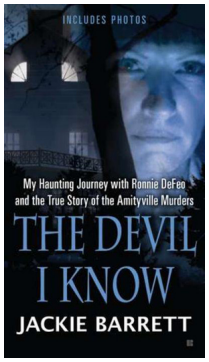
The tale of the Amityville murders is one known by just about anyone. Whether you’re a horror-movie fan, a history buff, intrigued by outlandish and sensational cases of murder and mayhem or just someone who read the newspaper that day, you know the story: On a November night in 1974, Ronnie DeFeo woke up one night, went for a shotgun he had in his house and systematically killed off his parents, two brothers and two sisters.

DeFeo claimed at trial that he heard their voices in his head, conspiring to kill him. The defense tried to push insanity, the judge didn’t fall for it and DeFeo is now serving six consecutive 25-year sentences for the murders he committed that fateful night. He has never had a concrete and stable story of what happened that night. Did he kill them? Was their another gunman? Was there something more sinister at work? The questions that needed answers were getting none…




Then, years later while in prison, psychic and author Jackie Barrett made contact with DeFeo, claiming that a presence made her aware of him and that she wanted to talk to him, get to know him and learn more about the case. Barrett began conducting multiple interviews and conversations with DeFeo over a period of time, facts that had never come up before began to simmer to the surface and long-needed answers seemed to finally be emerging. The result of her work and discoveries, THE DEVIL I KNOW (Berkley), is now in bookstores, and if you have ever been curious about what might *really* have happened that night in Long Island, this is a must-read on every level.

I was reluctant to actually enjoy reading this book; it addresses a sad and terrible case that has been glorified in print, TV and film for over 30 years now, and the prospect of yet another rehashing of the Amityville murders was not very alluring. However, the detailed interviews with DeFeo and the fact that, of all people, a psychic was able to have multiple conversations with this man years down the road, after all the attention died down, hooked me on the first page, and I never looked back.

Barrett has crafted a fast-moving, detailed and altogether well-written piece of documentary literature about a case that, honestly, has been beaten to death by various documentarians, news groups and anyone else who decided to add their two cents on the matter. It’s surprisingly intriguing to learn just a little more in depth about the mind of a man who may or may not be a mass murderer, especially given the brisk 337-page length. Barrett actually has a good feel for the interview process, and for asking the necessary questions to elicit the answers people want to hear—or the answer the interviewer wants to reveal. Some aspects of this book are actually quite chilling, even though this case has been written about in detail so often before. The revelation of a letter DeFeo sent to Barrett in 2011, containing a tooth that fell out of his mouth on his mother’s anniversary, is unsettling and cryptic in terms of the details of its contents.

In the end, this book may have not been necessary, but the way Barrett briskly and concisely takes us through her whirlwind connection and interactions with DeFeo offers a fresh take on the case. We may never truly, honestly, without equivocation know what happened that fateful night on Ocean Drive, but if this is the final word on the matter straight from the killer’s mouth, it has ended the only way it could have. Barrett has given us one last look at the case that engulfed New York, and does not disappoint.