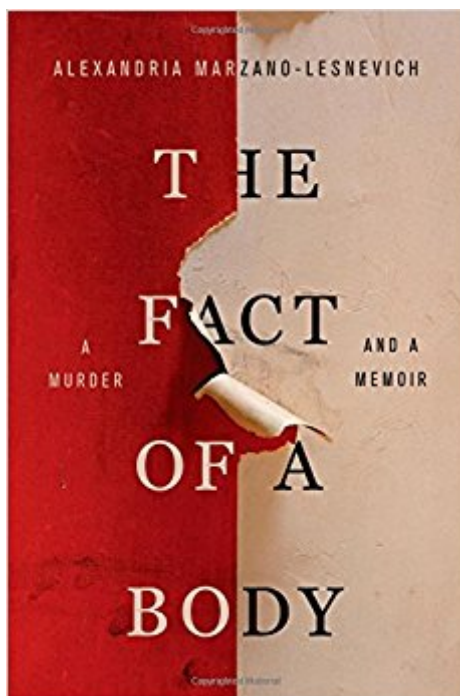


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The Fact Of A Body: A Murder And A Memoir



Synopsis

“A True Crime Masterpiece” • Vogue Entertainment Weekly "Must" List and Best Books of the Year So Far Real Simple's Best New Books "The Fact of a Body is one of the best books I've read this year. It's just astounding." • Paula Hawkins, author of *Into the Water* and *The Girl on the Train* "This book is a marvel. *The Fact of a Body* is equal parts gripping and haunting and will leave you questioning whether any one story can hold the full truth." • Celeste Ng, author of the New York Times bestselling *Everything I Never Told You* and *Little Fires Everywhere* Before Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich begins a summer job at a law firm in Louisiana, working to help defend men accused of murder, she thinks her position is clear. The child of two lawyers, she is staunchly anti-death penalty. But the moment convicted murderer Ricky Langley's face flashes on the screen as she reviews old tapes the moment she hears him speak of his crimes -- she is overcome with the feeling of wanting him to die. Shocked by her reaction, she digs deeper and deeper into the case. Despite their vastly different circumstances, something in his story is unsettlingly, uncannily familiar. Crime, even the darkest and most unsayable acts, can happen to any one of us. As Alexandria pores over the facts of the murder, she finds herself thrust into the complicated narrative of Ricky's childhood. And by examining the details of Ricky's case, she is forced to face her own story, to unearth long-buried family secrets, and reckon with a past that colors her view of Ricky's crime. But another surprise awaits: She wasn't the only one who saw her life in Ricky's. An intellectual and emotional thriller that is also a different kind of murder mystery, *THE FACT OF A BODY* is a book not only about how the story of one crime was constructed -- but about how we grapple with our own personal histories. Along the way it tackles questions about the nature of forgiveness, and if a single narrative can ever really contain something as definitive as the truth. This groundbreaking, heart-stopping work, ten years in the making, shows how the law is more personal than we would like to believe -- and the truth more complicated, and powerful, than we could ever imagine.

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Customer Reviews

“A memoir/true-crime hybrid that stands up to the best of either genre, and will linger in your mind long after the last page.” — Entertainment Weekly

“Marzano-Lesnevich, in her performance of hybridity is only doing what the best memoirists do: creating a book of fact and body, and speaking, in all their discord, as mother, father, and child.” — LA Review of Books

“This is a nonfiction book you could give up novels for.” — Intertwines a riveting true crime story with a brave memoir, reminding us that facing the truth is our only option.

“Utterly remarkable. It isn’t just that the writing can be beautiful — it isn’t just her coruscating honesty, it is that she understands how very partial the stories we tell ourselves are: the story of themselves that parents choose to tell their children as much as the stories that defence and prosecuting counsels create about events and people. Stories, she sees, are both essential and treacherous... Heroically accomplished.” — The Times of London

“There are echoes of *In Cold Blood* in this haunting story. A gothic mixture of memoir and true crime, *The Fact of a Body* is full of secrets that don’t want to stay buried, that are forced to the surface despite all attempts to keep them submerged.” — Bold, disquieting True crime that feels true.

“Dream-stippled prose, at once sharp with beauty and lush with horror.” — The Sunday Times of London

“The superb writing and story-telling keep luring you back. Marzano-Lesnevich writes with a beautifully deft one-two-three punch of grace, power and raw emotion.” — The Buffalo News

“This book is a marvel. With unflinching precision and immense compassion, Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich peels apart both a murder case and her own experience to reveal how we try to make sense of the past. *The Fact of a Body* is equal parts gripping and haunting and will leave you questioning whether any one story can hold the full truth.” — Celeste Ng, author of the New York Times bestselling *Everything I Never Told You* and *Little Fires Everywhere*

fascinating hybrid of true crime and memoir, *The Fact of a Body* is intricately constructed, emotionally raw, and unflinching. Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich has written a gripping meditation on memory, justice, and the limits of empathy.

—Tom Perrotta "The Fact of a Body is unlike any murder story I've ever read, a masterpiece of both reportage and memoir, a book that could only be written by an author with Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich's staggering gifts: a relentless reporter with a law degree from Harvard, a poet's understanding of the cadence of a line, and a novelist's gift for empathy. Walter Benjamin famously said that all great works of art either dissolve a genre or invent one. This book does both, and its greatness is undeniable."

