



## **Mop Men: Inside the World of Crime Scene Cleaners**

*Alan Emmins*

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Neal Smither doesn't hide his work. The side of his van reads: "Crime Scene Cleaners: Homicides, Suicides and Accidental Death." Whenever a hotel guest permanently checks out, the cops finish an investigation, or an accidental death is reported, Smither's crew pick up the pieces after the police cruisers and ambulances have left.

Alan Emmins offers a glimpse at this little-known aspect of America's most gruesome deaths. Filled with details as fascinating as they are gory, *Mop Men* examines not just the public fascination with murder but also how a self-made success like Smither can make a fortune just by praying for death.

## **Mop Men: Inside the World of Crime Scene Cleaners Details**

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Author : Alan Emmins

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## From Reader Review Mop Men: Inside the World of Crime Scene Cleaners for online ebook

### Lori says

I was one chapter from finishing Mop Men yesterday when my condo flooded -- burst pipe from next door leaking thousands of gallons of water into my home. As I sucked up all I could with a ShopVac, all I could think was, "At least it's not blood." Alan Emmis and his subjects, Neal Smither and Crime Scene Cleaners, had me seeing the bright side.

Which is funny, because the book is simultaneously about the gory and the light, the lost and the hopeful. The folks who do these jobs are both hardened and sympathetic, thorough and wickedly, wickedly funny.

Alan, a journalist who met Neal for a magazine article and went back for more, gets a little lost en route sometimes. Mop Men is as much about him and his changing views of death as it is the company and the cleaners. It veers off track a little (with cryogenics and morticians) and feels just a bit like he was trying to fill enough pages to make it to some word count. But the rest of the stories are good enough that it doesn't really matter.

I'm a huge fan of Mike Rowe and Dirty Jobs, and now I know there's a job much, much nastier than he's ever tackled. And I'm pretty damn thankful there are folks out there who do it.

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### Josh says

Mop Men is highly addictive – partly due to the colourful Neal Smither (owner of Crime Scene Cleaners Inc.) and his no holds barred outlook on death but mainly because of the macabre subject matter – crime scene cleaning. The topic, by nature of its title leads the mind down a path of unpleasantries but is explored in a humorous, yet respectful way. Seeking common people's perspective on death as a sidebar to the core theme was a nice tie-in to the profession and provided some basis for comparison against those who deal with death daily and those who are entertained by the distilled serialised TV dramas which consume modern media. It was interesting to read that Emmins himself experienced a change of perspective from initial apprehension when attending a crime scene to becoming inpatient between encounters of the gory and bodily-fluid-splattered kind.

The simplistic style employed by Emmins resulted in a quick easy read – light while heavy in retrospect. It's easy to criticise the style given the emphasis on over the top punctuation and preference for laymen's terms as apposed to catering for the literary crowd – however, this approach worked in enhancing the entertainment value of the book rather than leaving the reader feeling utterly depressed with the depiction of some of the more sadder ends to people's lives.

A key to the success of 'Mop Men' is that it reads like fiction with Emmins immersing himself as a core character reporting his findings on the various tag-along jobs he accompanies the Crime Scene Cleaners Inc staff. The ebb and flow was even and well paced. The distractions into Emmins personal life added to the realism and general light feel to the book. Overall, this was an enjoyable read which providing some fascinating insight into the world of crime scene cleaning – 4 stars.

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### **Linda says**

I have read much non-fiction about forensic science and pathology. I have found the subject matter fascinating even before CSI aired its first episode.

I thought this might be an interesting read. I was interested in the legalities, science (i.e. infection control protocols) and procedures of doing the work of cleaning body fluids from a crime scene.

In this way - the book disappointed. I got interested when they were given the job of cleaning a meth lab. I wanted to know more about the dangers, techniques of cleaning and disposing these dangerous, volatile chemicals. However, after a cursory run through on what chemicals were used in a meth lab - the writer was dismissed from the scene due to the danger and I was left wanting more information.

I agree with other reviewers in that the author put a lot of nonsense into the book to make it longer - the court transcripts were boring. I didn't even bother reading them all. This took several pages.

I ended up thinking poorly of the author after reading the chapter of his non-response to a medical crisis of a woman a few feet from him in a restaurant. He admitted that he didn't want to get involved and also critiqued others who DID get involved. He just seemed like such a sad, useless little man whose whole life is writing his opinion and chatting in coffee shops in his blissful little hometown of Copenhagen.

As for the proprietor of the business - he comes across as a hard working, although callous, money hungry asshole.

