



Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City

Robin Nagle

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"Meticulous . . . [Nagle's] passion for the subject really comes to life." *The New York Times*

New York City produces more than twelve thousand tons of household trash and recyclables a day. As quickly as it accumulates, it's hauled away. But who makes that happen? What's life like for the workers with careers built around garbage?

In Picking Up, the anthropologist Robin Nagle takes us inside New York City's Department of Sanitation, a largely unseen and often unloved army responsible for keeping the city alive. Nagle spent a decade with sanitation people of all ranks to learn what it takes to manage Gotham's garbage. She even took the job herself, driving trucks and plowing snow while enduring the physical aches, public abuse, and risk of injury that are constant realities of the job. Nagle offers an insider's perspective on the complex hierarchies, intricate rules, and obscure language unique to this mostly invisible world.

Not just a contemporary account, Picking Up charts New York City's four-hundred-year struggle with trash. It traces the city's waste-management efforts from a time when filth overwhelmed the streets to today's far more vigorous practices, which have made the city cleaner than it's been in decades.

Complete with vividly evoked characters and memorable descriptions of the sights and smells of the job, Picking Up reveals the vital role sanitation workers play in every city across the globe.

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