

I, a Squealer: The Insider's Account of the "Pied Piper of Tucson" Murders

Richard Bruns

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Richard Bruns's *I, a Squealer* promises an insider's account of the "Pied Piper of Tucson" murders. As intriguing as this narrative is, the more compelling story lurks within the relationship between the "squealer" and the "Pied Piper." Published fifty years after it was written, this tale is fueled no less by its teller's compassion than by the killer's deplorable deeds.

From the outset, one mystery begets another. Why did Bruns finally squeal? Why didn't he squeal sooner? How and why did Smitty plummet from a charismatic teen idol to Charles Schmid, killer without a conscience?

The introduction offers an uncanny glimpse of the style and structure employed in subsequent chapters. Suspense and absurdity abound as a curious, jovial crowd watches two officers excavate the remains of a teenage girl. A photo depicts an image too ludicrous to fathom without proof. Then, the story catapults through time and space to drop in on scenes at their most climactic moments—a courtroom as the verdict of is read; a jail cell where Smitty blames Bruns for his crimes.

Throughout the book, only as much is revealed as is necessary to propel characters from one rendezvous to the next. This sometimes results in confusion about where in time and place the characters reside, but frequently it enhances the suspense rather than diminishing the story line. Three appendices offer evidence for the most unbelievably bizarre events while resolving any residual confusion.

The final enigma spawned by *I, a Squealer* eclipses all others. How could a true-crime memoir so infused with brutality, betrayal, deceit, and destruction simultaneously function as an inspiring tribute to integrity and friendship? Yet Bruns succeeds in honoring the inviolability of friendship despite unmasking a barbaric fiend beneath the guise of his friend.

LINDA THORLAKSON (March/April 2018)

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