



Every Breath You Take : A True Story of Obsession, Revenge, and Murder

Ann Rule

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If anything ever happens to me, promise me that you will see that there is an investigation....And find Ann Rule and ask her to write my story," Sheila Blackthorne Bellush told her sister after she divorced multimillionaire Allen Blackthorne. Now, in perhaps the first book ever written at a victim's request, America's Number One bestselling true-crime writer, Ann Rule, untangles a horrific web of lies that culminated in Sheila's savage murder more than ten years after she left Blackthorne.

When beautiful, blond Sheila married the charming, handsome Blackthorne, she was convinced she had found her perfect soul mate, and helped him reach his goal of living the privileged life of the country club set. But behind Allen's smooth facade, she discovered a violent, controlling sociopath -- a liar, a scam artist, a sexual deviant. When she finally fled with their two young daughters, she was skeletally thin, bruised, and beaten.

Although Sheila recovered, remarried, and was starting a new life and family, she still felt she was doomed. Joyously pregnant, she and her new husband expecting quadruplets, Sheila still feared Blackthorne, who had sworn to her he would monitor her every move and "every breath you take." And, in fact, Blackthorne inevitably tracked her down, as did her killer, who left her in a pool of blood marked by the tiny footprints of her two-year-old toddlers. The questions remained: Could the authorities ever link Sheila's murder to Blackthorne himself? Was his true obsession high-stakes golf and his extravagant pink mansion -- or was it to destroy Sheila?

Following a trail of deception from Oregon and Hawaii to Texas and Florida, Ann Rule gained complete access to Sheila's family, friends, and neighbors, as well as to the detectives and prosecutors on the case. With *Every Breath You Take*, Ann Rule has written a heart-pounding account of obsession, revenge, and murder that will enthrall readers from beginning to end.

Every Breath You Take : A True Story of Obsession, Revenge, and Murder Details

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Robin says

Basically a good read if you like to follow true crime. However it's a novel that could and maybe should have been written with half as many pages. Rule gives far too many quotes and snippets from all sides of the families, legal teams and accused to make it a pleasure to read. It drags as we are burdened by a sea of facts, dates and her insights.

Kimberly Rahi says

Now I will perhaps get quite a bit of backlash for rating this book so low. I have nothing against the story. It was tragic, unnecessary, and senseless, like most killings. Sheila Blackthorne Bellush just wanted a normal life and after separating from her abusive husband, Allen Blackthorne, she attempted to have just that. Jamie Bellush, her new husband, tried hard to give her a sense of normalcy. Sheila had two children with former husband, Allen. She was the mother of his two beautiful girls, Stevie and Darryl. With Jamie, she added quadruplets to the mix. So for me, the most tragic part of this story is leaving six children motherless.

The reason the rating is so low is mostly due to the writing style. I understand that Ann Rule is quite the True Crime novelist. However, with "Every Breath You Take," there was far too much redundant and pointless information. The main characters are Allen Blackthorne and Sheila Blackthorne Bellush. I understand why Ann Rule speaks about their parents. That helps to establish a "why" that Allen was so vindictive and manipulative. It also explains why Sheila was overly trusting. However, do we really need the abundance of information concerning their grandparents? It is like listening to a family member ramble futilely about genealogy. I was extremely bored.

Another issue is the repetitiveness of the entire story. I did not write down specific pages but there are plenty of examples throughout the book. Again, elderly ramblings come to mind. Because of this, I found it hard to muddle through the story. I did so only to find out if Allen was convicted. Believe me, I was very tempted to skip to the end but being an avid book reader, I consider this "cheating."

My final complaint has to do with the victim. I am fully aware that people are not supposed to speak unkind of the dead. Here is me acknowledging this. Now to completely go against what I just said, I have some concerns about Sheila Bellush. Now I will again remind everyone that my opinion does not mean in the least that I feel Mrs. Bellush deserved to die. She was innocent of any wrongdoing. A woman who deserved to grow old with her beautiful family. However, Ann Rule mentions a few "concerns" others had about Sheila but then completely brushes them off. For example, she mentioned that Sheila "was not a saint but her children came first." That was it. She did not at all elaborate on this. Later in the novel, she speaks about how Sheila would get frustrated and "rightly so." She would sometimes verbally speak against to her older children and sometimes spank them with a belt. Now I am not against "sparing the rod," but again it was acknowledged in one sentence and never again.

So save your time and google the story. If the repetitiveness and needless information was eliminated, it would make for a much shorter, and enjoyable, read.

