FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

True Crime

Ma Duncan
Jim Barrett
Ivy House Publishing Group
978-1-57197-384-9
(January 15, 2004)

"I want you to kill the bitch! I want you to throw acid in her face and burn her eyes out of her head! I want that woman cold in her grave!" Elizabeth Duncan's jealousy and outrage became vicious when her son Frank got married. After the announcement that Frank's wife, Olga, was pregnant, Ma Duncan began searching for someone to kill her daughter-in-law and unborn grandchild.

She found twenty-one-year-old Luis Moya and twenty-five-year-old Augustine (Gus) Baldonado, who had both been born into poverty and turned to crime. Luis had been in juvenile hall and prison by age eighteen. Gus, too, had been in a juvenile facility and then enlisted in the Army at seventeen; in Korea he injected a soldier with heroin and was given a dishonorable discharge. Luis and Gus were ready to earn the money Elizabeth promised if they would kill her daughter-in-law.

Elizabeth Duncan was in love with her son Frank, unnaturally so. There was evidence that they had even been intimate. She lived with Frank and attempted suicide when he asked her to move out. Frank feared that his mother really would hurt herself, so he did her bidding. Even after he married Olga, he continued to spend nights at home with his mother, visiting his wife as his mother allowed. Elizabeth's love became an obsession: "I'm very much in love with Frankie," she stated. "If I can't have him, nobody can."

Elizabeth's compulsive love for Frank ended in the death of Olga Duncan and her unborn baby. Elizabeth's best friend, Emma Short, told the story to the police and became the star witness for the prosecution during the trial, relating the story as she had seen it. Later Gus and Luis also confessed, but Ma Duncan maintained her innocence throughout.

This book provides more than the details of a police investigation and trial. It is the story, the real story. The author, a veteran law enforcement officer of twenty-nine years, is currently serving as Captain of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department. His knowledge of

crime and criminals is obvious, yet Barrett knows how to pen a good tale. He presents the facts in an understandable way, and weaves the reader into the fibers of the lives involved. As the author allows the murderous tale to unfold, it often feels as though the story is telling itself.

Those who love true crime will enjoy this book. As one of the reporters covering the trial said, “The truth was indeed stranger than fiction.”