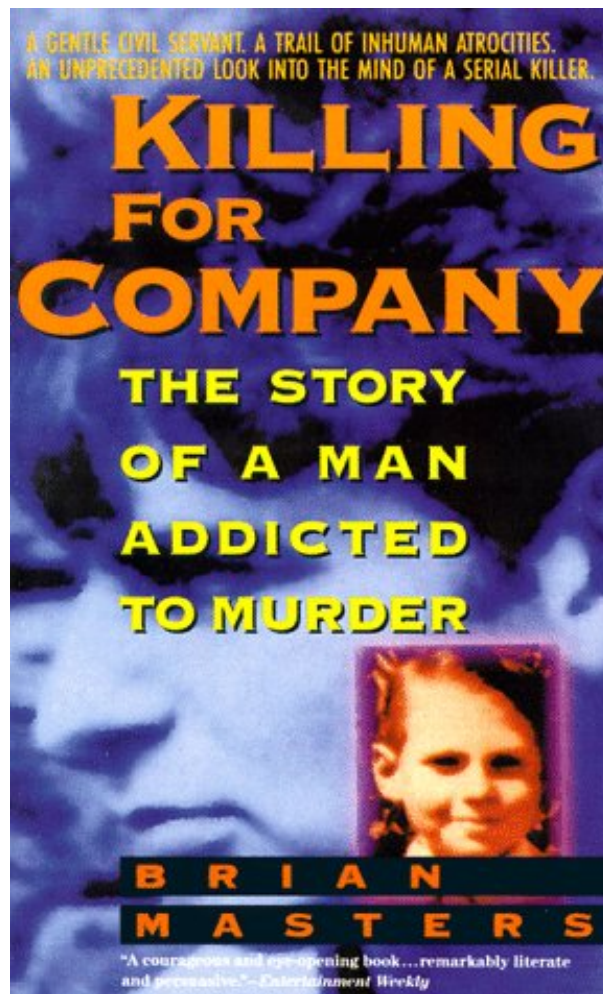


KILLING FOR COMPANY: THE STORY OF A MAN ADDICTED TO MURDER BY BRIAN MASTERS



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A GENTLE CIVIL SERVANT. A TRAIL OF INHUMAN ATROCITIES.
AN UNPRECEDENTED LOOK INTO THE MIND OF A SERIAL KILLER.

KILLING FOR COMPANY

THE STORY
OF A MAN
ADDICTED
TO MURDER



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M A S T E R S**

"A courageous and eye-opening book...remarkably literate
and persuasive."—*Entertainment Weekly*

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Amazon.com Review

This brilliant psychological study of British serial killer Dennis Nilsen was, writes the author, an "oddity," because its subject was so "outlandish," so unheard-of in the annals of psychiatry: "Until, that is, Jeffrey Dahmer was arrested ... While in the immediate sense of personal impact Dahmer is unlike Nilsen, being diffident, quiet, polite, even a little dull, against Nilsen's extrovert loquacity and self-confidence, their crimes bear such close similarities of method, manner, and, yes, motive, as to ... mean that the Nilsen/Dahmer brand of florid necrophilia could at last be definable." Brian Masters, better known for his literary and historical works, has written a classic of true crime--a penetrating exploration of not just the crimes, but also the mind of a serial killer. Especially fascinating are excerpts from Nilsen's journals and a collection called "Sad Sketches: Monochrome Man" of drawings and handwritten prose and poetry about the victims. The book includes a postscript by a forensic psychiatrist and a bibliography.

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Dennis Nilsen was arrested in February 1983 after the plumbing in his suburban London apartment was found to be clogged with body parts. "Are we talking about one body or two," a detective asked. Nilsen, a 35-year-old civil servant, replied: "Fifteen or sixteen, since 1978. I'll tell you everything." Besides confessing to the police, Nilsen wrote extensively to Masters from prison and offered him his journals. Using these sources and his considerable journalistic skill, the author (Moliere) fashions a stunning account of the largest mass murderer in British history. Nilsen is depicted as a lonely, articulate man who met men in pubs and cafes, invited them to his flat for drinks and killed them, fearing that they would leave the next day. Nilsen's trial was brief and expert testimony cast little light on the grisly events (Nilsen dismembered his victims, stuffing body parts under floorboards or boiling off flesh in a soup pot). Noting that the plea of insanity was not accepted either for Nilsen or for Jeffrey Dahmer, who was convicted of similar acts in the U.S. in 1992, Masters suggests that the current legal definitions of insanity need reworking. Photos not seen by PW. True Crime Book Club selection.

