



A Cold Case

By Philip Gourevitch

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A few years ago, Andy Rosenzweig, chief investigator for the Manhattan District Attorney's office, was abruptly reminded of an old double homicide: a friend from his youth, a former prizefighter, had been murdered along with another man in 1970. It bothered Rosenzweig that the killer had eluded capture for nearly three decades. He resolved to track down the fugitive and -- if he was still alive -- to close the case.

In a surprising, intensely dramatic narrative, Philip Gourevitch brings together the story of Rosenzweig's pursuit with a mesmerizing account of the killer's criminal personality and his decades on the lam. *A Cold Case* carries us deep into the lives and minds, the passions and perplexities, of two extraordinary men who embody opposing but quintessentially American codes of being--that of the lawman and that of the outlaw. Set in a New York City milieu that has all but disappeared, and written with a keen ear for the vibrant idiom of the men and women who once peopled its streets, this is a book for our times, written with a force and immediacy that compel attention.

When Gourevitch's first book, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, appeared in 1998, the novelist Robert Stone said of the author, "There is no limit to what we may expect of him." With *A Cold Case* Gourevitch sustains the promise of his earlier work, masterfully transforming a criminal investigation into a searching literary reckoning with the urges that drive one man to murder and another to hunt murderers.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Frank Koehler was only 15 when he shot a friend in the back for double-crossing him. That's the sort of guy he was--violent, Mob-connected, and remorse-free. In the same rough-and-tumble postwar neighborhood on Manhattan's West Side lived a very different young man: Andy Rosenzweig, rigorously straight and determined to become a policeman at a time when cops were more likely to be taking naps or bribes than nabbing criminals. Years later, in 1970, Koehler murdered two men after an argument in a restaurant. One of the victims was a friend of Rosenzweig's. It was a straightforward case, but in a typical show of the NYPD's ineptitude, the case was closed when someone decided to declare Koehler dead, allowing him to slip away.

Twenty-seven years after the murders, on the eve of Rosenzweig's retirement as chief of investigations, he reopened the case, determined not to leave without catching the murderer of his friend. Philip Gourevitch, who last examined murder in the award-winning *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, is more interested in the personalities of killers and those who pursue them than the drama of murder itself. As a result, *A Cold Case* is short on tension, but it is an excellent character study. Gourevitch immerses us in the "white hoodlum milieu of another time and from a city which no longer really exists," and he conjures up the particular moral universe of each character--Rosenzweig; murder victim Richie Glennon, an ex-prizefighter who walked the fence between the good guys and the bad guys; Murray Richman, the Mob-defending lawyer from the Bronx who likes murder cases because there's "one less witness to worry about"; and Koehler himself, now elderly but still unremorseful. Gourevitch's skillful handling raises intriguing contradictions and questions, not least this one Koehler asks about himself: "Why would people still think good of this asshole?" Now, that's a story. --Lesley Reed

From Publishers Weekly

In 1970, a New York criminal named Frankie Koehler killed two men in cold blood, then disappeared. Over the decades, he was all but given up for dead. Nothing haunts a cop like loose ends, however, and 30 years later lawman and fugitive at long last crossed paths. Basing this book on his article of the same title, New Yorker staff writer and NBCC and L.A. Times award-winning author Gourevitch revisits this case.

Gourevitch's first book (*We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*) dealt with the Rwandan genocide and that region's judicial vacuum; the scope here is smaller but, as Gourevitch shows, murder is a seemingly inescapable aspect of the human condition. In clean prose, the author follows former NYPD officer Andy Rosenzweig (now an investigator with the Manhattan D.A.'s office), who, like Koehler, was raised on the streets of postwar New York, a city that has all but disappeared except in the hands of capable writers. And Gourevitch lets his near-perfect pitch dialogue do much of the work. "I wouldn't kill anybody for money under any conditions.... That's a scumbag does that," Koehler says. The only jarring moments in this otherwise elegant and restrained narrative are the sudden intrusions of the pronoun "I." This residue of New Yorker style reminds readers that the material is not entirely fresh. But that is a minor complaint, for as Rosenzweig says, quoting a fellow officer, "Who speaks for the dead? Nobody. As a rule, nobody speaks for the dead, unless we do." Gourevitch has secured a place next to Rosenzweig in that lonely and all-important choir. 12 b&w photos. (July 11) Forecast: Thanks to the reputation Gourevitch established with his first book, this will be widely reviewed. During July and August, he'll do promotion in New York City; after Labor Day, he will embark on a five-city tour. This will sell handsomely.

From Library Journal

Almost 30 years after Frank Koehler murdered two men and disappeared, Manhattan D.A. investigator Andrew Rosenzweig rediscovered the case and set out to solve it. His interest wasn't just professional; Rosenzweig knew the two murdered men and had been on the fringes of the slightly sordid world from which both the victims and the murderer came. New Yorker writer Gourevitch (*We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*) covers not only the way investigators attack a "cold case" but the lives of both Koehler and Rosenzweig and how a similar milieu could birth both a dedicated lawman and a cold-blooded killer. Koehler's statements about his life, both as a small-time hood and as a good citizen while he was in hiding, are both fascinating and chilling. Gourevitch does a splendid job with this short, focused book, which should find a home in public libraries with true-crime collections.

- *Deirdre Bray Root, Middletown P.L., OH*

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