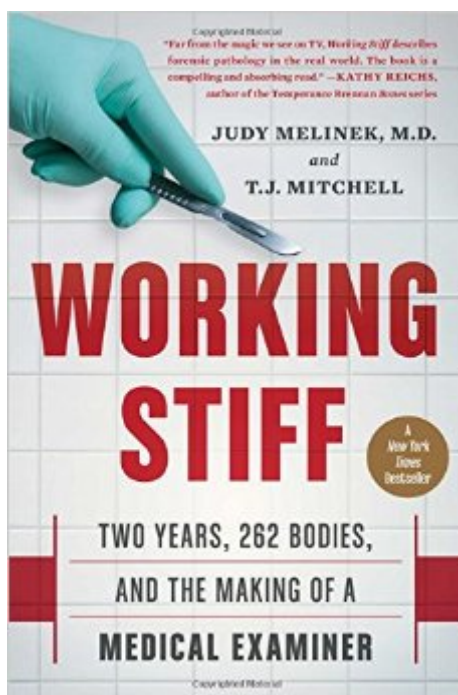


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Working Stiff: Two Years, 262 Bodies, And The Making Of A Medical Examiner



Synopsis

â œFunâ |and full of smart science. Fans of CSIâ ”the real kindâ ”will want to read itâ • (The Washington Post): A young forensic pathologistâ™s â œrookie seasonâ • as a NYC medical examiner, and the hair-raising cases that shaped her as a physician and human being. Just two months before the September 11 terrorist attacks, Dr. Judy Melinek began her training as a New York City forensic pathologist. While her husband and their toddler held down the home front, Judy threw herself into the fascinating world of death investigationâ ”performing autopsies, investigating death scenes, counseling grieving relatives. Working Stiff chronicles Judyâ™s two years of training, taking readers behind the police tape of some of the most harrowing deaths in the Big Apple, including a firsthand account of the events of September 11, the subsequent anthrax bio-terrorism attack, and the disastrous crash of American Airlines Flight 587. An unvarnished portrait of the daily life of medical examinersâ ”complete with grisly anecdotes, chilling crime scenes, and a welcome dose of gallows humorâ ”Working Stiff offers a glimpse into the daily life of one of Americaâ™s most arduous professions, and the unexpected challenges of shuttling between the domains of the living and the dead. The body never liesâ ”and through the murders, accidents, and suicides that land on her table, Dr. Melinek lays bare the truth behind the glamorized depictions of autopsy work on television to reveal the secret story of the real morgue. â œHaunting and illuminating...the stories from her average workdaysâ |transfix the reader with their demonstration that medical science can diagnose and console long after the heartbeat stopsâ • (The New York Times).

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Customer Reviews

"Staying alive is mostly common sense", Judy Melinek tells her husband, TJ, after he complains that listening to her daily stories of her work as a Forensic Pathologist, will cause him to wear gloves and a mask when he is out in public. Certainly the stories, Judy shares can be gruesome and cause one to wonder how they will die. After all, a pathologist gives you the last physician exam you will ever have. Judy Melinek, the author, along with her husband, TJ Mitchell, gives us the story of her life as a Medical Examiner, or Forensic Pathologist in New York City. Here, she learned at the hands of some of the best pathologists in the world. Judy and TJ met at Harvard where they both graduated. Judy went on to study as a surgeon in a prestigious hospital in Boston. What this experience taught her was that she would be forever tired, and working as a surgeon under these conditions is dangerous to us, her patients. After taking a year off to bring her son into the world, she studied as a pathology resident in California, and then went to the Medical Examiner's office in New York City. All of Judy's stories were exhilarating and informative, but the most unbelievable and realistic experience was after the 9/11 disaster. Each body and each body part, no matter how small, had to be examined. Judy relates the organization required and the skill set necessary to get through this trying time. The other point that Judy makes quite well, is that a autopsy is a medical discovery. You need to want to be a detective. One of the most important parts of the job, is communicating with the family. You are delivering the news on how a love one died. Some relatives are disbelieving, some don't want to know the truth. But, your word is the last word.

Be careful what you ask for. A few weeks ago I reviewed Andrew Meredith's THE REMOVERS. In it, I asked for "more dead bodies." I even taunted them in my blog post with GIF images of bloody cadavers and an exploding whale. Well, Scribner listened and delivered. Let's set this up a bit more: on one side, a medically trained examiner who uses all the precise and exact terms of the body's innards; combined with (married to) Harvard English major--you know, to make sure the wording is...just right. Yeah. You see where this is going? Then, take this dynamic duo to New York City. You know those one-in-a-million stories? Well, as the authors cleverly point out, New York City has 8 million people. This husband and wife duo corresponded and plotted this book a lot through e-mail. Some of that behind the scene's stuff has been captured for our extended-gory interest. The husband's blog has a great sample of one such exchange (grocery shopping & dead bodies...whatever works). **WARNING!** Thought I'd put this in all caps to get your attention. Just to be sure: **WARNING!** If you have any medical history whatsoever, be cautious about reading this book. If you drink, eat, or walk on the sidewalk, or breath, be cautious about reading this book. You think

deaths are quick and painless? You might not want to read this book. (But really, if you are like me, I know you'll still want to--sicko!) If you google my name and the words "cardiac arrest", you'll see why I was a bit squeamish when the authors talk about a heart busting through one of the body's cavity walls. I have friends with epilepsy, and the authors kindly point out how it kills. You like to drink? Yeah, Mr. Budweiser and his friends are big time killers.

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