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Drawing on the personal journals of mass murderer Dennis Nilsen, this recounting of the exploits of the mild mannered civil servant details how he strangled fifteen men over four years, kept their dead bodies as companions, and was undone by blocked plumbing. PW. Reprint.

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Most helpful customer reviews

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Not for the squeamish

By Debbie King

This book grabs your attention from the very first paragraph as it describes the events leading up to Dennis Nilsen's arrest. It explains in detail Nilsen's early years, and the profound psychological effect on the 6 year-old Nilsen when he sees his first dead body - the corpse of his beloved grandfather.

Although Nilsen's crimes were horrific and, to us, senseless, you cannot help but feel immensely sorry for a man who is so consumed with loneliness that he prefers the company of a corpse to no company at all, hence the title of the book. One can but imagine what might have been if Nilsen had been able to form a stable and secure relationship with someone.

An extremely interesting book for anyone interested in the criminal mind - but definitely not for the squeamish.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Dahmer Was Not Unique

By Sires

After the Jeffrey Dahmer story broke, it was easy to think that no one else like him ever did or ever could have lived. After all, his motive for killing was bizarre to say the least-- he wanted to keep the men he picked up from leaving him. Then a few years later I picked up Brian Masters' *Killing for Company* almost by chance-- It was shocking: here was Dahmer's mirror image in a quiet British civil servant named Dennis Nilson. For some reason his crimes had not been publicized in the US.

Nilson's crimes had been discovered in 1983 when the plumbing in his apartment building started to back up. Workmen were called in and discovered what looked like human flesh was the problem. The police questioned Nilson who confessed to his crime. He had been actively killing young men for 4 years and using their bodies in bizarre tableaux of domesticity and no one had noticed--would probably not have noticed had it not been that his plumbing couldn't handle his method of body disposal.

Masters' book does a very good job of laying out Nilson's life. It is definitely not a quickie book churned out to take advantage of a sensational crime. If you are at all interested in the darkest, most tabu areas of the human soul this is a very interesting read.

6 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

The Man Who Didn't Play Nice With Others

By Dan Bogaty

Before there was Jeffrey Dahmer, there was - in the late 1970s and early 1980s in London - Dennis Nilsen, whose story is presented in Brian Masters' *KILLING FOR COMPANY*. While Nilsen was not identical to Dahmer, there being no mention of cannibalization for example, and while any cooking of body parts that took place was strictly utilitarian for the purpose of making disposal easier, he was still close enough for

government work.

Nilsen is portrayed as an essentially normal if slightly colorless man, a civil servant who, while somewhat irritating personally, was quite good at his job. He did, however, have one unfortunate habit. He would pick up men younger than he at gay bars, get drunk with them and bring them home and listen to music with them. The fortunate would then spend the night and leave the next day. The less fortunate would leave in pieces after Nilsen had kept them with him for a while, in one piece though quite dead, sleeping with them, bathing them, and watching TV with them.

KILLING FOR COMPANY is written as a serious book which attempts to provide a psychoanalysis of Nilsen, to try to explain what in his past would produce a reasonably intelligent and competent man who possessed what I think we can all agree was an unusual deviation. Masters' research is extensive, his writing adult and factual.

The first part of the book deals in considerable depth with Nilsen's life as a child and a young man. This is well done and interesting as is the recounting of many of the murders he committed.

So why only two stars? Well, as hard as I tried, I couldn't finish this book. It got to the point where I was forcing myself to read it and could only read a few pages at a time. The reason is that it became really boring to me. The trial section goes on forever and became my own private death march, but I don't think that was the main problem.

Neither is the fact that the author makes extensive use of Nilsen's writings about what he became and why, in an attempt to explain him. But Masters is not a psychologist and his conclusions, while not ignorant nor necessarily wrong, have an amateur feel to them.

No, I think the main reason I finally gave up on this book, 300 plus pages into it, is that except for his spectacularly unique (until Dahmer) method of making friends, Nilsen is boring as are his writings, and, given that they are used extensively, the denseness of Masters' presentation slows the pace - and for me the interest level - to a crawl.

I actually feel that there are a number of true crime readers who may like this book, and I've tried to note the positives, but try as I might, I couldn't finish it.

See all 7 customer reviews...

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