I thought the whole book was summed up best by one of the workers, who explains to the author, "We are really just glorified janitors"

Save your time and money for decent book that is respectful to the helping profession and people in general.

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### **Laura says**

Alan Emmins follows Neal Smither, founder, president, and general Grand Pooh-Bah Woo-bah of Crime Scene Cleaners, which, as you might be able to noodle out from the name, cleans crime scenes, and also scenes of suicides and natural death. As you may imagine, these scenes get, um, messy. Very messy.

Not for the faint of heart (unless, of course, your heart goes pitty-pat at graphic descriptions of how maggots eat human flesh), this is nonetheless an engrossing (hm, maybe an unfortunate use of "engrossing" there, but anyway) look at an unlikely way to make a living.

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### **Evelyn says**

Journalist Alan Emmins profiles Neil Smither, the owner and CEO of Crime Scene Cleaners, Inc., in this wacky, irreverent look at the horrifically gruesome world of the detritus left behind from murders, accidents

and suicides that happen everyday.

In a nutshell, Neil's company enters the room when the CSI techs leave. In blunt words he tells how he removes baseboards to get any blood that might have seeped under them, checks for brain splatter on the ceilings, and disposes of personal effects so that families don't have to deal with the pain themselves. Its all about doing a good job.

This was a fascinating read with funny scenes like one where a man reneges on paying, saying "you've already cleaned everything so what are you going to do." Neil just calmly brings all the gunk back into the house and dumps it at the man's feet. The man then offers to pay half so Neil offers to take half back to his truck. Obviously the man pays the whole bill.

As graphic as many of the scenes are, Neil's compassion for people's suffering and his enduring work ethic are eloquently described by Emmins.

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### **Steven says**

Engrossing subject matter, believe me. Hard to put down! This is a good first-person account by a narrator squeamish enough to be an "everyman" to any reader. (He regularly has to run out of jobsites to throw up.) The book focuses on three things, the first is the creator of the "Crime Scene Cleaners" business, a gifted, sometimes outrageous personality whose words and ideas easily carry the book: "This what I do, Alan. I wake up every morning and pray for death!"

Second, is the author's regular return to one murder and his desire to see justice done. From court transcripts and finally, local news accounts, the author is able to explore both the murder and the larger issues of justice in a culture dominated by entertainment-driven news.

Finally, the book explores the author's theme of "Death as Entertainment." The idea bothers him personally, but he is convinced that death sells--indeed, already is selling on television, movies, video games, music, and other media. When he shadows the company for a month, the author must face his own hypocrisy, as he obviously intends to make money with a book that is exactly the morbid thing he wants to oppose.

In this, he finds himself helplessly linked to the owner of the "Crime Scene Cleaners," as he too "prays for death" during a particularly long spell without work. However, to the narrator, the businessman is performing an incredible, even heroic service, protecting families from having to clean their teenaged son's brain matter off the wall, for example, whereas the author is merely a voyeur, a rubbernecker.

I enjoyed the book very much. And reading it was much more polite and respectful than "rubbernecking" at an actual death.

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### **J.M. says**

I expected to like this more than I did, but it grew on me.

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## **Melki says**

**"I simply will not leave a speck behind for the parents, or loved ones or whoever, to find."**

Neal Smither,  
Crime Scene Cleaners, Inc.

The hotel room bathroom is covered with blood. It's everywhere. Walls, floor, fixtures, even the ceiling. Two hours later, Smither has the room clean and sparkling and ready to be used again by the next unsuspecting customer.

Keep THAT in mind on your travels this summer!

**"...one price will clean it, disinfect it, deodorize it, and dispose of the waste."**

Smither got the idea for Crime Scene Cleaners after watching *Pulp Fiction*. He's quite a character; earning a living by nonchalantly mopping up brains and precious bodily fluids, while at the same time, relishing his role as a mild-mannered suburban dad. He takes pride in his work, more so than many people, I suspect. After all, a job well-done may mean repeat business.

**"Clean means *clean*. If two months down the line somebody finds a speck of blood under the handrail or some dried brain inside the lampshade, or a skull fragment in the potpourri, then you ain't getting recommended when her friend Doris's daughter slits her wrists on the living room floor, you know what I'm saying?"**

I will never look at potpourri the same way again...

Sadly, there are a lot of problems with this book, the two biggest being:

- 1) There's really only enough material here for a magazine article. There are only so many ways to clean up a crime scene. (Lather, rinse, repeat...)
- 2) The author is kind of an a-hole. He's convinced he's just a *wee bit superior* to everyone - (Yes! We get it. EVERYTHING is better in Denmark!) - and this book is somehow ALL about HIM. How will HE cope with seeing so much blood? How will HE handle the smell? How will HIS life be changed when he goes back home to Denmark...The Most Perfect Place on Earth?

