



Untying the Knot: John Mark Byers and the West Memphis Three

Greg Day

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"On May 5, 1993, second-graders Christopher Byers, Stevie Branch, and Michael Moore disappeared from their West Memphis, Arkansas, homes. The following afternoon, their nude, beaten, and bound bodies were discovered in a drainage ditch less than a mile away.

After a troublesome confession, three local teenagers, later dubbed the "West Memphis Three," were arrested, tried, and convicted in early 1994. Jason Baldwin and Jessie Misskelley received life sentences, while ringleader Damien Echols went to death row. Three years later, the documentary film "Paradise Lost" premiered on HBO, and the effect on viewers was dramatic. Many became skeptical of the verdicts and also felt one of the fathers of the victims was a better suspect—John Mark Byers.

In *Untying the Knot*, author Greg Day tells the true story of John Mark Byers and the about-face he made to free the men convicted of the crime. Day exposes the propaganda campaign used to convince a gullible public that Byers was complicit in the deaths of his wife and son. Based on court transcripts and hours of personal interviews, *Untying the Knot* explores all the case evidence while interweaving dialogues and statements. It traces the life of Byers from his roots in rural Arkansas, to his son's murder and the death of his wife, to his ultimate imprisonment in 1999. It reveals a man redeemed by prison and whose change of heart changed his life.

"Day has captured the essence of a towering personality engulfed by an impossible situation. John Mark Byers is an immensely complex character, and *Untying the Knot* pulls no punches in revealing the man in all his seeming contradictions."

—John Douglas, *Mindhunter*"

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