Mary says

I feel kind of bad but this book didn't work for me. It was the writing and story structure...It just didn't do anything for me. Reading became a chore.

Melissa says

I must say that for a nonfiction book, this read like a novel. I was intrigued and disgusted by the case, and I wanted justice done! A very good book. I will definitely read more of Ann Rule in the future.

Sandra Stiles says

Every Breath You Take is the story of the life and death of Sheila Bellush and the road to bring those responsible for her murder to justice. Sheila had a tumultuous marriage to Allen Blackthorne. Violent and controlling, she finally found the courage to leave him. After her divorce to him he proceeded to create trouble for her and their two daughters Stevie and Daryl. Long after Sheila had married Jamie Bellush and they had quadruplets, Allen did his best to disrupt their lives. He used her neighbors and his children to create havoc. After his oldest daughter refused to visit him any longer he turned up the heat with his youngest daughter. He encouraged her to accuse her mother of child abuse. After one particular event it was decided they had to get away from Allen and do it secretly.

Jamie and Sheila moved to Sarasota, Florida after Jamie's boss transferred him to Sarasota. Sheila's youngest daughter was still in Texas. After flying back to get her and take care of legal issues, Sheila brought Daryl back and she was put in a youth camp. Problems prevented them from taking her home with them. Daryl through manipulation managed to give her father enough information for him to find them. This set in motion that wheels that led up to Sheila's death. On November 7, 1997 while at home with her four youngest children Sheila was brutally attacked and killed.

Ann Rule did an excellent job of taking the reader through the troubles that plagued Sheila until her death. She then takes you down the heart wrenching path of the day Stevie finds her mother's body and the all of the law enforcement officers that eventually brought the people responsible for her death to justice. This is a 5 out of 5. I read the book in 4 ½ hours.

Kitty says

This was a disturbing book to read. Not because it was not well written and a page turner, for it was all of that. I had decided about 50 pages or more not to finish, I found it so distressing. I could not stop thinking about those four poor babies, unattended for hours, walking in the blood of thier mother. It was soooo depressing. Then days later, I reminded myself that this mother actually chose Ann Rule to write her story, if in fact her husband killed her. It was a great book and the pictures make it more personal. That is one reason I choose to read and not listen to true crime. Ann Rule just does not disappoint.

Juanita says

The book was repetitive and dealt too much with the murder plot than the murder itself. Ann notes extensively the family history of the murdered woman and the killer devoting several chapters - translating to many hours of book reading time - to the kind of parents the murderer had. I understand that her attempt was to show the ultimate motives for the murder, but it just took me way off track. She could have mentioned as she wrote about the murderer that his mother was abusive, father hated him, etc. It was a waste of paper for the most part and awfully hard to read.

I'll still read my Ann Rule books, but this one just didn't do it for me at all!

Kailey says

Finally finished this book. Didn't love it. Pretty heavy on the cop-worship. I think I'm finally cured of my Ann Rule mania.

Duffy says

I think this is the one book that I could not finish. I like Ann Rule's books and she is a great writer but there is only one word to describe Allen Blackthorne and that is evil. He made me sick and it got to the point that I didn't care any more. He deserved whatever this life gives him because I know he will pay for his sins dearly when he passes over.

Rabbit {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says

Rating: 4.5, almost rounded up to 5 stars.

This book was very high quality for me, almost in the same vein of her Bundy book.

Don't let the cover and title fool you. I'm not even going to pretend that every time I saw the title I giggled. lol

Joan says

When I checked this book out from the library, I had no idea what it was about until I began reading it (I picked it because I love Ann Rule). When I began, I couldn't believe that it was about the Blackthorne/Bellush murder. I lived in the area where the plan was hatched, drove by the countryclub almost every day where he played golf, my husband was a firefighter in the suburbs where Allen Blackthorne lived and actually had been in his mansion to do a fireplan. Not only that, the actual murderer Jose Luis del Toro

went to high school with a very close friend of mine in Uvalde, TX....talk about six degrees of separation!! It is very weird reading this book while local landmarks are pointed out and realize that you have been to those very same places, the restaurants, the apartment complex where Sheila lived after she left Allen, street names, etc. only to find out that in an intricate sense they had something to do with this murder. Needless to say, I read it in two days

Shawna says

Perhaps I am beginning to suffer from Ann Rule fatigue, this is the third audiobook, I've blazed through in the same amount of weeks, but I didn't find this story overly compelling. Maybe it was because I already knew how it would end when I picked it up, it was a foregone conclusion. I'm still amazed that such seemingly smart people will do such dumb things like Allen "cartoonishly evil made-up last name" Blackthorne did by hiring men to beat up/kill his ex-wife and not expecting them to immediately roll over on him when they got caught. The title is also bit misleading because Blackthorne didn't stalk Sheila constantly until he hunted her down, they actually went through years of time when things were fairly calm between them.

