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WORKING STIFF
Two Years, 262 Bodies, and the Making of a Medical Examiner

By Judy Melinek, M.D. & T.J. Mitchell

“WORKING STIFF is the grossest book you’ll ever love... Seamlessly fusing memoir, science journalism, riveting whodunit mysteries, and light humor about a dark topic... a relentlessly fascinating and informative book from the first page to the last... A remarkable achievement by Mitchell and Melinek.” —Scott Stossel, editor of The Atlantic magazine

“Far from the magic we see on TV, WORKING STIFF describes forensic pathology in the real world. The book is a compelling and absorbing read.” —Kathy Reichs, author of the Temperance Brennan Bones series

The body never lies. Working at her autopsy table, forensic pathologist Dr. Judy Melinek is by profession an eyewitness to death—answering all the questions, settling all the arguments, revealing all the mysteries contained in the human body. But contrary to glamorized depictions of death investigation as seen on TV, a medical examiner does not fall out of the womb all-knowing. In WORKING STIFF: Two Years, 262 Bodies, and the Making of a Medical Examiner (Scribner hardcover; August 12, 2014; $25.00)—already optioned by Warner Brothers Television for development as a dramatic series—Judy and her co-author husband T.J. Mitchell offer the first account of a young forensic pathologist’s “rookie season” as a medical examiner.

Judy threw herself into the fascinating world of forensic medicine at the New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner—investigating death scenes and performing autopsies after deadly accidents, vicious crimes and ordinary, inevitable deaths. Then, just two months into her new job, she became one of the thirty doctors tasked with identifying the victims of the worst terrorist attack in American
history. With both empathy and humor, WORKING STIFF takes readers behind the police tape and into the morgue to tell the intimate story of death in a great city at a terrible time, including a firsthand account of the events of 9/11, the subsequent anthrax bio-terrorism attack, and the disastrous crash of American Airlines flight 587.

In WORKING STIFF, readers learn:

- Real-life crime solving, and the truth behind shows like CSI and Law and Order
- On-the-job training as a detective-doctor in New York
- The harrowing process of identifying the victims of 9/11 and American Airlines flight 587
- Judy’s role in grief support, and in providing closure to families after unforeseen deaths
- The quest for a work/life balance, shuttling between the living and the dead—conducting an autopsy while pregnant, feeling a new human life growing inside you while exploring the body of another life just extinguished
- T.J.’s role of stay-at-home dad—and the sacrifices we make to support the ones we love
- How the suicide of Judy’s father when she was young informs her job as a medical examiner
- True tales—stranger than fiction—from the morgue

“Whether dealing with routine autopsies, surviving relatives, or the catastrophe of September 11,” says author Leora Tanenbaum, “Dr. Judy Melinek reveals the dignity of being human in the face of death.” A must-read for everyone from mystery lovers and true crime fanatics to medical students to anyone with a fascination for the science of forensic pathology, Dr. Judy Melinek and T.J. Mitchell’s WORKING STIFF is an inspiring and eye-opening memoir of a young woman learning to be a compassionate doctor, a young man learning to be a patient father and supportive spouse, and a spellbinding and unforgettable glimpse into the making of a medical examiner.

About the Authors

Judy Melinek is a forensic pathologist and an associate clinical professor at UCSF Medical Center. She earned her college degree from Harvard and received her medical training at UCLA. Dr. Melinek travels nationally and internationally to lecture on anatomic and forensic pathology and she has been consulted as a forensic expert in many high-profile legal cases, as well as for the television shows E.R. and Mythbusters. For more information, including links to her appearances on Dr. Phil and Dr. Drew, visit http://www.drworkingstiff.com.

T.J. Mitchell graduated with an English degree from Harvard and worked in the film industry before becoming a full-time stay-at-home dad and screenplay consultant in 2000. He is currently writing First Cut, the debut book in a medical examiner detective-fiction series, with Judy Melinek as co-author, while simultaneously raising their three children. They live in San Francisco.