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Remington, R. and Zickefoose, S. (2009). Runaway Devil: How Forbidden Love Drove a 12-Year-Old to Murder Her Family. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd.

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Robert Remington and Sherri Zickefoose's narrative, "Runaway Devil" is a factual piece of Canadian literature that effectively details the odious truths of Canada's youngest multiple homicide killer in Medicine Hat and Canadian justice history. Remington and Zickefoose masterfully craft the horrific crimes details by telling the true story as if it were a thrill-seeking and chilling crime novel. In doing so, this allowed for exceptional depth, perspective and intel regarding the victims, the families, the courts, and the perpetrators involved in the case. Remington and Zickefoose tactfully weave elements of angst rebellion and young forbidden love with disturbing psychiatric declarations to further place the readers in the mind of a disturbed 12-year-old goth girl, J.R., who on April 23rd, 2006 brutally murdered her entire family with her 23-year-old boyfriend and high school drop-out Jeremy Steinke. The authors provide substantial consideration in the possibilities that Steinke corrupted the young and naïve J.R. and vice-versa – that a mature and convincing J.R. lured love stricken Steinke into murdering her entire family. The authors meticulously touch on a vast array of subject matter: Suburbia, goth and heavy metal culture, and the dangers of the internet to help substantiate both possibilities. The authors beautifully utilize the perils of each subject matter to pull together contributing factors involved in debunking the mysterious young girl's motive for murder. In debunking the motive, the authors also disclose J.R. and Jeremy's hankering appetite for one another and how their almost "Romeo and Juliet" romance (p. 84) could have been the ultimate motive for murder.

Remington and Zickefoose provide substantial back story regarding the two “star-crossed lovers” upbrining to provide the essential minutiae surrounding the nature of the crime, and the interpretations critical to the perpetrator’s predispositions and rationales that led up to the murders. In doing so, the authors pull together incriminating evidence along with a vast array of media portrayals, and public opinions surrounding the case to better substantiate the questions surrounding the case including the question of who the primary instigator of the murders was, and what the motive of a seemingly ordinary suburban girl would look like?

The authors give utterance to the possibility that J.R. was the mastermind behind the slayings. Remington and Zickefoose emphasise J.R.’s physical maturity and intellectual demeanour that exceeded her normal age progression. The authors correlate J.R.’s maturity with an ardent lust for violence with research studies that argued girls who reached early puberty were at risk of delinquency and aggressive behavior (p. 24). The authors substantiate these research claims, with J.R.’s adolescent acts of defiance detailed throughout the book and her potential for violence in a comic strip illustrated J.R. depicting her family being burned alive. With this being said, the authors deliberately insinuate that J.R.’s early onset puberty could have been sufficient cause in arguing that J.R. had the capacity to murder and the intellect to instigate a plot to murder. Remington and Zickefoose thicken the argument by analysing J.R.’s relationship with her boyfriend Jeremy Steinke. The authors detail Jeremy’s multiple failed relationships and consequently his yearning to be properly loved and cared for (p. 39). The authors also make note of Jeremy’s substance abuse and self mutilation issues through “cutting” which gave light to his several suicide attempts. Zickefoose and Remington believed that Jeremy’s fragile mindset could have been the perfect subject for manipulation. The authors suggest that Jeremy could have been at the mercy of a manipulative J.R., who used the mentally crippled and depleted Jeremy to

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evade herself from her overbearing “parental units” (p. 153). The authors provide further implication of J.R.’s part in the murders by providing readers with incriminating internet messages she had made to Jeremy saying she had a “plan” insinuating the calculated measures organized on her behalf. The authors touch on all three of these elements throughout the book which paint J.R. as a cold, calculated murderess (p. 221) who had the potential and capacity to be the ultimate brains of the operation.

Zickefoose and Remington provide an alternative from this perspective of those who opposed and instead believed that J.R. had been brainwashed by the mentally unfit and “perverted” 23-year-old Jeremy Steinke who convinced the impressionable and naïve pre-teen to murder her family. The authors gave previous utterance to J.R.’s impressionable nature with her lifestyle choices and self-identification with the religion Wicca and goth subculture. The authors make use of the friends and family’s disbelief that J.R. – a loving honors student – could not have murdered her family by choice or under her own discretion. The authors provided intel and detail regarding these notions. J.R.’s best friend Aubrey’s court statement during J.R.’s trial and Marc’s (J.R.’s father) sister Monique’s statement during Jeremy’s trial were highlighted by the authors as primary examples of those who came to J.R.’s defense. The authors disclose Aubrey’s first impressions of Jeremy for which she defined his attitude and demeanour as “immature.” She also added that he had a major and noticeable influence on J.R. on multiple levels (p. 203). Monique’s statement was in congruence with Aubrey’s statement. Her statement read as such:

My little niece, she was so sweet, you killed her, too: the beautiful little sweet princess I knew. I will never understand how in the few short months you knew each other; she could have changed so much. She was an A student.... (p. 249)

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The authors make use of Aubrey and Monique's perspectives on the situation as a proper defence to better substantiate the possibility that J.R. was "brainwashed" and manipulated by her much older, and wiser boyfriend Jeremy Steinke.

Remington and Zickefoose recognize the questionable validity of both the possibilities of who the primary instigator was which lead to the debates and discussions that ensued before, during, and after the trials. However, the authors' intent behind this unknown is perhaps intentional and a brilliant means of creating necessary discussion and questions indicative of the case. The questions indicative of the case are present throughout the book to do with the motive and the parts for which each perpetrators had in the murders. In doing so, the authors effectively re-tell the true story as it were being told for the first time. The authors argue that by acknowledging this, the discussion that took place during the trials that were just as important then should be just as important now.

Remington's and Zickefoose's intended readers, namely non-fiction lovers with a grave interest in learning about the case, or a willingness to become enlightened with regards to the case itself, perspectives to do with the case and criticisms about the case and or conclusions formulated about how the case was handled. The authors intended audience can also extend itself to that of Canadian Justice and Youth Justice history buffs for which the authors provide substantial criticism in regards to the Youth Criminal Justice act in regards to privacy laws and the minimum sentencing for children under the age of fourteen.

The authors' effective aim to retell the horrific crime through comparative means to ultimately stimulate central discussion around the questions essential to the case. The authors make use of the perspectives that were constructed from those involved to create a better understanding of the subject matter also related to the case. The authors beautifully conveyed

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this central aspect of the book through their skillful use of tone and non-traditional non-fiction writing style. However, among these praises, I'm curious if readers would be receptive to the books non-traditional means of conveying its contents. The authors tell the crime as if it were a thrilling, fictional crime novel which could be a dislike for many traditional non-fiction readers. With this being said, I found "Runaway Devil" an overall informative packed, easy to keep track, and entertaining read. I would recommend this read to anyone looking for a substantially detailed read about the contents and the observations made about the crime.