



Satans High Priest

By Judith Spencer

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From the days when Joseph's father, the charismatic Dexter Warren, established his prosperous mercantile and mortuary business, the occult opportunities the Warrens offered held a powerful allure for many of the townsfolk in their quiet community. The dark underside of Dexter's magnetism came to light in secret backroom meetings at his funeral parlor, where he presided over a coven of Satan worshipers that included people of authority and influence in the town. At home, Dexter's rigid morality and stern discipline made him a figure of awe and terror to his younger son, Joe, who was equally damaged by his mother's negligence and her subsequent death. Powerless against his father, Joe submitted to the teachings of satanism with rites of alcohol and drugs, sexual orgies, and humiliating physical torture, in a cycle that continued throughout his youth. Joe was free to leave the cult in early adulthood - but while college enrollment and excelling at football gave an outward appearance of normalcy, his cult training was deliberately calculated to ensure he would return. In his only act of personal revolt, Joseph overthrew his own father to claim the cult's highest position of power, to fulfill his destiny as sole commander of Satan's followers. Illuminating both the "why" and "how" behind the rise of Joseph Warren and others like him, Judith Spencer explores the compulsions behind the physical and emotional abuse inflicted, to lend a greater understanding of satanic cult behavior - and the incredible state of mental dissociation that allows an everyday person to partake in rituals with no memory of his or her "other" self. Against the chilling backdrop of Joseph Warren's colliding worlds of light and darkness - where the effects of his destructive extremes continue to challenge all those he drew into his relentless service of evil - Judith Spencer unlocks the mysteries of the satanic cult phenomenon, and exposes its dark and deadly traps.

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Satans High Priest By Judith Spencer Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1256331 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Atria
- Published on: 1997-09-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.07" h x 6.49" w x 9.50" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 320 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Intended as a hard-hitting exposé of secret cult practices in America, *Satan's High Priest* attempts to straddle a fine line between fiction and journalism--a line best left to the likes of skilled tightrope walkers such as Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe. The book doesn't really succeed at either, though the story of Joseph Warren's sadistic rise and fall as the "Great One" of a Southern cult is somewhat morbidly fascinating when read as a story that "could happen anywhere."

Warren, in his role as high priest to the unnamed coven, delights in rapes and murders, bestiality and necrophilia, and happily involves his entire circle of acquaintances in the small town of Lathrop (the state remains unidentified) in his "shows." To describe the atrocities of this multigenerational death cult, Judith Spencer places men like Warren and his father, Dexter, in their proper perspectives as outwardly normal, well-respected men of commerce. Warren and his brother, Linc, inherit their father's mortuary and dry-goods businesses, and while many of their customers are fellow cult members, life goes on as normal outside the pentagram; Spencer attempts to depict men who would casually gossip as they buy nails or coffee or a pair of boots, after having raped and ritually sacrificed children the night before. The problem for Spencer is that none of this particularly makes sense. She describes dozens of murders, yet offers no particulars or dates or corroborating evidence. Lathrop and Joseph Warren exist in a sort of deep concealing fog, impossible to pin down. Still, despite any doubts as to the book's veracity, it works as a somewhat elevated example of supermarket-tabloid-variety shock journalism. --Tjames Madison

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