



The Book of Matt: Hidden Truths About the Murder of Matthew Shepard

Stephen Jimenez

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What role did crystal meth and other previously underreported factors play in the brutal murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard? *The Book of Matt* is a page-turning cautionary tale that humanizes and de-mythologizes Matthew while following the evidence where it leads, without regard to the politics that have long attended this American tragedy.

Late on the night of October 6, 1998, twenty-one-year-old Matthew Shepard left a bar in Laramie, Wyoming with two alleged “strangers,” Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson. Eighteen hours later, Matthew was found tied to a log fence on the outskirts of town, unconscious and barely alive. He had been pistol-whipped so severely that the mountain biker who discovered his battered frame mistook him for a Halloween scarecrow. Overnight, a politically expedient myth took the place of important facts. By the time Matthew died a few days later, his name was synonymous with anti-gay hate.

Stephen Jimenez went to Laramie to research the story of Matthew Shepard’s murder in 2000, after the two men convicted of killing him had gone to prison, and after the national media had moved on. His aim was to write a screenplay on what he, and the rest of the nation, believed to be an open-and-shut case of bigoted violence. As a gay man, he felt an added moral imperative to tell Matthew’s story. But what Jimenez eventually found in Wyoming was a tangled web of secrets. His exhaustive investigation also plunged him deep into the deadly underworld of drug trafficking. Over the course of a thirteen-year investigation, Jimenez traveled to twenty states and Washington DC, and interviewed more than a hundred named sources.

The Book of Matt is sure to stir passions and inspire dialogue as it re-frames this misconstrued crime and its cast of characters, proving irrefutably that Matthew Shepard was not killed for being gay but for reasons far more complicated — and daunting.

From the Hardcover edition.

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