



# Corpse: Nature, Forensics, And The Struggle To Pinpoint Time Of Death

*Jessica Snyder Sachs*

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When detectives come upon a murder victim, there's one thing they want to know above all else: When did the victim die? The answer can narrow a group of suspects, make or break an alibi, even assign a name to an unidentified body. But outside the fictional world of murder mysteries, time-of-death determinations have remained infamously elusive, bedeviling criminal investigators throughout history. Armed with an array of high-tech devices and tests, the world's best forensic pathologists are doing their best to shift the balance, but as Jessica Snyder Sachs demonstrates so eloquently in *Corpse*, this is a case in which nature might just trump technology: Plants, chemicals, and insects found near the body are turning out to be the fiercest weapons in our crime-fighting arsenal. In this highly original book, Sachs accompanies an eccentric group of entomologists, anthropologists, biochemists, and botanists--a new kind of biological "Mod Squad"--on some of their grisliest, most intractable cases. She also takes us into the courtroom, where "post-O.J." forensic science as a whole is coming under fire and the new multidisciplinary art of forensic ecology is struggling to establish its credibility. *Corpse* is the fascinating story of the 2000-year search to pinpoint time of death. It is also the terrible and beautiful story of what happens to our bodies when we die.

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