is narrated by Kevin Pierce whose voice draws in the listener. There is so much happening in this book, I need to listen to it again to more fully appreciate the ending the ending.

A.r. says

Very chilling and graphic look into the life of a horrible serial killer (Arthur Shawcross). I read this while on holidays and it kept me spellbound every night. The descriptions are graphic, but not gratuitous. This is my favourite Jack Olsen book, and I think he is one of the greatest of True Crime writers.

Kelly A. Marsolek says

Mediocre

The editing killed the story. While it's understandable for the narrative portions to be contradictory, the actual text did not always flow appropriately. In places it read like it was cut and pasted and never proofread.

An Aussie Book Nerd says

What a fantastic read, or listen rather seeing as I listened to this on Audible. The narrator was FANTASTIC!!!! I can't stress that enough. Made me go look up everything he's narrated so I can listen to more of him.

But this story is so well written. Very factual, and sometimes that can be a bad thing because it can get boring and tedious, however the author appears to be quite skillful regarding this. Kudos. I enjoyed the depth also afforded to others in this horrid story, such as the victims. Often other authors focus on the SK a little too much and forget the numerous victims left behind, not in this story. At first I wondered why so much about Jack's story but it all started making sense.

My only con was the length of some chapters. They were short, a little too short for me and at times felt quite abrupt and jarring. But that's my only 'complaint'. Otherwise, I've searched for all the authors other work and look forward to reading more from him in the future!

Fishface says

Horrible story of a serial killer who killed some kids, went to prison, unaccountably got released, then killed some adults. Makes you wonder what could possibly be going on in the criminal justice system. The medicolegal angle is unusually fascinating in this case and I really wonder how many other cases of this sort there may be out there.

L says

A long haul - stick with it. There were times when I thought the amount of detail was excessive but I ended up appreciating the author's thoroughness.
