Down Among the Dead Men - A Year in the Life of a Mortuary Technician

“Thankfully Williams’s reminiscence does more than delight in the creepy and the ghoulish; it breathes life into the mortuary workers themselves.” — The Brooklyn Rail Michelle Williams is young and attractive, with close family ties, a busy social life . . . and an unusual occupation. When she impulsively applies to be a mortuary technician and is offered the position, she has no idea that her decision to accept will be one of the most momentous of her life. “What I didn’t realize then, she writes, “was that I was about to start one of the most amazing jobs you can do.” To Williams, life in the mortuary is neither grim nor frightening. She introduces readers to a host of unique characters: pathologists (many eccentric, some utterly crazy), undertakers, and the man from the coroner’s office who sings to her every morning. No two days are alike, and while Williams’s sensitivity to the dead never wavers, her tales from the crypt range from mischievous to downright shocking. Readers won't forget the fitness fanatic run over while doing nighttime push-ups on the road, the man so large he had to be carted in via refrigerated truck, or the guide dog who led his owner onto railway tracks—and left him there. The indomitable Williams never bats an eye, even as she is confronted—daily—with situations that would leave the rest of us speechless. “This entertaining memoir chronicles the author’s first year on the job, which sees her learning how to perform a postmortem, determine cause of death, and deal with grieving relatives and shady undertakers (among a lot of other things) . . . Not your run-of-the-mill occupational memoir, but definitely an interesting one.” —Booklist

Down Among the Dead Men

In a fort on the edge of civilization, an ancient evil has awoken Ten years after the Demon War, the wounds of the Forest Kingdom are finally beginning to heal. Deep in the Darkwood, on the border between two long-feuding territories, a fort has been erected to keep the peace. But a month ago, the soldiers inside stopped speaking to the outside world. Have they come under attack, or is something more sinister at work? Led by the adventure-hungry warrior Duncan MacNeil, a party of Rangers is sent to investigate. With a witch, a swordsman, and a powerful eight-fingered woman at his side, MacNeil steps into the deserted fort—and discovers a massacre. The gory scene suggests that the soldiers turned on one other, but the witch has an alternate theory. Beneath this newly built fort, she senses an ancient evil, a power older than the Kingdom itself, about to trap them in the dark.

Does This Mean You'll See Me Naked? - Field Notes from a Funeral Director

Why would someone want to hang out with dead bodies? With curious anecdotes and unbelievable truth, funeral director Robert Webster reveals that answer and more, offering readers entertaining and quirky stories gleaned from a life lived around death. Webster tackles those embarrassing questions we all have about what really goes on behind the scenes when
you've left this world: - Strange things people put in caskets - The biggest rip-offs in the business - The crazy things that happen to a body after death - Lime, waz, and other ways to hide the truth - The most important thing an undertaker does - How to avoid the high-pressure funeral parlor - What that's not a coffin the body is resting in

**Nine Years Under - Coming of Age in an Inner-City Funeral Home**

A dazzling and darkly comic memoir about coming of age in a black funeral home in Baltimore Sheri Booker was only fifteen when she started working at Wylie Funeral Home in West Baltimore. She had no idea her summer job would become nine years of immersion into a hidden world. Reeling from the death of her beloved great aunt, Sheri found comfort in the funeral home and soon had the run of the place. With AIDS and gang violence threatening to wipe out a generation of black men, Wylie was never short on business. As families came together to bury one of their own, Booker was privy to their most intimate moments of grief and despair. But along with the sadness, Booker encountered moments of dark humor: brawls between mistresses and widows, and car crashes at McDonald's with dead bodies in tow. While she never got over her terror of the embalming room, Booker learned to expect the unexpected and to never, ever cry. Nine Years Under offers readers an unbelievable glimpse into an industry in the backdrop of all our lives.

**Mortuary Confidential - Undertakers Spill the Dirt**

From rookie mistakes and runaway corpses to screaming dead men and unusual requests, a collection of stories by funeral directors.

**Weekends at Bellevue - Nine Years on the Night Shift at the Psych ER**

“A gem of a memoir . . . Holland takes us for a ride through the psych ER that is at once wild and poignant, a ride that leaves deep tracks in even the healthiest of minds.”—Katrina Firlik, M.D., author of Another Day in the Frontal Lobe

Julie Holland thought she knew what crazy was. Then she came to Bellevue. For nine eventful years, Dr. Holland was the weekend physician in charge of the psychiatric emergency room at New York City’s Bellevue Hospital. In this absorbing memoir, Holland recounts stories from her vast case files that are alternately terrifying, tragically comic, and profoundly moving: the serial killer, the naked man barking like a dog in Times Square, the schizophrenic begging for an injection of club soda to quiet the voices in his head, the subway conductor who helplessly watched a young woman pushed into the path of his train. Writing with uncommon candor, Holland supplies not only a page-turner with all the fast-paced immediacy of a TV medical drama but also a fascinating glimpse into the inner lives of doctors who struggle to maintain perspective in a world where sanity is in the eye of the beholder. Praise for Weekends at Bellevue “An extraordinary insider’s look at the typical days and nights of that most extraordinary place, written with a rare combination of toughness, tenderness, and outrageous humor.”—Andrew Weil, M.D. “Unforgettable . . . tells a mean story.”—New York Daily News “The tension between [Holland’s] macho swagger and her shame at the harsh way she occasionally treats patients gives this memoir extra intrigue.”—Psychology Today “A fascinating portrait . . . Holland is a good storyteller with a dark
wit.” —New York Post “Equal parts affecting, jaw-dropping, and engrossing.”—Booklist

