Anyone You Want Me to Be: A True Story of Sex and Death on the Internet

by John E. Douglas and Stephen Singular
JOHN DOUGLAS -- THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF MINDHUNTER AND THE UNDISPUTED MASTER PROFILER OF SERIAL CRIMINALS -- TELLS THE CHILLING TRUE STORY OF JOHN ROBINSON, THE INTERNET’S FIRST SERIAL MURDERER.

In Olathe, Kansas, a balding, pudgy father of four sits in prison convicted on three counts of homicide -- two of capital murder -- and suspected in at least five other disappearances. During the last half of the 1990s, John Robinson exploited the Internet’s active world of sadomasochism with horrific results. By haunting chat rooms, he pinpointed vulnerable women who were looking for romance and stalked them on-line, nefariously convincing them of his maturity, sensitivity, and financial stability. He seemed like the perfect man. He enticed these women with offers of a solid relationship and a lucrative job, persuading them to move to his hometown. Once they arrived in Kansas, the women invariably disappeared.

After a dramatic trial and days of intense jury deliberation, Robinson now faces the death penalty. Disturbing as his crimes may be, what’s most alarming is how he selected and lured his victims and how willingly they responded. John Robinson expanded the hunting ground, the techniques, and the technology of the sexual predator. He is the world’s first-known Internet serial killer.

Law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and the coauthors of Anyone You Want Me to Be have struggled to unravel the enigma that is John Robinson. They reveal what can go wrong in a world where relationships are devoid of physical contact, showing how easily mainstream Americans can be drawn into the dark underground of cybercrime. The Internet has drastically expanded the realm of fantasy -- from the limited confines of physical reality to the worldwide stage of virtual reality -- and anyone can become involved in an on-line seduction. Erotic fantasies, which were once socially off-limits and extremely private, are now instantly accessible. This rapidly
growing community masks a sinister truth: With only a computer, an Internet connection, and a knack for creativity, criminals have the power to reach millions of unsuspecting victims while remaining in complete control of their own -- often false -- image. John Robinson was a true innovator in this variety of crime. Through interviews with law enforcement specialists, Web experts, and others, John Douglas and Stephen Singular illustrate, with this case, a much larger -- and more frightening -- pattern of Internet sex and violence.

As technology proliferates in the twenty-first century, so do opportunities for enterprising criminals like John Robinson. No one is better equipped than John Douglas and Stephen Singular to expose the underworld of the Internet and to warn people about the dangers of cyberspace. A cautionary and educational tale about being wary of strangers and false intimacy, Anyone You Want Me to Be is also a terrifying, high-tech story of crime and punishment.

Amazon.com Review

The Internet has made many enterprises easier since its rise to popularity in the mid-90s: book sales, personal correspondence, and, in the case of John Robinson, serial murder. Even before he ever went online, Robinson had forged a life consistent with a killer's profile. Despite being fired and arrested numerous times for fraud and theft, he wriggled out of serious trouble thanks to a smooth charm and cunning intelligence. For decades, Robinson's more sinister activities escaped the notice of nearly everyone, including law enforcement and, incredibly, his own wife. But what makes Robinson's story, as told here by John Douglas and Stephen Singular, uniquely disturbing is the presence of the World Wide Web and the ease with which a murderer can use it. Online, Robinson frequented chat rooms and sites dedicated to the lurid underground world of bondage and sadomasochism. In this anonymous space, he was free to assume honey-tongued new identities that he used to lure women, especially those in vulnerable situations, to Kansas with promises of employment, protection, or sex. Their subsequent disappearances were explained away with letters that appeared to be written by the victims but were actually typed by the killer on pieces of paper the women had previously signed. Ultimately, dogged law enforcement officials were able to catch up with Robinson and put him on trial after finding gruesome evidence of his deeds. While they are skilled true-crime writers, Douglas and Singular occasionally stray into hyperbole, which is far from necessary given the elements already present in Robinson's horrifying story. It is likely that any reader will walk a little more warily by their computer after reading this book and getting an idea of who might be hiding behind a given nickname. --John Moe

Product Description

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