



Driving with Dead People: A Memoir

By Monica Holloway

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Small wonder that, at nine years old, Monica Holloway develops a fascination with the local funeral home. With a father who drives his Ford pickup with a Kodak movie camera sitting shotgun just in case he sees an accident, and whose home movies feature more footage of disasters than of his children, Monica is primed to become a morbid child.

Yet in spite of her father's bouts of violence and abuse, her mother's selfishness and prim denial, and her siblings' personal battles and betrayals, Monica never succumbs to despair. Instead, she forges her own way, thriving at school and becoming fast friends with Julie Kilner, whose father is the town mortician.

She and Julie prefer the casket showroom, where they take turns lying in their favorite coffins, to the parks and grassy backyards in her hometown of Elk Grove, Ohio. In time, Monica and Julie get a job driving the company hearse to pick up bodies at the airport, yet even Monica's growing independence can't protect her from her parents' irresponsibility, and from the feeling that she simply does not deserve to be safe. Little does she know, as she finally strikes out on her own, that her parents' biggest betrayal has yet to be revealed.

Throughout this remarkable memoir of her dysfunctional, eccentric, and wholly unforgettable family, Monica Holloway's prose shines with humor, clear-eyed grace, and an uncommon sense of resilience. *Driving with Dead People* is an extraordinary real-life tale with a wonderfully observant and resourceful heroine.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Death lurks everywhere in Holloway's childhood. A neighbor boy accidentally shoots and kills a train conductor; a little girl is mowed down by a motorist. Her father's main hobby is filming grisly car wrecks and natural disasters, and her best friend's family runs the town mortuary. Observing the dead in their coffins, Monica wonders: would she be better off in a casket than alive in her parents' home? In this memoir, Holloway (an actress turned writer) tackles the horrifyingly familiar story of father/daughter incest: the secrecy that surrounds it and the ways it corrodes families from the inside out. Even though her memories of the abuse were repressed, evidence cropped up everywhere, from her chronic bed-wetting and compulsive lying as a girl to her adult attraction to abusive men; when her older sister, JoAnn, comes forward with her recollections, Holloway begins to remember her own trauma. As a writer, Holloway might not be in Mary Karr's league, but her blunt sentences deliver the unvarnished truth. In coming to terms with her tragedy, Holloway writes, "Knowing there is no cavalry is much better than hoping for a cavalry that never comes." Her memoir sings with the power of a disenfranchised woman finally finding her own voice, and her brutal memoir is hard to forget. (*Mar.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Holloway's candid story starts out innocently enough as she describes her eccentric family, especially her father, who loved "talking gore" and kept a movie camera in his pick-up for filming gruesome wrecks. Monica, too, has an obsession with death, and revels in her friendship with a mortician's daughter and their access to postmortems. When Monica reaches her teen years, her parents divorce. Her mother then decides it's "her turn," and she goes back to college, often leaving Monica and her next oldest sister alone. Holloway perceptively writes about hurtful moments embedded in her memory, such as her parents repeatedly telling her that her birth was a "mistake," and her mother's selfish refusal to pay for treatment for a kidney infection. The final piece of this dysfunctional family's puzzle falls into place when the oldest sister begins to remember being molested by their father; so, too, does Monica. Amidst a burgeoning number of abuse memoirs, Holloway's shines because of her deft handling of the small details while painstakingly assembling the larger picture. *Deborah Donovan*

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Review

"Memoir, at its best, opens my heart and gives me a view into the core perfection of another. Monica does this in the most essential way, going directly to perfect storytelling laced with irony and humor. She held my heart with her raw, unapologetic honesty, and she flawlessly rendered what it is like to be a child who sees everything, endures it, and still loves with her whole being."

-- Jennifer Lauck, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Blackbird* and *Still Waters*

"A meticulously reported account of one girl's journey through a violent and unpredictable childhood. Holloway's strong voice and remarkable sense of humor, in spite of the horror in her past, make this an unforgettable read."

-- Hope Edelman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Motherless Daughters*

"Joining searing childhood memoirs such as *The Glass Castle* and *Running with Scissors* comes the impressive *Driving with Dead People*, a fascinating, gritty, hilarious read for everyone who realized as a child -- as Monica Holloway did -- that 'we were the weird ones.' Holloway narrates her sad, funny childhood

with an exquisite blend of raw honesty, deadpan wit, and compassion for her family -- and herself."

-- Leslie Morgan Steiner, *L.A. Times* bestselling editor of *Mommy Wars*

"*Driving with Dead People* is a heartbreaking, hilarious, and page-turning read. In the space of one sentence Monica Holloway can break your heart and make you laugh out loud at the same time. Her memoir has the momentum of a good mystery novel -- the kind you stay up all night reading to find out what happens to the heroine, because you love her so much. This is a stunning debut of a writer who deals with difficult material and makes it fresh and moving."

-- Barbara Abercrombie, author of *Writing Out the Storm* and *Courage & Craft*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Melinda Kendall:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important normally. The book *Driving with Dead People: A Memoir* was making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The book *Driving with Dead People: A Memoir* is not only giving you a lot more new information but also being your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship with the book *Driving with Dead People: A Memoir*. You never really feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

Michael Vines:

The reason? Because this *Driving with Dead People: A Memoir* is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap that but latter it will shock you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who all write the book in such wonderful way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book include such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking method. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I had been you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

Randy Mosley:

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