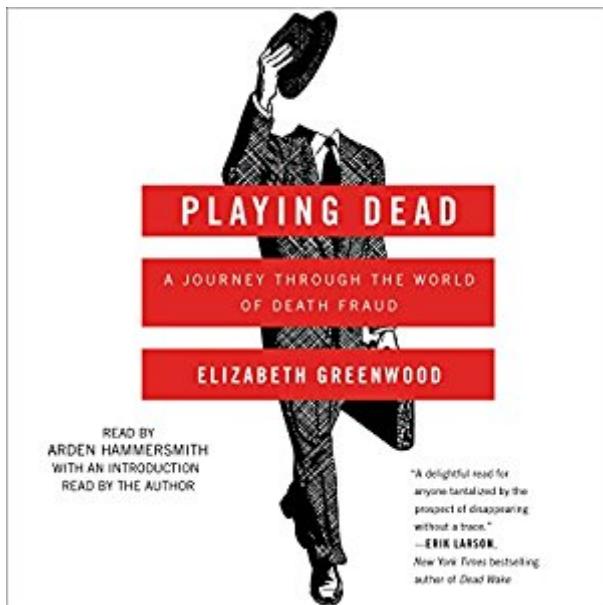


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# Playing Dead: A Journey Through The World Of Death Fraud



## Synopsis

A darkly comic inquiry into how to fake your own death, the disappearance industry, and the lengths to which people will go to be reborn. Is it still possible to fake your own death in the 21st century? With six figures of student loan debt, Elizabeth Greenwood is tempted to find out. So she sets off on a foray into the world of death fraud, where for \$30,000 a consultant can make you disappear - but your suspicious insurance company might hire a private detective to dig up your coffin...only to find it filled with rocks. Greenwood tracks down a man who staged a kayaking accident and then returned to live in his own house while all his neighbors thought he was dead. She takes a call from Michael Jackson (yes, he's alive - or so some would have her believe); talks to people contemplating pseudocide; and gathers intel on black market morgues in the Philippines, where she may or may not succeed in obtaining some fraudulent goodies of her own. Along the way she learns that love is a much less common motive than money and that making your death look like a drowning virtually guarantees you'll be caught. (Disappearing while hiking, however, is a great way to go.) Playing Dead is an utterly fascinating and charmingly bizarre investigation into our all-too-human desire to escape from the lives we lead and the men and women desperate enough to lose their identities - and their families - to begin again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is so much fun. Of course, it's not a fun topic, and there's a lot that's dark and even sad. But Greenwood is such a charming and winning narrator, that I loved going along with her on this journey! It was a real deep dive into some very seedy worlds, but the people you meet are always

real and human, even when they're very strange. But part of Greenwood's magic is making them less strange. I really loved this book!

Elizabeth Greenwood offers a crazy look into the bizarre—“but very real” world of pseudocide. The writing is funny as hell, but even better, the author is able to find the humanity in even the most unsavory characters. It’s that kind of empathy and thoughtfulness (mixed with hilarity) that this world could use a little more of...

A stunningly well-crafted debut - Greenwood's voice really brings alive the reliably quirky personalities she profiles. Strongly recommend.

As a writer myself, I was just as riveted by Liz's adept, quick style as I was by her subject matter. This is a quick read in the best possible sense of the word: I challenge future readers to put it down mid-narrative. I myself was unable to resist the temptation of a thorough and day-consuming read. Would that more writers had the ability to slough off the mundane and dive into the intrepid world of this type of journalism, which is immersive, engaging, and, all in all, beyond the scope of most of our wildest imaginations. I can't say I'm not a little jealous of Greenwood's talents, but I can say that I'm eagerly awaiting to see what incredible work she produces next.

I've got a bit of a dark side, so when I saw this book on Netgalley, I requested it and crossed my fingers that the publisher would approve my request. It worked, and I was launched into the world of "pseudocide." Yes, the Michael Jackson "Believers" wore a bit thin. Luckily I read the book on my computer. Skipping pages was easy enough. It seemed like a pretty full examination of why, what, and how--even extending as far as Elizabeth Greenwood holding her own death certificate. She got to see what it would be like to be "dead," but not dead. She could have disappeared into the vapor, never to be heard from again, and re-entered the world of the living as someone else. Wow. What an opportunity.

Elizabeth, where have you been all my life? Having been fascinated with this topic for so many years, it's a joy to find a kindred soul. I wish this book had come out before I wrote an entire novel about a community of people who are playing dead, but nonetheless, this is most excellent research for a sequel. The writing style and information will keep you reading all the way to the end. Finally, a non-fiction book that deserves the pages, and wouldn't be better as a magazine article. Thank you

for giving us something fascinating and new.Â Under the Legend

This book offers a sort of journalistic "tour" of the process of faking ones own death. Its equal parts thought experiment, practical advice and character study of the people who inhabit this particular world. Its written in a very personable way by the author with many unforgettable characters and anecdotes The lesson in the book seems to somewhat be that faking ones death is generally effective only in the situation where there is no incentive for others to investigate or find the person. Those who don't matter can disappear, but there is a massive interest on the part of law enforcement or an insurance company to find someone, they will likely figure it out. She eventually ends up in the Philippines generating the actual documents and process involved in a fake death. But doesn't actually carry it through all the way. There are some asides in the book into subjects such as people who believe that dead celebrities are alive (Michael Jackson for example) which are thinly connected to the main subject, but tolerable. It would have perhaps been more interesting if she had spent more time on the process of assuming another identity or how to travel internationally as an un-person. The main point by the end to me was that while it may still be possible to elaborately fake ones death even with today's more elaborate technology, its rarely worth the time or effort. Its better to just disappear and assume a new identity. A death in a foreign country or a death where there is no body will just raise attention and suspicion if there is someone looking. Subject matter aside, its a fun lightweight book with an engaging author, some interesting characters and what seems like an original premise. Not bad for a summer read.

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