



Sitting Up with the Dead: A Storied Journey through the American South

Pamela Petro

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For the first time in paperback, an acclaimed look at the American South through the lenses of its most acclaimed storytellers and their tales.

Rarely does a nonfiction work come along that is as original and refreshing as *Sitting Up with the Dead*. Here, take a ride with Pamela Petro as she embarks on a series of road trips through the states of the Old South to collect its stories and meet its tellers of traditional tales. Some of them are local celebrities, others national treasures. Among them are Ray Hicks, a National Heritage Fellow; Kathryn Windham, the “ghost lady”; Nancy Basket, a kudzu paper-maker; Colonel Rod, self-proclaimed “Florida cracker”; and Grammy Award-winner David Holt. You encounter plat-eyes and boo-hags, Jack the trickster and Brer Rabbit, mule eggs, singing turtles, talking corpses, and flying Africans from the sea islands of South Carolina.

Stories provide the connective tissue of the South, linking the past with the present. They join communities as widespread as the coastal plains of the Carolinas and Georgia, the swamps of the Gulf Coast, and the mountains and valleys of Appalachia. As distinctly American as jazz, they blend cultures and oral traditions as diverse as those of southern England, Ireland, West Africa, and native America. They contain bits of lived history, both from before the Civil War and after. *In Sitting Up with the Dead*, Pamela Petro offers a paradoxical wake for the undying body of the Old South, to hear its truths and contemplate its robust afterlife in the tallest, “lyingest,” most fruitful, and most haunting of its tales.

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