

You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife

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Short stories about death—and what comes after—are the subject of *You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife*.

The book includes twenty-four graphic stories from a variety of creators who draw on a wide range of cultures, styles, and tones. Most of the stories focus on the process of dying and the transition to an afterlife, as people and animals bid their farewells to the world of the living. Parents part from children, and children from parents, but it's not all heartbreaking emotion—there's room for humor, as shown in a lighthearted take on reincarnation. Sometimes, as in the story of a family scattering a man's ashes at an amusement park, humor and emotions are both present.

The book's diversity of creators and approaches means that there are surprises at every turn. The first story, "What Eats Us," upends expectations as a decomposer explains to a dead animal what will happen to its body. "Inanna's Descent to the Underworld" retells an ancient Sumerian myth, while the more science-oriented "Peat, Bone, Oak" probes the feelings that arise from discovering a well-preserved corpse from long ago. Another entry also looks to the past, analyzing Victorian mourning rituals; still others use the future and science fiction settings to tell their stories.

The book's pictorial storytelling is always satisfying. Its metaphors for life, death, and the departed involve flowers and birds, contributing to memorable, heartfelt expressions. *You Died* shows that although there are many different ways to address death, it remains a universal constant and the ultimate relatable experience.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2021)

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