



# Bluegrass: A True Story of Murder in Kentucky

By William Van Meter

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**Bluegrass: A True Story of Murder in Kentucky** By William Van Meter

**By the lights of absolutely everyone who ever knew her, Katie Autry never harmed a hair on a dog's head.**

She came from a tiny village in Kentucky. The State moved her as a child into a foster home in a town so small it had one stoplight. New to her own beauty and a little awkward, Katie had the biggest smile on her high school cheerleading squad. In September 2002, she matriculated as a freshman at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green. She majored in the dental program, but as it was for many college students her age, partying was of equal priority. She worked days at the smoothie shop, nights at the local strip club, and fell in love with a football player who wouldn't date her.

Five feet two in heels and without a bad word to say about anyone, Katie Autry was sweet, kind, and utterly naïve. She was making the clumsy strides of a newborn colt, discovering what the world was like and learning to be her own person. And on the morning of May 4, 2003, Katie Autry was raped, stabbed, sprayed with hairspray, and set on fire in her own dormitory room.

In telling the true story of this shocking crime, *Bluegrass* describes the devastation of not one but three families. Two young men, whose lives seem preordained to intertwine, are jailed for the crime: DNA evidence places Stephen Soules, an unemployed, mixed-race high school dropout, at the scene, and Lucas Goodrum, a twenty-one-year-old pot dealer with an ex-wife, a girlfriend still in high school, and an inauspicious history of domestic abuse, is held by an ever-changing confession. The friends of the suspects and the foster and birth families of the victim form complex and warring social nets that are cast across town. And a small southern community, populated by eccentrics of every socioeconomic class, from dirt-poor to millionaire, responds to the horror. Like *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, this tale is redolent with atmosphere, dark tension, and lush landscapes.

With the keen eye of a talented young journalist returning to his southern roots, Van Meter paints a vivid portrait of the town, the characters who fill it, and the simmering class conflicts that made an injustice like this not only possible, but

inevitable.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In 2003, college student Katie Autry was brutally raped, stabbed and set on fire in her dorm room at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Ky. Returning to his hometown, journalist Van Meter explores Autry's murder, and the subsequent investigation and trial. But his scattershot approach leaves the account as full of holes as the suspects' alibis. Authorities tracked down several people who'd been at a fraternity party Autry had attended before focusing on Stephen Soules, a high school dropout who at first said he'd had consensual sex with the drunken girl in her dorm. But Soules blamed the murder on Luke Goodrum, a 21-year-old with a history of domestic violence. Despite mounting evidence implicating Soules, Goodrum was tried for the crime, while Soules—who now claimed Goodrum forced him to rape Autry—agreed to testify in exchange for life in prison, thus avoiding a capital trial. Instead of exploring the glaring legal errors that ran rampant during the investigation and Goodrum's trial, Van Meter instead cobbles together a melodramatic narrative that doesn't do Autry's tragic death justice. (*Jan.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

The murder of Katie Autry would seem to have it all, true-crime-wise. Attractive coed is raped and killed in her dorm room, and her corpse set afire. Authorities quickly determine she was at a frat party the night before, so the always-enjoyable drunken witnesses and suspects come into play. Then DNA evidence points to a high-school dropout who claims to have had consensual sex with her but later contends to have been forced to rape her by a pal he also fingers for the murder. Oddly, the coppers believe him. Unfortunately, Van Meter's disorganized chronicle dissipates much of the excitement and prosecutorial glee one might expect. What could be a scathing look at a prosecution gone awfully wrong turns into a weepy narrative with more to say about the quaint college-town setting than the carnival of investigative and prosecutorial missteps that would seem to be the real story here. Imperfect though it is, *Bluegrass* should still satisfy dyed-in-the-wool true-crime fans, if not much of anyone new to the genre. --Mike Tribby

Review

"Characters and events alike in Van Meter's harrowing and mesmerizing account of a Kentucky co-ed's murder are etched with photographic clarity, as the narrative moves toward its end with a sort of doomed inevitability." -- William Gay, author of *I Hate To See That Evening Sun Go Down*

"William Van Meter's *Bluegrass* is not just a story of 'murder' but of race, class, gender, region, etc...there are many layers of moral universality in this small-town murder case that far outreach the suburbs of Southern Kentucky in their magnitude. Van Meter resists all the easy traps of the exposé-chronicler with his elegantly interwoven investigation of Bowling Green's harrowing homicide triangle, involving an unforgettably winsome young college co-ed and the two young men--economically and culturally worlds apart and yet historically and socially bound--who are implicated in her baffling murder....This is narrative non-fiction packed with the overpowering magnetism of a sensationalist page-turner, yet Van Meter infuses it with a literary astuteness in the vein of the best of our New Journalism forefathers. Plus, he picks a story to tell that too many of us missed; the Katie Autry case is so mind-blowingly chilling it's evidence once again that real life hands-down surpasses fiction in enormity. It took me to a universe I had never been, and yet one I know I won't be able to shake off soon." -- Porochista Khakpour, author of *Sons and Other Flammable Objects: A Novel*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Frankie Graybill:**

As people who live in the actual modest era should be change about what going on or information even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era that is always change and move forward. Some of you maybe may update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know which you should start with. This Bluegrass: A True Story of Murder in Kentucky is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

#### **Thomas Smith:**

The particular book Bluegrass: A True Story of Murder in Kentucky has a lot of information on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was written by the very famous author. The author makes some research previous to write this book. This kind of book very easy to read you can find the point easily after scanning this book.

#### **Ernest Bryan:**

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#### **Daniel Scott:**

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