



Living Among Headstones: Life in a Country Cemetery

Shannon Applegate

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In 1997, Shannon Applegate was bequeathed a small cemetery in western Oregon. The neglected five acres were not only the burial site for generations of her family but also the designated resting ground for many in the nearby, down-on-its-luck logging town. *Living Among Headstones* chronicles the author's experiences as she takes charge of this sacred land and finds herself plotting graves, consoling families, and confronting the funeral industry. Filled with humor, singular events, pathos, and unexpected smiles, the pages offer historical asides and moving personal stories. For example, Shannon explores the language and customs of funerals as she agonizes over how to approach families who have covered graves with plastic flowers and inappropriate ornaments. In doing so, she contemplates the myriad ways cultures past and present approach the dead. *Living Among Headstones* is, in part, about rural cemeteries in contemporary America, but the sum is a meditation on how we long for those we love to have a continuing place in our world, and it focuses as much on life as death.

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