

★ **Springer Mountain: Meditations on Killing and Eating**

Wyatt Williams

The University of North Carolina Press (Sep 28, 2021)

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A short fever dream of a book, *Springer Mountain* combines historical records with personal philosophies about the evolution of meat-eating and vegetarianism in human beings.

Wyatt Williams, a restaurant critic, was on a mission to locate an idyllic farm, Springer Mountain, where all of the best restaurants claimed their chicken came from. But it turned out to be a made-up place. The chickens came out of a factory farm that slaughtered and processed hundreds of thousands of them daily, and divided them up for multiple distributors with different ethical ideals. Williams visited the factory, witnessed the gruesome process, and became obsessed with the notion of killing and eating animals. He got a job at a similar factory, killing cows. He tried hunting deer. He wanted to understand how humans got to this place of meat-eating.

A moving narrative about an artist's all-consuming curiosity, with snippets from speeches, letters, diaries, and novels that discuss vegetarianism and killing for meat, the book covers topics like the etymology of the word "meat"; the racism of colonists who slaughtered buffalo in order to starve the Native Americans who survived on them; and the Arctic communities who rely on whaling for food and tools. Williams's writing is thoughtful, even poetic at times, as he works to come to terms with the atrocity of factory farming and his role in the continuation of it. Photographs and paintings of slaughtered chicken, the horrifying machinery that kills animals in a factory, and a rotting carcass in the woods are interspersed in the text, all without commentary, leaving the audience to come to its own conclusions.

Springer Mountain is masterpiece investigation into the philosophy of killing for food.

ASHLEY HOLSTROM (September / October 2021)

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