

KAREN KINGSBURY

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

A DREAM VACATION TURNS INTO A NIGHTMARE WHEN
TWO BEST FRIENDS MEET TWO COLD-BLOODED KILLERS.

A TRUE CRIME NOVEL

THE SNAKE AND THE SPIDER

ABDUCTION AND MURDER IN DAYTONA BEACH

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THE SNAKE AND THE SPIDER

**Two Michigan teens set out for a week in the sun.
They never came back...alive.**

A REAL-LIFE CASE OF ABDUCTION AND MURDER IN DAYTONA BEACH

By: KAREN KINGSBURY

The Snake and the Spider

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A Note from Karen Kingsbury

The story you are about to read was adapted from my days as a news reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Sadly, the characters in this story are real. In most cases, the dialogue and events are real. Some scenes have been re-created to better tell the story. Always, the chapters were difficult to write, a very real look at the darker side of life.

Missy's Murder was the first of four true-crime books I wrote at the beginning of my career as an author. It allowed me to be home with my daughter, Kelsey, who was just an infant when I covered the trial.

I wrote three more, *Final Vows*, *Deadly Pretender*, and *Snake and the Spider*. After that, I decided I couldn't write another. I'd explored enough of the dark side.

All of my novels since then contain characters with serious trials and troubles, but they are written in context of the faith, light, and hope that I believe exists for us all—including the characters in this book. God Bless!

Karen Kingsbury

P.S. You can learn more about my other titles at KarenKingsbury.com or by following me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Dedicated

To

Little Norm,
my sweetest song.
I love you, honey.

T.D.,
my baby boy
whom I love so dearly.

Donald,
my husband,
with whom life just
keeps getting better.

My parents,
for their loving support.

My Christian family at
WVCC and VVCC.

God Almighty,
who defines love.

And to the memory of
Jim Boucher and Daryl Barber.

Acknowledgments

Much thanks goes to the people who helped make this book possible. First, and foremost, Marian Barber and Faye Boucher, who shared their lives and those of their sons so that their story could be told. May the telling of what happened to Jim and Daryl serve to keep Snake and Spider in prison forever.

A very special thanks also goes to Private Investigator Bob Brown, who opened up dozens of files and hundreds of documents for my inspection. Thank you for recreating your amazing work and providing me with details that I wouldn't have had otherwise.

I would like to thank Maria Amato for uprooting herself during the writing of this book and taking special care of my children for six long, hot weeks. I couldn't have done it without you, Moe!

Thank you, too, to Donald, my husband, who continues to make whatever adjustments are necessary so that I can break away from life long enough to complete a manuscript. You are wonderful and I love you!

My appreciation goes out to my parents, who believed in my writing abilities from the beginning and who will always be strong pillars in my support system. I love you!

And a sincere thank you to my dear friends Pat, Amber, Jo Ann, Sue, and Gina (who is anything but a slub). Your laughter, love, and encouragement are what help me keep focused through the difficult times. I love you all and thanks a million.

Finally, I would like to thank my editor, Tony Gangi, for his brilliant knack of turning the ordinary into the extraordinary, and also my agent, Arthur Pine, and Dell's Leslie Schnur. Thank you for believing in me.

Author's Explanatory Note

The events described in this book are taken directly from court transcripts and other public records and documents, as well as from numerous interviews with the many people involved. In many instances, however, to better communicate the story and the atmosphere surrounding the events, incidents and dialogue have been dramatically recreated based on court testimony and other public records, and interviews with various participants or other knowledgeable individuals.

Snake's wife, Sandra; Mike Black and Rob; Jeff Kindel, Dick Kane, and the names of other minor characters are all pseudonyms. The author has chosen to change these names and disguise the identities of certain people involved in this story. This has been done to preserve privacy. Any similarity between the fictitious names and those of living persons is, of course, entirely coincidental.

The People You're About to Meet

JIM AND DARYL DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT WAITED
FOR THEM. . . .

THE SPIDER-

A loser, a biker, a kid with
no conscience—what secret did
he know that could break a parent's
heart in two? What deal was
he willing to make to tell it?

THE SNAKE-

A thief, a drug dealer, a Pagan
leader—where did he get
Daryl's red Chevy Nova and traveler's
checks signed by Jim?

BOB BROWN-

A dedicated private eye who prayed
before taking this case—what did
he find out in a run-down trailer park
that made his blood run cold?

LARRY-

A fearless red-haired giant and a biker
on his own—could he find
the person called "Fat Man"
and the clue that would break the case?

SANDRA-

A pretty twenty-three-year-old who
was married to a man called
Snake—what was her birthday present
that was paid for in blood?

