

This Party's Dead: Grief, Joy and Spilled Rum at the World's Death Festivals

Erica Buist

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Erica Buist's emotional, informative book *This Party's Dead* is a stunning trip through personal grief and global death festivals.

When her partner's father was found dead at home, Buist began to spiral. What followed was a year of grief, agoraphobia, and constant checking in with her loved ones. Knowing that not everyone can live with such constant fear, she began researching how the rest of the world handles death. Her travels took her to seven countries in total, including Nepal and Madagascar—one nation for each day that her father-in-law-to-be was dead before being discovered.

Buist highlights places where death is viewed in terms of a celebration, rather than of deep loss. She makes pit stops in New Orleans, where there are more dead people than living ones; California, where she meets a man who believes that cyborgs are humanity's next phase; and returns to the UK, where a man's story went viral after he kept his wife's body in their house for six days after she passed.

Part travel journalism, part memoir, the book is respectful about focusing on how the people of different cultures approach death. Its accounts of their trauma, joy, anxiety, and humor help Buist to work her way through her own grief. With chapters dedicated to death festivals that are bookended by accounts of her future father-in-law's death and the spreading of his ashes, Buist's book shows how her perspective of death shifted as she began to accept it for what it is: an inevitable fact of life.

Exploring grief and celebration through the world's death festivals, *This Party's Dead* is a fantastic, death-positive memoir.

ASHLEY HOLSTROM (July / August 2021)

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