



# Dead Reckoning: The New Science of Catching Killers

By Michael Baden, Marion Roach

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**Dead Reckoning: The New Science of Catching Killers** By Michael Baden, Marion Roach

In a forty-year career Michael Baden has conducted more than 20,000 autopsies. Considered one of the world's leading forensic pathologists, he was New York City medical examiner from 1960 to 1985 and is now co-director of the New York State Police Medicolegal Investigation Unit. The host of the popular program Autopsy on HBO, Dr. Baden brings riveting stories and expert analysis to Dead Reckoning. The authors go to the crime scene, take readers to the autopsy table in the morgue and practically place the scalpel in the reader's hand to show how advances in forensic science are solving crimes as never before. They visit cases both famous and ordinary to explain why the first hour at a crime scene is crucial. They reveal for the first time how a key clue to the killer of Nicole Brown Simpson was lost during the transportation of her body to the morgue. In another case, they show how something as obscure as the imprint of a button on a dead man's skin was overlooked until months later when, while reviewing the crime-scene photos, Dr. Baden saw it, causing the case to take an astonishing turn. Baden and Roach invite readers to be present at the analysis of soil, plant matter, insects, blood spatters, bone, teeth, hair, weather, and other crime-scene evidence to witness how the startling accuracy of science can improve the chances of a just verdict.

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

Baden, a leading forensic pathologist and host of HBO's *Autopsy*, and Roach (*Another Name for Madness*) are a dynamic pair, delving into delightfully creepy material that can potentially bring murderers to justice or free an innocent on death row. Baden is a methodical and ethical medical examiner and consummate scientist. Every page reveals another aspect of the forensic sciences, leading the reader into the Cimmerian world of autopsies, murder scenes, blood-splatter analysis, the life cycles of blowflies in carrion, DNA fingerprinting and the methods for identifying unknown victims by their skulls, teeth and bones. The authors also touch upon the obscure yet fruitful fields of forensic botany and climatology. The material is exhaustive, yet the journey is never less than fascinating. For the reader (with a strong stomach) interested in the juncture of crime, law and science, this book is chock-full of practical information about death by unnatural means. The account is replete with a cast of weird, amiable characters, historical insights (where else this year will readers learn that Paul Revere took the first step in forensic odontology?), and reverence for the scientific study of the dead. Baden and Roach invite the outsider into the laboratory with a gripping sense of immediacy, and conversely, they bring the usually hidden forensic sciences into the light of day.

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#### From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-Forensic science is a fascinating and complex subject. Baden and Roach simplify the details but retain the interesting aspects and serve up exciting and illuminating cases culled from Baden's extensive background as former Chief Medical Examiner for New York City. His curriculum vitae includes a stint as the chief forensic pathologist for the Congressional Select Committee on Assassinations investigations into the deaths of JFK and Martin Luther King, Jr. Readers follow along during an autopsy, learn about bloodstain pattern analysis, discover the importance of insect analysis performed on corpses, and are introduced to the methods used to reconstruct faces from skeletons. All the information is presented in an easy-to-understand format, with plenty of grizzly detail. The crime-scene gaffs that derailed the O. J. Simpson trial, how DNA evidence has established the innocence of some wrongfully imprisoned prisoners, and the tests that determined the cause of Princess Diana's fatal accident are also addressed. Black-and-white photos add interest. Those who are interested in crime, criminal sciences, or just intrigued by science in general will find it difficult to put down this well-written and authoritative book.

*Carol DeAngelo, Kings Park Library, Burke, VA*

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#### From Library Journal

Blood spatter, witnesses, exhumations, and incompetent forensic pathologists this book takes us deep into the world of forensic science, where an accurate reading of blood spatter can mean the difference between guilt and innocence. Baden (*Unnatural Death: Confessions of a Medical Examiner*), former New York City medical examiner and current codirector of the New York State Police Medicolegal Investigation Unit, takes on these topics plus some not commonly discussed: blow flies, autoeroticism, and the one aspect of his work that is "scary and unsettling even terrifying." One feels part of the autopsy team as Baden who has performed more than 20,000 such procedures describes how the body arrives (bagged and tagged) at the morgue, how

the autopsy is performed, how to know the difference between cause and manner of death, and how a body is read by police and medical examiners for evidence. This book is more than the cases Baden handled; it is an in-depth, engrossing look, even for the squeamish, at how medical examiners work and why you want a competent one on your side. Recommended for all libraries. Karen Evans, Indiana State Univ., Terre Haute Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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