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DEAD RECKONING

By Caitlin Rother

“A true crime triumph”
-*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

“Caitlin Rother’s research for *Dead Reckoning* proves she is a journalist worthy of having been nominated for a Pulitzer Award. Also, it’s just a terrific, page-turning read.”
-*South Florida Gay News*

“A breathless tale of unthinkable events that no true crime fan should miss.”
-Katherine Ramsland, author of *The Human Predator*

“A gripping read... frank and frightening. It sizzles.”
-Aphrodite Jones, host of *True Crime with Aphrodite Jones* on Investigation Discovery

Caitlin Rother, hailed as “the next Ann Rule” by acclaimed true crime author Gregg Olsen and as “San Diego’s crime queen” by *Voice of San Diego*, has a new book coming out in February 2011: **DEAD RECKONING**.

Tom and Jackie Hawks were living their dream on the *Well Deserved*, a 55-foot trawler they’d called home for the past two years. Blissfully happy sailing between Newport Beach, California, and the Sea of Cortez, Mexico, the adoring couple put their yacht up for sale to spend time with their new grandson in Arizona. Tom’s ad in a boating magazine drew the attention of Skylar Deleon.

Skylar, a charming 25-year-old conman, shared Tom’s obsession for boats, but their similarities ended there. While Tom was a former firefighter and retired probation officer whose brother was a retired police chief, Skylar was an ex-con who made his living by lying and stealing, just like his drug-dealer father. While the Hawkses watched their money carefully, Skylar and his pregnant wife, Jennifer, were deeply in debt, living in a cramped garage studio with their 10-month-old daughter in Long Beach, as Skylar continued to try to please his wife with diamonds, cars, and fantasies of wealth.

“By way of some twisted synchronicity, the two of them, who became known as the Bonnie and Clyde of Orange County, forged a greater malevolent force together than when they were apart,” writes Rother, who has a background in psychology. Calling the case “a quintessential tale of good versus evil,” she paints a tragic portrait of a beautiful dream shattered by greed and callousness.

“I definitely loved [Jennifer] to the point that there was nothing I wouldn’t do for her,” Skylar admitted.

As the Deleons’ bank account balance headed into the red, Skylar, who claimed he was a hermaphrodite, put down a deposit for a \$15,500 sex change operation, scheduled for two weeks after he murdered the Hawkses. They were going to be millionaires, he promised.

This case was one of the most highly publicized and horrifying criminal cases in Southern California, profiled on “Dateline,” “20/20,” and “48 Hours” for the sheer brutality of the crime. Skylar, his former jail guard and a strapping Crips gang member, overpowered Tom and Jackie Hawks, handcuffing, blindfolding and forcing them to sign power-of-attorney documents. Skylar then tied the couple to an anchor and watched as they were yanked overboard – alive. As Skylar told his wife, “no body, no crime.”

But Skylar didn’t foresee the monumental effort that the Hawks family would make to find Tom and Jackie. Nor did he predict the massive police investigation the Newport Beach Police Department would mount, spanning two countries, two states, three contiguous California counties, and the Pacific Ocean.

With close cooperation from the lead detective and prosecutor on this case, Pulitzer Prize-nominated Caitlin Rother reveals never-before-told details in ***DEAD RECKONING***, a compelling, authoritative and behind-the-scenes account of the investigation into the murder conspiracy between the five defendants, the crime and its aftermath, as well as a previous murder Skylar committed in Mexico while out of jail for the day, and the hits he later put out on his father and cousin from behind bars. Rother spent five years collecting exclusive details for this book, culled from witness interviews with police, investigative reports, court exhibits and other documents that were never released to the media. She also attended the triathlon of trials that lasted until 2009, and did scores of her own interviews with key players.

In the epilogue, Rother describes her interviews with Skylar before he was delivered to death row, when he sang to her and disclosed his long-awaited desires for a sex change operation, including his efforts to saw off his penis with a razor in the Santa Ana jail. Cut off from the love of his life, Jennifer, and letters to his two children returned, he now awaits his execution at San Quentin State Prison.

Pulitzer-nominated investigative journalist Caitlin Rother is the author or co-author of eight books: ***Dead Reckoning, Poisoned Love, Naked Addiction, Body Parts, Twisted Triangle, Deadly Devotion, My Life, Deleted, and Lost Girls***. Rother, who worked at daily newspapers for nearly 20 years before becoming a full-time author, has also been published in *Cosmopolitan*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Globe*, and *The Daily Beast*. She has done dozens of TV and radio appearances as a crime expert on E!; *Snapped* on the Oxygen Network; Greta Van Susteren’s *On the Record*; *Who The Bleep Did I Marry?*, *On the Case With Paula Zahn*, *True Crime With Aphrodite Jones*, *Wicked Attraction*, and *Deadly Women* on Investigation Discovery; *America at Night*;

the American Radio Network; various NPR and PBS affiliates, and XM radio. She is the founder of the San Diego Writing Women blog, and teaches journalism and writing workshops at UCSD Extension. Rother's first thriller, ***Naked Addiction***, will be released in January 2012, and her next true crime, ***Lost Girls***, about the rape and killing of teenagers Chelsea King and Amber Dubois by sexual predator John Gardner, will be out in July 2012.

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