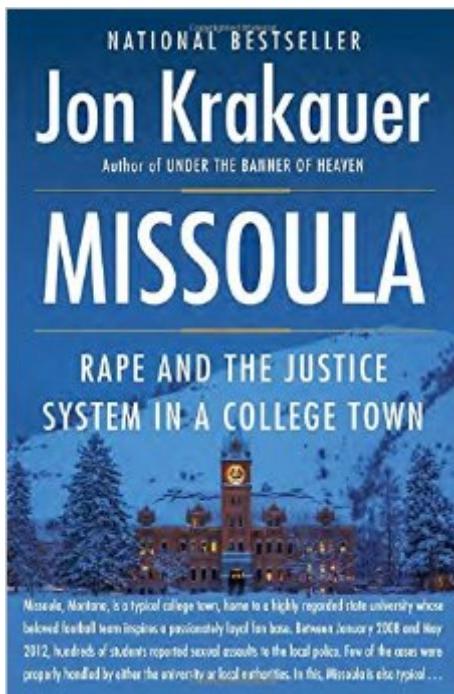


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# Missoula: Rape And The Justice System In A College Town



## **Synopsis**

Missoula, Montana, is a typical college town, home to a highly regarded state university whose beloved football team inspires a passionately loyal fan base. Between January 2008 and May 2012, hundreds of students reported sexual assaults to the local police. Few of the cases were properly handled by either the university or local authorities. In this, Missoula is also typical. In these pages, acclaimed journalist Jon Krakauer investigates a spate of campus rapes that occurred in Missoula over a four-year period. Taking the town as a case study for a crime that is sadly prevalent throughout the nation, Krakauer documents the experiences of five victims: their fear and self-doubt in the aftermath; the skepticism directed at them by police, prosecutors, and the public; their bravery in pushing forward and what it cost them. These stories cut through abstract ideological debate about acquaintance rape to demonstrate that it does not happen because women are sending mixed signals or seeking attention. They are victims of a terrible crime, deserving of fairness from our justice system. Rigorously researched, rendered in incisive prose, *Missoula* stands as an essential call to action.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Just finished *Missoula* and found it to be one of the best nonfiction books I have ever read. I live in Montana and 30 years ago I went to college in Montana-not at The university of Montana in Missoula. My senior year my apartment was broken into and I was raped by a guy I had been out at a bar with that evening. Later that year I went to a bar with friends who left me. I needed a ride

home and a guy I kinda knew offered me a ride in his pickup. I had not been drinking. He drove past my apartment and continued to drive fast to his place out of town and only took me home after he raped me- I thought I was going to die that night. Keep in mind that I had only gone to bars a handful of times in 4 years of college when these rapes happened to me. Either I was extremely unlucky or rapes are very common. Ask any sampling of 5 women and you will find that at least 3 have been sexually traumatized at least once during their lifetime.Campus rapes and non campus rapes are almost epidemic in our society. Thank you Mr. Krakauer for researching and writing Missoula. It was a hard book for me to read, but worth every tear I shed. After each chapter I had to go outside and walk off the fear and memories. The young women whose stories you told so eloquently are much braver and stronger than I ever was when it happened to me. Thank You.

In "Missoula" Krakauer presents, sometimes in agonizing detail, the lasting injuries inflicted upon several women in Montana who were sexually assaulted, often times by members of the Grizzlies football team. From the assaults themselves, to the invasive post-rape examination, to equally invasive and character defaming trials, to the blowback from a community inclined to support football over all, it's a stunning presentation of our flawed court system, and the manner in which rape victims are treated. Supported by research, Department of Justice investigations, trial observation, and victim testimony, "Missoula" seeks to underscore that victim status is not tidily resolved at the conclusion of a trial, and justice is hard-won, particularly when the accused struggles to understand their guilt. The level of denial presented by families, in particular -- even when confronted with outright admission of guilt -- shows that the court system begs for crime to not be crime, if the person can make something of themselves eventually. While this book is set in the same town as the title, it is also Any College Town, America -- and is a book that everyone should read. "Missoula" has heroes, like police detective Guy Baker who encouraged Allison Huguet to report Beau Donaldson, and persuaded Hillary McLaughlin to testify about an attempted rape at Donaldson's trial. It also champions Charles Couture, former University of Montana Dean of Students, who conducted investigations into three of the rape cases presented in this book, and chose not to bow to community pressures to favor football players. The book also has its villains, like Kirsten Pabst, a prosecutor who actually showed up at a college hearing in defense of the accused. Krakauer is not attempting to be unbiased; this book is in defense of rape victims and against the culture that enables rapists to walk free. Still, the book would have been stronger with a one-on-one interview with controversial prosecutor-turned-defense attorney-turned-prosecutor Kirsten Pabst, who appeared to deliberately avoid sexual assault cases during her tenure -- a fact