**Blood on the Table - The Greatest Cases of New York City's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**

A behind-the-scenes study of the work of New York City's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner looks at some of the most important and unusual cases the OCME has handled since its inception in 1918, ranging from political intrigue and high-profile murder cases to vicious gang wars and the September 11th terrorist attacks. Original.

**The Boy Who Talked to Dogs - A Memoir**

When Martin McKenna was growing up in Garryowen, Ireland, in the 1970s, he felt the whole world knew him as just “that stupid boy.” Badly misunderstood by his family and teachers, Martin escaped from endless bullying by running away from home and eventually adopting—or being adopted by—six street dogs. Camping out in barns, escaping from farmers, and learning to fend for himself by caring for his new friends, Martin discovered a different kind of language, strict laws of behavior, and strange customs that defined the world of dogs. More importantly, his canine companions helped him understand the vital importance of family, courage, and self-respect—and that he wasn’t stupid after all. Their lessons helped Martin make a name for himself as the “Dog Man” in Australia, where he now lives and dispenses his hard-earned wisdom to dog owners who are sometimes baffled by what their four-legged friends are trying to tell them. An emotional and poignant story seasoned with plenty of Frank McCourt–style humor, The Boy Who Talked to Dogs is an inspiration to anyone who’s ever been told he or she won’t amount to anything. It’s also a unique, fascinating look into canine behavior. In these pages, Martin shows how modern life has conditioned dogs to act around humans, in some ways helpful, but in other ways unnatural to their true instincts, and how he has benefited enormously from learning to “talk dog.”

**My New Orleans, Gone Away - A Memoir of Loss and Renewal**

A New York Times bestseller: A “charming” memoir of growing up Jewish among New Orleans high society—and finding a place in the bigger world (Winston Groom, The Wall Street Journal). The Wolf family had been in New Orleans for generations. They were Jewish but—as Peter Wolf’s grandmother put it—“not in an obvious way.” In fact, they threw lavish Christmas parties to entertain Peter’s father’s friends in the cotton business and even put up a tree. But despite their success and their philanthropic work, the Wolfs were always excluded from NOLA’s inner circles, elite clubs, and high-status Mardi Gras krewes. It took a detour to New England—where Peter attended Exeter and Yale, and met friends like Calvin Trillin—to put the young man in touch with his cultural roots, and an adventurous adult life beyond the Big Easy to see the corruption, insularity, and racism that lurked beneath the cultural and culinary delights of his home. With a fond heart and a clear, candid view, Wolf offers this reminiscence of his childhood in Metairie, Louisiana, and the unique social hierarchies of New Orleans, with its old Creole families and residents both rich and poor. A meditation on place and identity, this is “a loving
and beautifully written portrait of New Orleans in the 1950s and 1960s” and a look at a landscape that was shifting and disappearing even before Hurricane Katrina altered it forever (Booklist).

**Deadhouse - Life in a Coroner's Office**

Deadhouse: Life in a Coroner's Office chronicles the exploits of a diverse team of investigators at a coroner's office in Pittsburgh. Ed Strimlan is a doctor who never got to practice medicine. Instead he discovers how people died. Mike Chichwak is a stolid ex-paramedic, respected around the office for his compassion and doggedness. Tiffani Hunt is twenty-one, a single mother who questions whether she wants to spend her nights around dead bodies. All three deputy coroners share one trait: a compulsive curiosity. A good thing too because any observation at a death scene can prove meaningful. A bag of groceries standing on a kitchen counter, the milk turning sour. A broken lamp lying on the carpet of an otherwise tidy living room. When they approach a corpse, the investigators consider everything. Is the victim face-up or down? How stiff are the limbs? Are the hands dirty or clean? By the time they bag the body and load it into the coroner's wagon, Tiffani, Ed, and Mike have often unearthed intimate details that are unknown even to the victim's family and friends. The intrigues of investigating death help make up for the bad parts of the job. There are plenty of burdens—grief-stricken families, decomposed bodies, tangled local politics, and gore. And maybe worst of all is the ever-present reminder of mortality and human frailness. Deadhouse also chronicles the evolution of forensic medicine, from early rituals performed over corpses found dead to the controversial advent of modern forensic pathology. It explains how pathologists “read” bullet wounds and lacerations, how someone dies from a drug overdose or a motorcycle crash or a drowning, and how investigators uncover the clues that lead to the truth.

**U.S. News**

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