One hundred percent of the people in this room are going to die. And when we shuffle off this mortal coil, we need to find an eternal resting place for our bodies.

About 36% of Americans decide to be buried, nearly half the rate from eighteen years ago.[[1]](#footnote-1) More and more Americans are deciding to be cremated, currently around 57%, and climbing.[[2]](#footnote-2) Why the change? Not only is it becoming too expensive to live in America, but it’s becoming too expensive to die.

A funeral with a traditional burial averages $7,848,[[3]](#footnote-3) not including the cost of a burial plot, which can add anywhere from $500 to $5,000.[[4]](#footnote-4) Cremation, which has long been regarded the less expensive, environmentally friendly alternative to burial,[[5]](#footnote-5) still averages $6,971[[6]](#footnote-6) with a funeral. Costs are only expected to rise as cemeteries run out of space, forcing people to exhume graveyards and stack coffins.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Families used to be responsible for their loved ones’ funerals. Death is a solemn inevitability, and the dead and their families deserve to be treated with respect. Today, death has been transformed into an industry worth $20 billion.[[8]](#footnote-8)

But what about that remaining 7% of Americans? Those who aren’t buried or cremated? These are the people who look into the future and see a solution.

Alkaline hydrolysis, also known as aquamation. When a body is naturally laid to rest, it undergoes a natural breakdown of organic materials. Aquamation accelerates this process. The body is placed into a stainless-steel vessel filled with 95% water and 5% alkali, which gently circulates at a high temperature and breaks down the body over a course of 6 to 8 hours. At the end of the process, all that remains are the bones, which are processed and returned in an urn, much like in a fire cremation.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Aquamation is much gentler than embalming or cremation. Embalming is an incredibly invasive process to artificially preserve the body for burial, and cremation violently destroys the body with fire. Aquamation, by contrast, is almost like putting your loved one into a warm bath,[[10]](#footnote-10) and the family receives 20 to 30 percent more ashes than they would after a fire cremation. The price is comparable as well, within $0 to $1,000 of the cost of a cremation.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Aquamation can also be a parting gift from you to your loved ones. You can save them money, and you can also save them the world.

The United States buries 800,000 gallons of formaldehyde[[12]](#footnote-12) inside embalmed bodies every year, poisoning the ground. Cremations release 360,000[[13]](#footnote-13) metric tons of carbon dioxide per year — that’s 534.6 pounds per person, or more than the annual per capita emissions of Afghanistan.[[14]](#footnote-14) We’re running out of places to bury people, yet we’re simultaneously making it harder to live.

Aquamation is clean. The water is sterile and recyclable. If the family chooses to embalm their loved one before aquamation, the chemicals will be broken down.[[15]](#footnote-15) The entire process uses less water than an American household uses in a day[[16]](#footnote-16) and has one tenth the carbon footprint of a flame cremation.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Funerals are emotionally and economically taxing times when we say a final goodbye to our loved ones; the funeral industry has no right to make it any more difficult. Death can seem strange, scary, and a far-away concept, and so I urge you now to take a moment to reflect. How will I best honor myself, my body, my family, and my planet?

When you find your eternal resting place, I hope it feels like a warm bath.

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