

# Trailed: One Woman's Quest to Solve the Shenandoah Murders

By: *Kathryn Miles*

**About the book:** In May 1996, two skilled backcountry leaders, Lollie Winans and Julie Williams, entered Virginia's Shenandoah National Park for a week-long backcountry camping trip. The free-spirited and remarkable young couple had met and fallen in love the previous summer while working at a world-renowned outdoor program for women. During their final days in the park, they descended the narrow remnants of a trail and pitched their tent in a hidden spot. After the pair didn't return home as planned, park rangers found a scene of horror at their campsite, their tent slashed open, their beloved dog missing, and both women dead in their sleeping bags. The unsolved murders of Winans and Williams continue to haunt all who had encountered them or knew their story.

**About the Author:** Kathryn Miles is the author of *Superstorm: Nine Days Inside Hurricane Sandy*, *All Standing* and *Adventures with Ari*. An award-winning science writer, she has published her work in dozens of publications including *Best American Essays*, *Ecotone*, *History*, *Outside Magazine* and *Popular Mechanics*. Miles currently serves as writer-in-residence for Green Mountain College and as a faculty member in Chatham University's low-residency MFA program.

## People:

Laura "Lollie" Winans

Julianne "Julie" Williams

Darrell David Rice-Original Suspect of the murders of Winans and Williams

Derek- Julie's Roommate and a suspect in the murders of Winans and Williams

Tom and Patsy Williams- Julie's Parents

Barb Stewart- Supervisory ranger

Ken Johnson-senior investigation ranger

Tim Alley-Head of case

Brenda Blongigen-Sheriff's deputy (specializing in women and children's cases)

Peter Groh-FBI Investigator

Yvonne Malbasha-Female bicyclist that Rice was in prison for attempted kidnapping

Janet Reno-Attorney General Preceded John Ashcroft

Richard Marc Evonitz- Kidnapped Kara Robinson and the suspect in the murders of Winans and Williams

### Discussion Questions:

1. Kathryn Miles places herself directly into the narrative. How did you feel about her personal involvement in the investigation? Did it enhance or complicate your trust in the story?
2. *Trailed* combines true crime, memoir, and investigative journalism. How did this blending affect your reading experience? Did it make the story more compelling or distracting?
3. What role did media coverage and public speculation play in the case? Do you think it helped or hindered the investigation?
4. What ethical responsibilities do authors and journalists have when writing about real victims and ongoing investigations? Did Miles meet those responsibilities?
5. The book raises questions about law enforcement, jurisdiction, and systemic gaps. Which failures stood out to you most, and why?
6. What do you think is the most important message or question the book leaves us with?
7. What evidence in the case did you find most compelling or troubling? Was there anything you felt was underexamined or overemphasized?
8. How does this case reflect broader patterns in how crimes against women are handled?
9. Which theory or suspect did you find most plausible, and what evidence supports that conclusion?
10. Did the book challenge or reinforce your assumptions about profiling and suspect behavior?
11. What ethical lines should true-crime writers avoid when dealing with unsolved or ongoing cases?
12. How does Miles handle naming suspects, victims, and investigators? Was her approach responsible?
13. Do books like *Trailed* help advance justice, or do they risk retraumatizing victims' families?
14. How does Miles's personal involvement affect the credibility of the investigation?
15. At what point—if any—does persistence become obsession in true-crime investigations?
16. Should journalists involve themselves this deeply in active or unresolved cases?
17. Did reading *Trailed* change how you think about unsolved cases or cold-case investigations?

### Read Alike:

- Murder at Teal's Pond: Hazel Drew and the mystery that inspired *Twin Peaks* by Bushman, David
- *Submerged*: a cold case, an innocent man condemned, and one family's darkest secret Levin, Hillel
- The Berman murders: unraveling the Mojave Desert's most mysterious unsolved crime by Kari, Doug