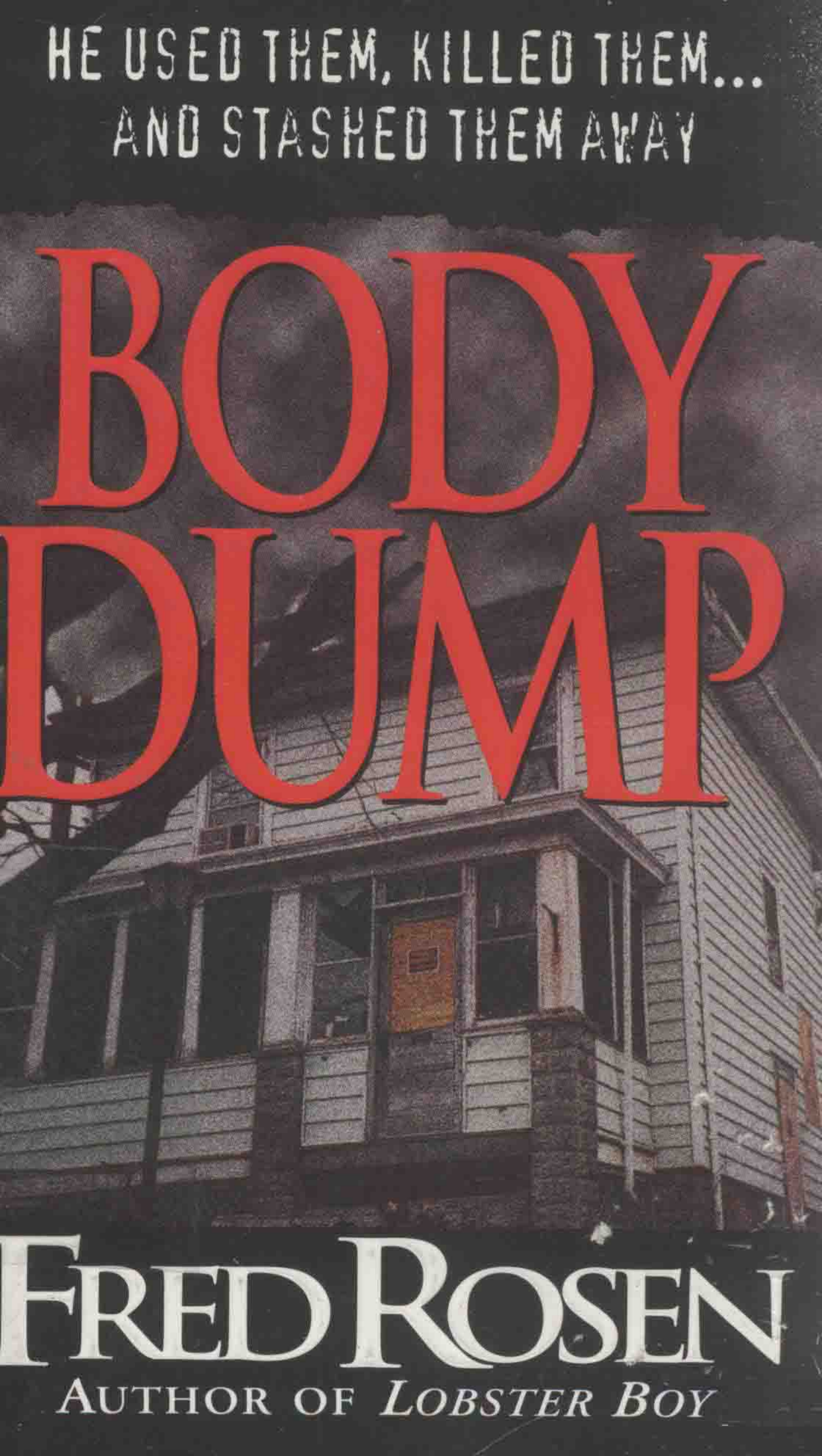


HE USED THEM, KILLED THEM...
AND STASHED THEM AWAY

BODY DUMP

A dark, grainy photograph of a two-story house with a porch, serving as the background for the title. The house has light-colored siding and a dark roof. The porch has a railing and a door. The overall tone is somber and mysterious.

