

**ESTHER**

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*Her Murder Haunts  
a Small Town in Oklahoma.  
By Leonard Sanders.  
John Macrae/Holt, \$22.50.*

On a cold April evening in 1987, Esther Steele was murdered in her bed. To this day, that single fact has remained on the minds of most of the people of Granite, the small Oklahoma town where she lived. And Leonard Sanders's deft reporting will keep readers of "Esther" thinking about it too. There are no sex, no celebrities, no accusations of child abuse and no police brutality in this story. The murder was not committed in the heat of passion. With painstaking detail, Mr. Sanders, a novelist, takes the reader through the murder investigation and the trial and conviction of the two men accused of killing Steele. But he doesn't stop there; he examines the homicide's broader effects. Nobody had ever been murdered in Granite. After the crime, the townsfolk were forced to look not only at the victim but at themselves. Changes had been taking place all around them, yet in Granite it still seemed safe to keep the door unlocked. It was not until after the murder that the residents realized they had been a part of the larger society for some time.

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