MURRAY ZIEGLER-

A hard-nosed homicide detective—why
was he finally brought into the case
of the missing boys?
What sickening facts did he
suspect ... or know?

SOME POISONOUS CREATURES
ARE HUMAN.

CHAPTER 1

Faye Boucher hummed quietly to herself as she made French toast in the kitchen of her rambling country home that August 12, 1978. This was going to be a special breakfast, the last one she would cook for her oldest son, Jim, before he and his best friend Daryl set out for Florida. Their dream vacation had finally arrived.

Faye considered the trip and decided she was not concerned about the boys' safety. After all, Jim was seventeen, about to start his senior year in high school, and Daryl was nineteen. Certainly the boys were old enough to take a one-week vacation.

She set her mind to the task at hand, dipping the slices of soft bread into the mixture of egg and milk and placing them on the hot buttered griddle. The sun shone bright in the early morning sky and the temperature had already soared into the eighties. She and her husband, Roy, loved summertime in Metamora, Michigan, and this day like so many others was going to be a beauty: the rolling deep green hills, maple trees in full bloom, and long, warm days of fishing or horseback riding or swimming at the nearby lake. There would be family picnics, barbecues, and endless get-togethers with the dozens of relatives who lived less than an hour away. Metamora summers made the snowy winter months tolerable.

But for two teenage boys who had spent a lifetime of summers in Metamora, the town offered very little in the way of entertainment. And so the dream vacation had been born. One week in which the boys would drive to Florida, spend a few days at Daytona Beach and then visit Disney World in Orlando. They had planned the trip for months and Faye knew her son had never been more excited.

"Hey, Mom, did you wash my blue jeans?" Jim walked past the kitchen wearing only a pair of shorts and headed toward the utility room where he began searching frantically through a load of clothes in the dryer. "I don't see 'em," he yelled. His body was now partially inside the dryer. "Hey, Mom! Can you help me here? I need my jeans."

At the same time, the youngest member of the Boucher family, seven-month-old Kristi, began to cry.

"Okay, okay, I'm coming," Faye said, flipping a batch of French toast and smiling to herself as she moved briskly toward the baby's playpen. "Be there in a minute, Jim."

Faye easily lifted her infant daughter onto her hip as she headed toward the utility room. She was a slim, pretty woman whose body showed few signs of having had five children. Tossing her son's brown hair as she walked past him, she picked up two neatly folded pairs of blue jeans off a folding table.

"This what you're looking for?"

Jim grinned. He was a slender, muscular boy, five-foot-ten, one hundred and forty pounds, with shoulder-length brown hair and sparkling brown eyes much like his mother's.

“Why don’t you get Daryl and come to breakfast,” Faye said. “It’s almost ready.”

“Good idea,” Jim said, setting the jeans down. “Can you help me pack after we eat?”

“Sure. Now go get Daryl.”

“Thanks, Mom.” Jim flashed her a smile from beneath the sparse mustache he had grown a few months earlier and then dashed back down the hallway toward his bedroom. Faye wasn’t entirely pleased with the mustache but she figured it was harmless.

“I’m nearly a man, now,” he had told his parents when they both raised an eyebrow at the growth on his upper lip. “It makes me look older, don’t you think?”

“What’s the hurry, Jim?” she had said then. “You’re only seventeen.”

Jim had always been mature for his age and now he seemed to want nothing more than to be treated like an adult. But Faye feared that growing up in Metamora had not prepared him for the world he wanted so desperately to explore—another reason why this trip was such a good idea, she told herself as she set the table. It would give Jim a chance to feel independent.

In a matter of minutes both teenage boys were sitting at the butcher-block kitchen table consuming mountains of French toast, syrup, and melted butter. Daryl and Jim had been friends for seven years and although Daryl was two years older, neither boy had been away from home by himself.

Daryl was polite, a good-looking teenager who was the youngest of five kids and lived just a few houses down on Baldwin Road. He had been working as a machinist for the past year and was about to begin his first paid vacation. He had brought his 35-millimeter camera and planned to capture a lot of memories in the coming week.

The excitement in the sprawling kitchen was palpable.

“I think we’re going to need at least a few bags of this French toast for the road,” Daryl said as he stood up and took his plate to the kitchen sink. He turned to Jim. “Maybe she can come with us, you know, just so we can get a good breakfast each day.”

Faye smiled. “Somehow I don’t think you want me and four kids tagging along to Daytona Beach.”

Jim stood up and set his empty plate in the sink. “Oh, we wouldn’t mind at all,” he grinned, leaning over and kissing his mother on the cheek. “Hey, Mom, you ready to help me pack?”