The best things about this book, other than getting to know the philosopher Neal Smither?

- 1) There are no photos.
- 2) There are no scratch & sniff pages.

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## **Karen Germain says**

I was browsing in Barnes and Noble and this book screamed "Buy Me!!!"

I, for the most part, completely ate it up. I loved hearing about the gory details and it's simply fascinating that someone has a job doing crime scene clean up. It's nothing I ever thought about before. Alan Emmins is a slick writer and I really felt like I was right there in the moment with him, discovering the crime scenes.

Although I thought it was an interesting case, the multiple chapters about the man in the bathtub, slowed down the book for me. I found myself skimming through those chapters.

I also found his take on suicide to be pretty interesting. I never thought about what the different methods may reveal, but Emmins makes compelling points. I have witnessed a suicide and find the subject to be morbidly fascinating, probably another reason the subject matter of the book initially caught my interest.

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### **David says**

Neal Smither and his business, Crime Scene Cleaners, are great material for a book, but are they enough material? The answer is yes and no. Author Alan Emmins had enough material for a great book, but that book would have been only 60% as long as this one. Instead, he turns backflips padding his way to a bloated word count, and you can actually pinpoint the moments where he first becomes desperate and then gives up. Desperate: Beginning on page 181, he drops in a chapter on cryonics--material that he had lying around from a planned magazine article that he never wrote. Giving up: Beginning on page 242, he drops in 19 tedious pages, verbatim, from a court transcript. If you are interested in this book, proceed as follows: Read all scenes where Neal Smither is on stage. Read all scenes that involve actual cleaning. Skip everything else.

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### **Shawna says**

This is the second book I've read about crime scene cleaners. It had the requisite gory stories and moral ambiguity of making money/being curious about such a business. The main hook of the book was a case of a man who had murdered an older gentleman he was staying with and then proceeded to live in the man's apartment for a month while the body deteriorated. This led to, what I considered to be the weakest part of the book, basically a transcript of the presumed killer's pretrial hearing, which I found to be filler, and not at all compelling. It's a shame that they couldn't have published a modestly rendered before and after photo series so we could see examples of the clean ups.

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### **jacky says**

Meh. Too much of it is about the author's feeble attempt at self-examination (Why am I drawn to the world of crime scene cleaners? Does that make me a bad person? Wah, wah, wah). More voyeurism and less faux introspection for me, please!

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### **Jamie Ferguson says**

When I first saw this book I thought this would be an interesting book to read about what goes on in the

world of Crime Scene Cleaners. What I didn't know is what I was getting myself into upon reading this.

Alan Emmins takes you into the world of Neal Smither and his company Crime Scene Cleaners. Not only does Emmins tell of the gruesome details of cleaning a crime scene, but he manages to keep you interested at the same time. With Neal Smither's weird and sometimes jaw dropping jokes, you get the impression he is just this weird guy who loves when people die because it makes him money, but you see in parts of the book that he is more than that. He actually has a soft side to him, a decent side to him.

Emmins expresses some interesting points on how our society is so fascinated with death and how we can't help ourselves to try and get at peak at a Crime Scene. He also tells how he gets sucked into the world of death and becomes engulfed in fascination when people die. And when no one dies he can't help himself, but pray for death.

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### **Jo says**

Interesting topic for a book as I'd never really given much thought before as to who cleans up a messy death once the crime investigators are done with the scene. Rather educational and a bit gruesome in parts. The author also explores current society's attitude towards death and for some reason seemed to keep an eye on the elections in California (not sure how relevant that was!). My only bugbear is that for a journalist, Emmins does not have a great grasp on the English language as the book is littered with the wrong spellings of words (steal instead of steel, waste for waist, etc) and his punctuation leaves a lot to be desired.

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### **Jan B says**

A great book! The book deals with an unusual subject in a sensitive way. Graphic at times, but the author pulls back when needed with compassion and feeling for the victims.

Mr. Emmins is amazed with Americans who do not take care of their neighbors or look in on their own relatives, as all of us should. I'm amazed, too. He writes of a country obsessed with CSI television that needs to be turned off. The court case throughout was especially enlightening and sad.

A few quotes were more British than American but we'll forgive that. Hopefully Mr. Emmins will write more books looking in on American culture.

Also a great book to read to start your diet!

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