



Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory

Caitlin Doughty

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A young mortician goes behind the scenes, unafraid of the gruesome (and fascinating) details of her curious profession.

Most people want to avoid thinking about death, but Caitlin Doughty—a twenty-something with a degree in medieval history and a flair for the macabre—took a job at a crematory, turning morbid curiosity into her life's work. Thrown into a profession of gallows humor and vivid characters (both living and very dead), Caitlin learned to navigate the secretive culture of those who care for the deceased.

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes tells an unusual coming-of-age story full of bizarre encounters and unforgettable scenes. Caring for dead bodies of every color, shape, and affliction, Caitlin soon becomes an intrepid explorer in the world of the dead. She describes how she swept ashes from the machines (and sometimes onto her clothes) and reveals the strange history of cremation and undertaking, marveling at bizarre and wonderful funeral practices from different cultures.

Her eye-opening, candid, and often hilarious story is like going on a journey with your bravest friend to the cemetery at midnight. She demystifies death, leading us behind the black curtain of her unique profession. And she answers questions you didn't know you had: Can you catch a disease from a corpse? How many dead bodies can you fit in a Dodge van? What exactly does a flaming skull look like?

Honest and heartfelt, self-deprecating and ironic, Caitlin's engaging style makes this otherwise taboo topic both approachable and engrossing. Now a licensed mortician with an alternative funeral practice, Caitlin argues that our fear of dying warps our culture and society, and she calls for better ways of dealing with death (and our dead).

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