FRED ROSEN
AUTHOR OF *LOBSTER BOY*

QUICK SEX, SLOW DEATH

Kendall Francois's fingers closed around the prostitute's throat like a vise. Startled, she grabbed for them and began struggling. But it was no contest. The petite woman was no match for the six-foot-four, 380-pound ex-wrestler. He squeezed harder, determined to kill her. He twisted around and brought the woman's body down to the bed, still holding hard to her throat. Her struggles became weaker. Then it was over. Francios's powerful hands had strangled the life from his newest victim.

He took the body into the bathroom and washed it clean in the tub. Then he slung it over his shoulder and headed for the attic to dump it with the other bodies. He noticed it was getting a little crowded. He'd have to move the body to the basement tomorrow; there was plenty of room down there. Enough for this body . . . and the bodies to come.

Other Books by Fred Rosen

**NEEDLE WORK
BLOOD CRIMES
DOCTORS FROM HELL
LOBSTER BOY
THE MAD CHOPPER*
DEACON OF DEATH**

Published by Pinnacle Books

***written under the name Kent Allard**

BODY DUMP

Fred Rosen



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Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals connected to this story.

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For my dear Aunt Irene and Uncle Nat

Prologue

September 1998

Eight women were missing. Only he knew how many more he had eliminated.

Eliminated. That was a good word to describe what he did. Once he was through with them, the women ceased to exist; he just . . . *eliminated* them.

To their grieving families who couldn't find them, they vanished off the face of the earth. To Bill Siegrist, lieutenant of detectives dedicated to tracking him down, the harsh fact that his victims were prostitutes worked in the bad guy's favor.

Prostitutes, Siegrist knew, followed a nomadic lifestyle. One day they were working Main Street, the next Oak Street, the next . . . who knew? They might find a sugar daddy who would take them off the street and support them. Or maybe they would escape from the city's cold and damp into the warmth of Florida or California or Arizona.

Street people. They vanished without a trace.

The majority of the time, it was not murder, just a by-product of their lifestyle. Nothing for anyone to worry about, in fact, maybe even a good thing. The more hookers that got off the streets, the less the cops had to run them in for prostitution. That meant less of a strain on the legal system and less for the reformers to kick up a storm about.

Eight prostitutes in a city of just over 28,000, a city where everyone knew everybody. The cops knew the prostitutes and the prostitutes knew the storekeepers whose stores they stood in front of, trying to attract the men in their cars to pull over to the side of the street and ask them to hop in. The storekeepers up and down Main Street knew the eight who had vanished off their street in the downtown area of the city. So, where were they? A few blocks away was the answer.

The house looked like something out of a Vincent Price movie. It was an old Victorian that children walking by could easily fantasize was haunted. But they had to walk fast.

"The place smelled something awful," said Jim White, the postman who had the house on his regular route. "But I couldn't figure out what it smelled from. It was just awful."

People would gaze up at the gables of the old Victorian, wondering what in hell that smell was. At the Arlington Middle School where one of the residents worked as a hall monitor, the kids noticed the odor emanating from him and *they* wondered what it was.

It was a stink reeking off his massive, wres-

ter's body, the kind of body capable of putting a man in a stranglehold that would quickly leave him unconscious. The kids had coined a name for the hall monitor that would dog him for the rest of his life.

Stinky. The kids had called him Stinky.

So he smelled; so do a lot of people. But Stinky smelled from body odor and something else. That "something else" was hard to define. Only a war veteran would have known what it was. It was a smell etched in memory, created in battle. The odor never faded from consciousness. It was a simple smell, actually, an elemental smell, as elemental as life itself.

It was death. That was what he smelled of.
Death.

PART ONE
The
Serial Killer

One

October 24, 1996

Highland is a pleasant small town on the west bank of the Hudson River. Located just one mile from the Mid Hudson Bridge, the town lies in a narrow valley that provides picture-postcard, Norman Rockwell winter scenes of snow-covered hills and kids on sleds going down steep slopes during the winter months.

