

Belle Gunness

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Belle Gunness (November 11, 1859 – possibly April 28, 1908) was a Norwegian-American serial killer.^[1] Gunness is thought to have killed at least 14 people^[2] (and may have killed as many as 40) between the years 1884 and 1908.^[3] Brynhild Paulsdatter Storset^[4](Belle Gunness) was born in Selbu, Norway. She was born on November 11, 1859.^[4] Gunness moved to the United States in 1883.

Biography[edit]

Her criminal activities came to light in April 1908, when the Gunness farmhouse in La Porte, Indiana burned to the ground. In the ruins, authorities found the headless body of an adult woman, initially identified as Belle Gunness, and her three children.^[5] Further investigation unearthed the partial remains of at least 11 additional people on the Gunness property.^[6]

Crimes[edit]

Mads Sorenson[edit]

Belle Gunness married Mads Sorenson in 1884.^[7] Sorenson and Gunness owned a candy store which burned to the ground. The couple's home had also burned down, both instances granted the couple insurance payouts.^[7]

Sorenson had purchased two life insurance policies. On July 30, 1890, both policies were active at the same time, as one would expire that day, and the other began. Sorenson died of cerebral hemorrhage that day. Gunness explained he'd come home with a headache and she provided him with quinine powder for the pain, she later checked on him and he was dead. Gunness collected money from both the expiring life insurance policy, and the one that went into effect that day, making a total of \$5000.^[7]

Peter Gunness[edit]

Belle Gunness married Peter Gunness in 1901. Peter died eight months later due to a skull injury. Belle explained that Peter reached for something on a high shelf and a meat grinder fell on him, smashing his skull. His death was ruled an accident.^[7]

Ray Lamphere[edit]

In November 1908, Gunness's hired hand, Ray Lamphere, was convicted of arson in connection with the fire.^[8] Lamphere later confessed that Gunness had placed advertisements seeking male companionship, only to murder and rob the men who responded and subsequently visited her on the farm.^[1] Lamphere stated that Gunness asked him to burn down the farmhouse with her children inside.^[1] Lamphere also asserted that the body thought to be Gunness's was in fact a murder victim, chosen and planted to mislead investigators.^[6]

The brother of one victim had warned Gunness that he might arrive at the farm shortly to investigate his brother's disappearance.^[1] According to Lamphere, this impending visit motivated Gunness to destroy her house, fake her own death, and flee.^[6]

Legacy[edit]

Belle Gunness is the subject of several American murder ballads.^{[6][9]} The La Porte County Historical Society Museum has a permanent "Belle Gunness" exhibit.^[10]

Hell's Belle

by Kari Karsten

Package: Basic Coverage

Date: 04/30/2019

Page Count: 111

Genre: Drama

Analyst: ZZ44

Rating: Recommend

Score: 8.70/10

CATEGORY	SCORE	PERCENTILE
Plot	8.00/10	(87 percentile)
Characterization	9.00/10	(98 percentile)
Concept	9.00/10	(98 percentile)
Format	8.00/10	(86 percentile)
Voice	9.00/10	(98 percentile)
Structure	9.00/10	(98 percentile)
Dialogue	9.00/10	(98 percentile)
Overall Weighted Percentile		96
<i>Note: Percentiles are based on historical data of scores given out by this analyst.</i>		

About Analyst ZZ44

Reader has previous experience writing analysis for independent production companies, film production video editing, and coordinating film festival programming.

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Score: 8.00/10

CATEGORY	SCORE	PERCENTILE
Plot	8.00/10	(95 percentile)
Characterization	8.00/10	(95 percentile)
Concept	8.00/10	(95 percentile)
Format	8.00/10	(95 percentile)
Voice	8.00/10	(95 percentile)
Structure	8.00/10	(95 percentile)
Dialogue	8.00/10	(95 percentile)
Overall Weighted Percentile		95
<i>Note: Percentiles are based on historical data of scores given out by this analyst.</i>		

About Analyst JR99

The reader studied television and film at Northwestern University and currently works as an independent producer in New York City.