



Son of Sam: The Life and Crimes of David Berkowitz

Charles River Editors, Zed Simpson

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*Includes pictures

*Includes accounts of the crimes and Berkowitz's own words about his life

*Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading

*Includes a table of contents

"I am a monster. I am the Son of Sam. I love to hunt." – David Berkowitz

“Sudden death and bloodshed appealed to me.” - David Berkowitz

It's still difficult for people today to conceive of someone being born bad, even as more and more studies are coming out each year that point to the significant effects of DNA on human behavior. But of course, it is also rare that a child born to parents carrying the genes for mental illness or antisocial behavior grows up in a happy, stable home where the parents are equipped to provide a living, nurturing life. Even children who are adopted into loving homes have to deal with feelings of having been unwanted by their biological parents. Simply put, nature and nurturing can often have countervailing influences.

Unfortunately, in the case of David Berkowitz, best known as the “Son of Sam,” it seems almost as though nature and nurture both conspired against him. In the wake of his notorious crime spree, one of the most infamous of the 20th century, he recalled internal struggles to conform from a very early age and had to deal with the baggage and insecurities that came from his adoption. As he grew up, he seems to have lacked the will, or at least the fear of the justice system, that kept many others like him from going too far down a bad road. Indeed, he later claimed to be unable to control himself, describing dark forces that pressed him on to do things he would never have otherwise done, even as he ultimately confessed to his heinous acts and accepted his punishment rather than drag himself and his victims through a long, drawn out trial.

The details, and the actions of the Son of Sam, remain shocking even decades later. Over the course of a seemingly random series of shootings that took place across New York City in 1976 and 1977, Berkowitz taunted law enforcement in highly publicized letters as he continued to elude justice, and when he referred to himself as the “son of Sam” in one of his rambling letters, his notorious nickname came to life. The senseless nature of the crimes and the erratic statements of the man claiming responsibility for them shook the Big Apple to its core as long as the killer remained at large, and many rightly feared that the publicity Berkowitz generated would only further fuel his crimes and those of copycats.

Things only got stranger when Berkowitz was finally arrested in August 1977. After he claimed a neighbor's dog was ordering him to commit the crimes, there was plenty of debate over his mental state, but he was ultimately given a life sentence. New York officials proposed legislation to prevent criminals from profiting off the publicity generated by their crimes, and since his incarceration, controversy continues to follow Berkowitz, from his claims to be a born again Christian to others' claims that he's Satanic. One outsider has even offered to exorcise his demons. Throughout, Berkowitz has continued to personally request that he not be granted parole, once explaining, "In all honesty, I believe that I deserve to be in prison for the rest of my life. I have, with God's help, long ago come to terms with my situation and I have accepted my punishment."

Son of Sam: The Life and Crimes of David Berkowitz looks at the life of the serial killer and the crimes he

committed. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the serial killer like never before, in no time at all.

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