In the summer, the town transforms itself from its sleepy winter hibernation into a tourist spot of antiques stores and hole-in-the-wall restaurant finds. Still, unless one is a shopkeeper or restaurateur, making a living can be tough.

Route 9W, a long state highway that stretches from the New York City border north to Albany, meanders through Highland's outskirts. In the summer, chili cook-offs, crafts fairs and country festivals can be found in back of the churches and schools that border the road. In the fall, pumpkin festivals are held in the large fields scattered along this 150-mile stretch of four-lane blacktop.

At various points along the way are independently run motels, the kind that have long since been passed by the major chains because 9W is no longer a main thoroughfare. That distinction belongs to the New York State Thruway, Interstate 87, to the west. Still, if a cheap, clean room with few amenities is wanted, a motel on 9W is a good bet. The Valley Rest Motel was one such place. Like most, it had been built in a u-shape. Wendy Meyers had taken up residence in one of the Valley Rest's rooms. The place wasn't expensive, so it was affordable to a street person like Meyers. A small, slight woman, Meyers was thirty years old. Her mug shot, taken after an earlier arrest for prostitution, shows a woman with dark eyes, high cheekbones that could have belonged to a model, a long aquiline nose and a jaw that jutted out almost defiantly. By the time she walked out of the Valley Rest Motel on Route 9W in Highland on October 24, she had more than her fair share of responsibilities.

Besides her relationship with her boyfriend, Meyers had a son who lived with his father in Ayden, South Carolina, the man Meyers had married and subsequently divorced.

Wendy Meyers had been born in the nearby town of Carmel, and given her mother's name, while her brother George bore their dad's name. A second brother had been named Albert. The men had moved to the warmer climes of Bell, Florida.

It probably came as a surprise to some people that Meyers was a member of St. James the

Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Carmel, given her profession. She was a prostitute. She had turned to prostitution to support her burgeoning drug habit.

Prostitution is a business requiring the right business climate, that is "johns." Highland is small and doesn't have enough trade. People also talk. Women like Wendy Meyers, who had had a life in front of them that had turned downward to drug hell, found that the only way to support their habit was prostitution. The only place in the vicinity that had a lot of men willing to pay for sex was the big metropolis across the Mid Hudson Bridge—the city of Poughkeepsie.

With all its economic travails, Poughkeepsie was a busy place and so was the Mid Hudson Bridge. More than twelve million vehicles a year use the bridge. Most come from the rural hamlets on the other side of the river. Highland is one such place, a bright, happy, sunny place with a stream flowing directly through the town. It is the last place a murder trail would be expected to begin from.

Wendy Meyers hitched the last ride of her life. As the car she was in crossed the river, Meyers was actually looking up at something really special. The Mid Hudson Bridge has often been recognized by bridge-building architects and bridge aficionados as one of the most beautiful suspension bridges in the world.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 25, 1930, New York State's first lady Eleanor Roosevelt stood in for her husband, Franklin,

the state's governor and future President. When the ribbon was cut, traffic began pouring over the 3,000-foot span almost immediately.

On the other side of the bridge, the driver let Meyers off on Church Street. Thirty years before, when Lieutenant Bill Siegrist had been a raw twenty-two-year-old recruit assigned to foot patrol, Church Street was just a narrow block, with room for only one car to pass at a time. Set at the curbside were neat two- and four-family houses and occasional stores.

As the 1970's progressed and urban decay set in, Church Street was literally thrown down and widened. It was transformed into the street with main access to the bridge to expedite traffic through the city. Siegrist could understand the need to do that, but he also felt that the city lost some of its charm with those changes, not to mention the human toll. Residents were forced to sell out and move someplace else.

To stimulate the city's economy, a downtown civic center was built beside a Sheraton Hotel. The idea was to attract major conventions. It did, in a limited way, though not enough to revive the town. Conventions, plus the occasional "knife show," touring circuses and music acts, did bring some additional revenue into the area. The Bardovan Theatre, which was built in 1869, was even restored to its former glory.

Despite such civic improvements, the town's economy still floundered and the city and the surrounding township, which contained 42,000 residents, fell further into the economic dol-