

While Idaho Slept: The Hunt for Answers in the Murders of Four College Students

J. Reuben Appelman

About the book: Just after 4:00 am on November 13, 2022, four University of Idaho students were viciously stabbed to death in an off-campus house. The killings would shake the small blue-collar college town of Moscow, Idaho, dominate mainstream news coverage, and become a social media obsession, drawing millions of clicks and views. While a reticent Moscow Police Department, the FBI, and the Idaho State Police searched for the killer, unending conjecture and countless theories blazed online, in chatrooms and platforms from Reddit and YouTube to Facebook and TikTok. For more than a month, the clash of armchair investigators and law enforcement professionals raged, until a suspect—a 28-year-old Ph.D. candidate studying criminology—was arrested at his family home 2,500 miles away in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania on the day before New Year's Eve.

About the Author: J. Reuben Appelman is a screenwriter, author in multiple genres, and two-time State of Idaho Literature Fellow, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. His film industry work includes documentaries as well as several produced screenplays. His investigative writing and research have earned him an ongoing spot as special lecturer on the issue of Human Trafficking for the Honor's College at Boise State University. He works as a private investigator.

People/Victims/Investigators/Suspect:

Kaylee Goncalves-Victim/Graduating/ Best friends with Maddie

Ethan Chapin-Victim/Freshman/ Boyfriend of Xana/Triplet

Xana Kernodle-Victim/Freshman/Girlfriend of Ethan

Madison (Maddie) Mogen-Victim/Senior/Best Friends with Kaylee

Dylan Mortensen(21)-Survivor/Saw the suspect leave the house

Bethany Funke (21)-Survivor/First reported as being asleep the entire time but later revealed to be awake.

Roger Lanier-Moscow Police Captain

James Fry- Moscow Chief of Police

Bryan Kohberger-" Alleged" Suspected in the Idaho College Murders (On trial now)

Discussion Questions:

- What were your initial reactions to the case as presented in the book?
- How did the investigation and media coverage influence your perceptions of the case?
- How did the book make you feel about the role of citizen sleuths and online speculation in such cases?
- Why do you think that the other two roommates survived?
- Do you think this has anything to do with their affiliation with the Greek life?
- How do you feel about the author going into the dysfunction of the family lives of the victims?
- What do you think of Chief Fry? Do you think he did a good job from the beginning?
- Did you learn anything that you didn't know?
- What do you think about his questionnaire that was posted on reddit?
- What do you think about the gag order being placed. Was it a good idea?
- Were you surprised to learn about Dana Smithers death in PA?
- Do you think the house should have been torn down before the trial?
- What did you think of this book?

Read Alike:

American predator: the hunt for the most meticulous serial killer of the 21st century by Maureen Callahan

Missoula: rape and the justice system in a college town by Jon Krakauer

Trailed: one woman's quest to solve the Shenandoah murders by Kathryn Miles

The Phantom Killer: unlocking the mystery of the Texarkana serial murders: the story of a town in terror by James Presley

New Information

-Trial of Kohberger is set for August 11th

-Prosecutor is looking to seek out the death penalty

-Jurors will hear the vast majority of the 911 call made by the surviving roommates

-Jurors will also see the text messages between the roommates

-Kohberger has been diagnosed with Autism and it has been determined that the defense can say very little about it.

- Dylan Mortensen will be testifying to everything she witnessed.