—Justin St. Germain, author of *Son of a Gun* "The Fact of a Body is remarkable act of witness, an anatomy of silence and the violence it abets, a book of both public and private accountings. Rejecting the false comfort of certainty, it confronts the inadequacy of all our tools for fathoming not just unforgivable crimes, but the baffling, human grace that can forgive them. This is a profound and riveting book."

—Garth Greenwell, author of *What Belongs to You* "The balancing act here performed between autobiography and journalism, documentary and imagination, witnessing and reckoning, the tender and the terrible, is shrewd and graceful. In the hands of a lesser human or writer, it could have all fallen apart; instead, Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich has given us an exquisite and exquisitely difficult work of art that makes a fierce claim on our attention, conscience, and heart."

—Maggie Nelson, author of the NBCC award-winning *Argonauts* "Haunting...impeccably researched...Her writing is remarkably evocative and taut with suspense, with a level of nuance that sets this effort apart from other true crime accounts."

—Publishers Weekly, Starred Review "An accomplished literary debut | an absorbing narrative about secrets, pain, revenge, and, ultimately, the slippery notion of truth | A powerful evocation of the raw pain of emotional scars."

—Kirkus "Compulsive, eloquent and profoundly troubling. One of those rare books which embrace the genuine complexity of life."

—Mark Haddon, bestselling author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* "The writing is superb and gripping | a moving must-have."

—Library Journal, starred review "Surprising, suspenseful, and moving | A book that defies both its genres, turning into something wholly different and memorable."

—Booklist, starred review "Haunting | Marzano-Lesnevich digs into one case that begins to feel oddly familiar, and eventually is forced to confront her understanding of justice, forgiveness, and truth."

—BuzzFeed "THE FACT OF A BODY is excellent. So gripping and fascinating."

—Sophie Hannah, New York Times bestselling author of *The Monogram*

Murders – “Suspenseful and spellbinding.” – Bustle
Audible Best Books of the Year (So Far)

A 2014 National Endowment for the Arts fellow, she has received a Rona Jaffe Award and has twice been a fellow at both MacDowell and Yaddo. Her essays appear in the New York Times, Oxford American, and the anthologies TRUE CRIME and WAVEFORM: Twenty-first Century Essays by Women, as well as many other publications. She received her JD from Harvard, her MFA at Emerson College, and her BA from Columbia University. She now lives in Boston, where she teaches at Grub Street and in the graduate public policy program at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.

This book is powerful. The author beautifully crafts her own memoir and a murder story together. They are not directly related, but the connections she makes are life-changing. And, it was pivotal for me as well. I realized how callous I had become toward criminals, never pondering for too long about the possibility of a tragic childhood, they themselves being victims. I was convinced they bitterly chose their life of crime and strategically planned their strings of offenses. That may often be the case, but these stories together made me realize that there is often more. And, whether we know it, or not, we bring who we are and where we have been, into every decision we ever make. Even when evidence is there before us and it plays a part in our decision, the bigger catalyst is our own personal experiences. The stories might be hard to stomach, but the writing is lovely.

This memoir is haunting, heartfelt and deeply moving. Once opened, I could not set it down. In 300 gripping pages, the author has braided together two seemingly disconnected narratives, stories brought together only by chance, separated by time and place, into a complex tale of abuse, murder and forgiveness, and of accepting truths on the other side. Powerful emotional moments are interspersed with meticulous research and details of legal technicalities that are somehow compelling in their own right. All of that, and startlingly lush, textured prose. I can’t believe this is the writer’s debut work. Highly recommended.

Well written from the authors own memories and the blanks she fills in for Ricky’s story. The author does a very good job at detailing the locations of the incidents and fully flushing out the characters. Makes you feel as though you are there in the moment.

Unusually complex and worthwhile study of human nature. While very concrete and specific to a true crime story, it has implications for a more universal query into our human need to obsess over the very moments of life that make us the most miserable. That rumination that won't let go like irritating music that gets stuck in memory and won't shut up. "Just forget about it. Let it be." Easier said than done. Perhaps for good reason. How do you tell festering from a healing process, wishful thinking from actual progress?

This disturbing book tells two stories, both of them sad and one of them tragic. The author, molested as a child by her grandfather, investigates the murder of a six-year-old boy by his neighbor, Ricky Langley. Nothing can ever satisfactorily explain or excuse her own suffering or the perverted actions of Langley, but Marzano-Lesnevich gives us every horrible detail and brings home the sad fact that an abused or traumatized child may never recover full trust in the adult world. We are left wondering how many others Langley molested and possibly murdered. The book is well written and moves back and forth rapidly between the author's story and the account of the murder and trial. There are no definitive answers to the questions raised about pedophilia, but in the end we come to recognize the complexities of human character.

I don't usually read true crime or memoir; this book is exquisitely both and neither. In a single sentence the writer can transport the reader through time, showing the present as layered by what has passed and what will follow.

I couldn't imagine writing about true crime and having somewhat lived it too. But Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich does just that and does it very well. It couldn't have been easy for her to relive because it wasn't easy to read about. The story is public, yet personal and the subject matter is quite disgusting. I cringed often, but continued reading because I was fascinated and maybe a bit morbidly curious about what makes people do what they do, and continue to do things to others or even themselves, not caring who they're affecting! Question: How much of who we are and who we become begins in the womb where we are powerless to protect ourselves ?!

This book is captivating. A true crime story. A memoir. Pieces, people, places, alternating and woven together in a memorable, moving, haunting masterpiece. Marzano-Lesnevich confronts human behavior, emotions, and relationships, to reach the reality that how we experience others and their actions does not always leave us with a simple or simplistic reckoning.

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