



Untitled

Elizabeth Ford

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From the Executive Director of Mental Health for Correctional Services in New York, comes a revelatory and deeply compassionate memoir that takes readers inside Bellevue and Rikers, and brings to life the world—the system, the staff, and the haunting cases—that shaped one young psychiatrist as she learned how to doctor and how to love.

Elizabeth Ford went through medical school unsure of where she belonged. It wasn't until she did her psychiatry rotation that she found her calling—to care for one of the most vulnerable populations of mentally ill people, the inmates of Rikers Island who are so sick that they are sent to the Bellevue Hospital Prison Ward for care.

These men were broken, unloved, without resources or support, and very ill. They could be violent, unpredictable, but they could also be funny and tender and needy. Mostly, they were human and they awakened in Ford a boundless compassion. Her patients made her a great doctor and a better person and, as she treated these men, she learned about doctoring, about nurturing, about parenting, and about love.

While Ford was a psychiatrist at Bellevue she becomes a wife and a mother. In her book she shares her struggles to balance her life and her work, to care for her children and her patients, and to maintain the empathy that is essential to her work—all in the face of a jaded institution, an exhausting workload, and the deeply emotionally taxing nature of her work.

Ford brings humor, grace, and humanity to the lives of the patients in her care and in beautifully rendered prose illuminates the inner workings (and failings) of our mental health system, our justice system, and the prison system.

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