further revealed through Department of Justice investigations. Presented as calculating, narcissistic, and intentionally negligent, hearing her voice respond to these allegations would have added another layer, and offered more information as to the mindset of an individual who appears to prioritize trial victory over justice. Similarly, the demonization of Gwen Florio, a Missoula journalist, by the community at large comes up repeatedly, but since her articles aren't cited and there isn't extensive examination of her role, it's hard to understand why she was such a polarizing figure, and what kind of impact this might have had on her life. It would have been helpful to better understand the relationship she had with various rape victims and the community itself, as well as what role she thought she played in the tale as it unfolded. Also missing is insight as to the mindset of the average Missoula citizen, to understand better what informs a culture of enabling. Krakauer describes the passion for football and the tendency of the average citizen to be more educated than average, but this doesn't offer the same insight that candid interviews would provide, or thoughtful observations of daily interactions between men and women, college students and towns people. I found myself wanting Krakauer to wander into a neighborhood bar for a conversation with the men and women seated at tables, instead of reading the comments people tend to post on the internet when they have no fear of the words becoming attached to their faces. Overall, the book is fast-paced, completely engrossing, and an important testimony about sexual assault in America. It's a dark story that emphasizes that ways rape permanently alters the lives of victims, and how only communities working collectively can change things.

"We will have to wait a while longer for the book Krakauer might have written, the one that explores from the inside all the social factors that produce and enable so many young men who prefer drunk, drugged, supine, knocked-cold or forcibly restrained female flesh to consensual sex with conscious and willing women."-- Newsweek As a longtime fan of Krakauer, I looked forward to the type of insightful cultural dissection that helps to explain the unexplainable, as he has done in his other books, esp Into the Wild and Under the Banner of Heaven. Instead, Krakauer focuses mainly on the Missoula County Attorney's Office's mistakes in prosecuting reported rape cases. I was surprised to encounter Krakauer's opinion column style as he eviscerated the people responsible for the mishandling, namely Kirsten Pabst, when I had been accustomed to an unbiased perspective from my favorite nonfiction writer. In Missoula, Krakauer was often as hostile as the people he was lambasting. He hurt his case by adding embellishment where none was needed. As another reviewer said, he let his bias show. Nevertheless, when he does focus on the perplexing circumstances around acquaintance rape, he hits the nail on the head, elucidating some of the

myths about rape and the culture of entitlement among college-aged men, especially athletes. "It pissed me off that she played along the whole way and then decided to squirm out of it like that at the end. I mean, she was so plastered that she probably didn't know what was going on, anyway." This is the problem, stated simply by a serial rapist who would never think to call himself one. In a psychological interview he thought was designed to study "childhood experiences and adult functioning," this college man went on to describe how having sex with unsuspecting, drunk freshman was sort of a game he played with his frat brothers. The study was actually a study of "undetected rape." Among scads of other questionnaire questions, the designers of the study asked 1,182 randomly chosen college aged men if they had ever had sexual intercourse with someone, even though they did not want to. Of the study, 6.4% were identified as rapists. Of those, 63% were repeat offenders who were collectively responsible for at least 439 rapes. How? Why? "You basically had to have an instinct for it...I had this girl staked out. I'd picked her out in one of my classes...I was watching for her,...and the minute she walked into the door of the party, I was on her...And after a while I asked her if she wanted to go up to my room, you know, get away from the noise, and she came right away. Actually it wasn't my room...We always had several rooms designated before the party...that were all prepped for this..." The chilling conclusion of this study are that "a small number of indiscernible offenders-only 8.4% of the population studied-were responsible for a staggering number of rapes." If there's any argument for why perpetrators of acquaintance rape should not be let off with a slap on the wrist, here it is. Even more alarming is what Krakauer didn't dig into: why these men don't think of themselves as rapists. Why rape victims are so often harassed by state officials, asked if they have boyfriends (implying that they're lying about the rape to avoid being caught out as cheaters), why entire communities like Missoula rallied around the men accused of rape on the football team, citing examples of what "good boys" these were, as if they were therefore incapable of rape. On the contrary, the illustrious lives of the accused only shows that it would be surprising if these boys didn't feel entitled, especially in a culture in which up to 80% of rapes aren't reported, fewer still are prosecuted, and that many would have you believe that women often lie about rape, even though the % of false rape claims is below 10%, not the 45% cited by the debunked study relying solely on police officers' memories. According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, only 2% of rapists will ever serve a day in prison. I finished Krakauer's book with only a slight loss of interest. He does, after all, do a great job of telling the stories of the heroes of the Missoula rape scandal: the women brave enough to come forward. It was at around 60% through the book that their story gave way to the childish power struggle between the MCSAO and the DOJ, the epithets spit between opposing sides in newspaper articles and social media,

essentially, a struggle to evade blame. I was interested in the political machinations, but that's all they were: political machinations. I wish Krakauer would take a second stab at this book, because it's a paradoxical issue, and an urgent one: why acquaintance rapists offend repeatedly without acknowledging the wrongness of these actions although they seem to know right from wrong elsewhere, why their families cannot fathom their guilt, why when they're caught they still don't feel guilty, why when they're proven guilty they still don't want to go to jail. Essentially, why we don't make a big enough deal about rape.

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