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POISONED LOVE

“We've finally found the next Ann Rule! Caitlin Rother writes with heart and suspense.”
-- Gregg Olsen, **author of *All She Wanted***

“A true-crime thriller that will keep you on the edge of your seat... [Rother] has done a brilliant job of captivating the inner workings of a female killer, someone who uses her cunning ways to commit murder.”
-- **Aphrodite Jones, author of *All She Wanted***

“Caitlin Rother, a seasoned reporter with integrity, class and skill, weaves this complex story seamlessly, offering it up in the page-turning fashion of a suspenseful novel.”
-- **M. William Phelps, author of *Love Her to Death***

“Rother paints a devastating portrait of the family that shielded their daughter from the consequences of her addiction... This book cuts close to the bone in its unwavering look at how one young woman fantasized herself into murder.”
-- ***The San Diego Union-Tribune***

Kristin Rossum had everything going for her: Beauty, brains, youth, and the start of a brilliant career in toxicology at the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office. But the 24-year-old daughter of accomplished academics from Claremont, Calif., was torn between three relationships: one with her husband, who was found not breathing with red rose petals sprinkled over his body; one with her married boss; and one with crystal methamphetamine, an old friend with whom she'd become reacquainted.

In ***POISONED LOVE***, Pulitzer-nominated investigative journalist Caitlin Rother tells the story behind the “American Beauty murder,” a cautionary tale that illustrates how an obsession with passion, a fatal attraction to crystal meth, and easy access to dangerous narcotics can devastate not just one life, but many others in the process.

This book explores the psychological aspects of this complex case, providing a behind-the-scenes look at the investigation and major players that the public never saw in the mainstream media. The 496-page book reveals e-mails, diary entries, letters and other court evidence that lends insight into Rossum's character. This updated edition also contains 16 pages of new developments and an in-depth look at her appeals, which raise forensic questions about her conviction.

Rossum had kicked meth five years earlier with the help of Greg de Villers, the son of a French plastic surgeon. After reluctantly agreeing to marry him, she was already regretting her decision six months later. He was clingy. She felt suffocated. He wanted to start a family; she wanted to pursue her career.

Then Rossum found a way out: She fell in love with Michael Robertson, her hunky Australian boss, who was also in an unfulfilling marriage. The lovers snuck away for sex at lunch and wrote each other cards and e-mails, fantasizing about having children and spending the rest of their lives together. “You are my destiny,” they told each other.

Torn over what to do, Rossum started using meth again. She told de Villers she was going to move out. He threatened to report her affair and drug use to her superiors.

On November 6, 2000, she called 911 to report finding her husband in bed – cold, pale and not breathing. The dispatcher told her to pull him to the floor and start CPR. Rossum pulled back the covers, she said, and that’s when she saw red rose petals all over his chest and their wedding photo tucked under his pillow. Despondent she was leaving him, he must have committed suicide.

The police initially believed her story, but their doubts grew as the incriminating evidence mounted. First, they learned of her affair. Then, that de Villers had ingested a lethal cocktail of narcotics, including fentanyl, a highly regulated painkiller 100 times more powerful than morphine.

After fentanyl, meth and other two drugs found in de Villers’ body were discovered missing from her lab, Rossum was charged with murder. Prosecutors described Robertson as her “unindicted co-conspirator,” but he has never been charged. A jury found her guilty in November 2002, and she was sentenced to life in prison without parole. Rossum and her family were given new hope in 2010 when an appeals court sided with her new defense, which raises questions about the role of fentanyl in de Villers’ death.

The Rossum case has been featured on national TV shows, including *Good Morning America*, *48 Hours*, *Inside Edition*, and on E!, Investigation Discovery, the Oxygen Network, and the Biography channel. The case also made headlines in the international editions of *Cosmopolitan*, as well as *People*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Reader’s Digest*, newspapers including the *Los Angeles Times*, and other print and broadcast media in Australia.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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, covered this case from arrest to sentencing for *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. She has also been published in *Cosmopolitan*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *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 shows, including E!’s *Women Who Kill*, the Oxygen Network’s *Snapped* series, 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; and *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 creative writing workshops at the University of California San Diego 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.

Price: \$6.99. Pages: 496, including 16-page photo insert. ISBN: 978-0786022199