Faye wiped her hands on a dish towel. “Let’s get to it while Kristi’s taking a nap,” she said.

For the next twenty minutes she gathered clean clothes from the utility room and helped Jim pack his spacious blue suitcase. In addition to the necessities, he was taking several T-shirts and pairs of shorts, a few tank tops, a bathing suit, and the blue jeans.

“Plenty of room for souvenirs,” he said as he and Faye stood side by side surveying the contents.

“Well, don’t buy too much,” Faye reminded gently. “You have a car on order, remember?”

Jim had won a statewide bowling tournament in January and three months ago had received a check for ten thousand dollars as prize money. He had decided to take just four hundred dollars on the trip and set aside the remainder to pay for the brand new 1979 Camaro he had ordered.

“Who said anything about buying souvenirs,” Jim said. “I’m bringing home live crabs!” He looked down at his little brother, John, who had joined them a few minutes earlier. John was about to enter first grade and he loved his oldest brother dearly.

“You want a crab, John?” There was mischief in Jim’s voice.

The small boy’s eyes lit up at the idea. “Yeah! Bring me a crab, okay, Jim?”

Jim laughed as he caught his mother’s disapproving expression. “Okay. But I think Mom will make us keep it outside.”

“Yeah, I’ll make a cage for him,” John said as he raced out of the room, intent on finding a place where he could store a crab. Seconds later they could hear him singing happily, “I’m getting a crab, I’m getting a crab. Jim’s going to get me a crab.”

The packing finished, Jim and Daryl hauled their suitcases outside and placed them in the trunk of Daryl’s 1972 Chevrolet Nova. Although not flashy, the red sports car was easy to recognize with its shiny, black vinyl top.

Jim’s father, Roy Boucher, had said good-bye to his son that morning before he left for work and Daryl’s family had said their good-byes earlier, also. Now, the rest of the Boucher family lined up in the family driveway to watch Daryl and Jim leave. Timothy, fifteen years old, laughed and playfully wrestled with Steven, just two years younger than him. John, meanwhile, hovered beside Jim, struggling to help him pack a stack of towels and a blanket into the backseat of the car. The child worshiped his oldest brother and had not stopped talking about the idea of getting a crab when he returned.

“Are you sure, Jim?” the little boy asked, huge brown eyes searching Jim’s for an answer. “A crab? A real live crab?”

Jim crouched down on one knee and put his hands on John’s shoulders. “I’ll try my best to find one for you, and you be a good boy for Mom, is that a deal?”

John nodded but then his lower lip began to quiver and a single tear escaped as his eyes overflowed. “How long is a week?”

Jim pulled the child into a hug as the others watched from nearby and Faye felt a lump rising in her throat. “Not very long,” Jim said softly. “I’ll be back before you know it.”

John nodded and his sudden sadness seemed to pass as quickly as it had come on. Jim stood up and waved good-bye to his other brothers as Daryl climbed into the driver’s seat and shut the car door. Faye walked up to Jim and took him in her arms. Kristi was up from her nap and she sat balanced once again on Faye’s hip. The three of them stayed close for a long moment until finally, Jim pulled away.

“I love you, Mom,” he said, leaning toward her and kissing her.

The lump in Faye’s throat had grown larger and she was unable to speak. Her eyes grew damp and Jim could see how emotional she had become.

Faye smiled in spite of her feelings. “I love you, honey,” she whispered, her voice raspy.

“Don’t worry, Mom,” he said, looking intently into her eyes. “We’ll be fine.”

Faye nodded quickly, swallowing hard. She did not want to cry. It was ridiculous to be so concerned over Jim’s departure. But he had never been away from home, never been on his own without the help of his parents.

“Please call when you get there, okay?” she said finally, forcing herself to sound casual. The boys planned to travel more than five hundred miles that afternoon and arrive in Daytona Beach sometime late that night. Faye figured she should be getting their phone call at that time.

“We will,” he said. “Soon as we get there.”

Jim kissed her one more time and smiled.

“Have fun,” Faye whispered, brushing her son’s hair back from his eyes and smiling in return. “We’ll miss you.”

“Me, too.” Jim slid into the passenger seat and waved at his family. “Bye!” he shouted. “See you in a week!”

Faye looked hard at Jim as the car pulled out of the driveway. He looked young and carefree, about to begin the adventure of a lifetime. A week wasn’t long at all and then they would be back, sharing tall tales of their time in Florida. She raised her arm up once more, waving one final time.

“Bye, Jim,” she said softly. “Love you.”

And then she and her four remaining children stayed in the driveway waving to the boys until the red Chevy Nova with the shiny black top turned off Baldwin Road and disappeared from sight.

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