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Practice to Deceive

Ann Rule

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#1 *New York Times* bestselling author and Queen of True Crime Ann Rule delivers another gripping true-crime story—this time a shattering case of Christmastime murder off the coast of Washington State, with a shocking amount of drama, greed, sex, and scandal and no shortage of suspects.

With more than 50 million copies of her thirty-four books in print, from *The Stranger Beside Me*, her chilling personal account of knowing Ted Bundy, to fourteen hardcover books— including *Small Sacrifices*; *Green River, Running Red*; and *Too Late to Say Goodbye*—and sixteen collections in her #1 bestselling Crime Files series, Ann Rule is without a doubt "America's best true-crime writer" (*Kirkus Reviews*). In *Practice to Deceive*, her first book-length investigative chronicle since *In the Still of the Night*, Rule unravels a shattering case of Christmastime murder off the coast of Washington State—presented with the clarity, authority, and emotional depth that Rule's readers expect. It's a case with enough drama, greed, sex, and scandal to be called "The Real Housewives of Whidbey Island," but this was not reality television. This was murder: pure, cruel, ugly, and senseless. And someone had to pay the price.

Nestled in Puget Sound, Whidbey Island is a gem of the Pacific Northwest; accessible only by ferry and the soaring Deception Pass Bridge, it is known for its artistic communities and stunning natural beauty. Life there is low-key, insular, and the island's year-round residents tend to know one another's business. But when the blood-drenched body of Russel Douglas was discovered the day after Christmas in his SUV in a hidden driveway near Whidbey's most exclusive mansions, the whole island was shocked. A single bullet between his eyes was the cause of death, but no one could imagine who among them could plot such a devious, cold-blooded crime. At first, police suspected suicide, tragically common at the height of the holiday season. But when they found no gun in or near the SUV, Russel's manner of death became *homicide*. Like a cast of characters from a classic mystery novel, a host of Whidbey residents fell under suspicion.

Brenna Douglas was Russel's estranged and soon-to-be-ex wife, who allowed him to come home for a Christmas visit with their children. The couple owned the popular Just B's salon. Brenna's good friend Peggy Sue Thomas worked there, and Brenna complained often to her that Russel was physically and emotionally abusive. Peggy Sue's own life has been one of extremes. Married three times, hers is a rags-to-riches-and-back-again tale in which she's played many roles: aircraft mechanic, basketball coach, the "drop-dead gorgeous" beauty queen as a former Ms. Washington, Las Vegas limousine driver, million-dollar horse breeder, wealthy divorcée. But in 2003, her love affair with married guitarist Jim Huden led the two Whidbey Island natives to pursue their ultimate dreams of wealth and privilege—even at the expense of human life.

Unravel the tangled web woven by Russel Douglas's murder in *Practice to Deceive*, the newest heart pounding true-crime tour de force from Ann Rule.

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