

Our Lips are Sealed

For anyone who has ever had a best friend or significant other, the conversation about whoever dies first is inevitable. From that a pact is likely born that whoever outlives the other has the sole responsibility of burying any secrets that need not see the light of day as soon as the death occurs—cringe-worthy high school diaries, browser histories, and over twenty years of smoking that have been kept from mom. When the time comes and we are no longer able to defend our secrets in this world, we hope that those who are closest to us will take the time to do a sweep on our behalf. This is a very organic and normal way people can safely share their last wishes while also creating comfort in discussions about death and dying—whether they be serious, silly, or both.

Crime Scene Cleaners often take it upon themselves to help in this role wherever appropriate. Keeping a departed (or living) person's secrets and integrity intact with regard to private materials, culturally taboo subject matter, or strange artifacts is all part of the job. To clarify, important and sentimental items are never kept from families working with a biohazard remediation service (or instances of serious criminal activity)—the level of care and sensitivity depends entirely on the situation and the customer's wishes. Sometimes these customers are the best friends and family members who know what they are looking for—they just need assistance in searching for, cleaning, or disposing of certain items. Sometimes there is no next of kin, and institutions like banks, businesses, or apartment managers have no preference about how work is to be performed. Every situation is unique, and with that, every approach is different, but it is always a Crime Scene Cleaner's obligation to respect the customer's needs, the deceased, and the space they are working in.

When stumbling across a surprise or two, such as pornography, adult toys, or strange collections—much like a close friend's reaction or somebody trying to cope with an awkward situation—laughter or a private exchange between technicians does happen. However, it is in that moment or with that job that these very human experiences are picked up and then laid to rest. There can be honesty without degradation, and humor is sometimes used as a coping mechanism for those whose hands are simultaneously cleaning up and bearing witness to the aftermath of a tragedy. The difference here is that these secrets, once found, are kept. There is no name-dropping, exploiting, or sharing beyond the necessary engagement of hands sifting through somebody's life in order to remediate the space.

But not all surprises are as light-hearted as Playboy magazines or a room full of beanie babies. There are many things within the human experience that people hide, and with each of them comes a different weight—like evidence of one last relapse, a severe medical diagnosis, or an extensive drinking problem. Sometimes, technicians may even stumble across interests or keepsakes that resemble who people really were on the inside, but who felt they could not share safely on the outside. With these things in mind—the utmost privacy and care are given.

Reaper Clean, Fresno's local Biohazard Remediation Company, is made up of a team of experienced Crime Scene Cleaners who are available to assist families throughout the Central Valley 24/7. They are also advocates who align themselves with causes that intersect with their line of work—such as suicide prevention, domestic violence awareness, drug rehabilitation, gun safety, mental health access, and LGBTQIA support. For every secret kept in these instances, there is also a weight in the heart that grows and demands action—and being a good friend or advocate in honor of those who are no longer with us can be an exceptional way to live in the face of one's own mortality.

For more information about Reaper Clean, go to www.reaperclean.com, email

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