



# **"The Events of October": Murder-Suicide on a Small Campus (Painted Turtle)**

*Gail Griffin*

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On a Sunday night during Homecoming weekend in 1999, Neenef Odah lured his ex-girlfriend, Maggie Wardle, to his dorm room at Kalamazoo College and killed her at close range with a shotgun before killing himself. In the wake of this tragedy, the community of the small, idyllic liberal arts college struggled to characterize the incident, which was even called "the events of October" in a campus memo. In this engaging and intimate examination of Maggie and Neenef's deaths, author and Kalamazoo College professor Gail Griffin attempts to answer the lingering question of "how could this happen?" to two seemingly normal students on such a close-knit campus.

Griffin introduces readers to Maggie and Neenef—a bright and athletic local girl and the quiet Iraqi-American computer student—and retraces their relationship from multiple perspectives, including those of their friends, teachers, and classmates. She examines the tension that built between Maggie and Neenef as his demands for more of her time and emotional support grew, eventually leading to their breakup. After the deaths take place, Griffin presents multiple reactions, including those of Maggie's friends who were waiting for her to return from Neenef's room, the students who heard the shotgun blasts in the hallway of Neenef's dorm, the president who struggled to guide a grieving campus, and the facilities manager in charge of cleaning up the crime scene. Griffin also uses Maggie and Neenef's story to explore larger issues of intimate partner violence, gun accessibility, and depression and suicide on campus as she attempts to understand the lasting importance of their tragic deaths.

Griffin's use of source material, including college documents, official police reports, Neenef's suicide note, and an instant message record between perpetrator and victim, puts a very real face on issues of violence against women. Readers interested in true crime, gender studies, and the culture of colleges and universities will appreciate "The Events of October."

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