I wonder if Ann Rule ever feels guilty for profiting from the pain that she writes about? She couches her motives pretty well, claiming that Sheila wanted her in particular to write her story, but in the end, Ann Rule moves on to the next horror show, and can leave all the pain behind her. The Bellushes cannot.

Jacks Wife says

This poor woman, who became famous for a brief time, after having quads, and began the talk show circuit talking about having so many babies after taking a fertility drug, failing, and then seeing another doctor who ended up making her pregnant and all the babies surviving to full term, only after she had escaped an incredibly abusive ex-husband. She was Sheila B., who had 2 beautiful daughters with this Alan B., who were caught in the middle.

There are neighbors who get involved, and go against Sheila, and don't realize she's not the bad guy and they are being seriously misled.

I believe that if people didn't just believe the first person they met in a story such as this, and paid attention, if they were going to be nosey anyway, to the person in question, then maybe there wouldn't be so many spouses being murdered or disappearing.

This woman was so small in stature, under 5 ft. tall, and a beautiful soul, only to be brutally murdered by her ex husband because he told fellow inmates and fellow golfers that his ex wife was abusing their girls, refusing to let him see the girls, and lied all the way around about Sheila. It happens, and only afterwards, does the killer realize he was seriously misled. It's tragic, and there are graphic crime scene photos in the book, but it's so compelling a story, I would highly recommend it if only to save others from this same fate.

Charlene says

If Ann Rule wants a simple story of right and wrong, then she should pick a simple story in which there is clearly a victim and clearly an evil person and there is no overlap. If she chooses to pick a more complex case, like this case, then she should have enough respect for the intelligence and analytical thinking skills of

her readers to represent the details of the complex case as such. Rule chooses murder cases that I am interested in. Despite the fact that she is a profoundly terrible writer (very similar to Jerry Bledsoe), I keep coming back for more. That just goes to show you that you don't have to be a great writer to rake in the bucks. You simply have to provide the reader with an addicting, even if poorly told, story. Without exception, Rule is more interested in right and wrong dichotomies than she is in analyzing complexities of human nature. It's almost as if her need for justice and punishment turns off the critical thinking parts of her brain, making everything black and white-- when it's not. I want Josh Greene to study people like her.

There is no excuse for killing the mother of his children. There is no doubt that the murderer in the book is just that, a horrible murderer who doesn't deserve the sympathy he pandered for. Should we hate him? Sure, go right ahead. I could not help but hate him while reading this story. I am so thankful I never married someone who killed me and ruined the lives of the children we brought into this world. At the same time, this divorce was ugly. The wife did not deserve to die for her very deliberate part in making things contentious, but that doesn't mean that just because she is dead, she was perfect while a live. She was a human being. She had good qualities and bad. Both her children, who no longer speak to their father and are absolutely devastated by the murder of their mother, have said that she lied about the sexual abuse allegations made against their father. (I had to look all of this up using outside sources since Rule cannot be counted on to present **all** the facts). The mother wanted the kids and did everything she could to make up lies about the father and then use those lies to threaten him and forcefully take his children from him, even though they very much wanted to see him. He too lied about her abusing the girls (even though there is evidence that both she and their step father were very hard handed-- just not quite **as** hard handed as the father had alleged. If I were her, I too might have wanted to keep my kids away from him. After all, he did murder her in the end. The point is, there was so much complexity that Ann Rule refused to acknowledge. Every time the wife hurt the children, lied about sexual abuse, or did anything else that was **clearly** wrong, Rule justified it. It was never the wife's fault. So stupid. She can be at fault for doing some of the stupid things that human beings do from time to time and still not be at fault for being murdered. Rule should do a better job of representing the whole picture.

Jenn says

This was a very long detailed tale of murder for hire. I had seen an episode of some criminal show that detailed this case so I already knew the outcome. Allen is an evil, evil man who should have died when he was attacked in prison. The thought that someday an appeal could go through and he could be released is frightening. I do wonder where the quads are today and if they fared well.
