



The Heart's Truth: Essays on the Art of Nursing (Literature and Medicine)

Cortney Davis

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A collection revealing the joys, fears, intimacies, and transcendent moments shared by a nurse and her patients “The Heart’s Truth should be required reading at every nursing school in the country. It offers a powerful and moving portrait of what it means to be a nurse. In writing that is of the highest quality, the reader is swept up in the drama of nursing and the compassion with which it is perfused.”—Richard Selzer, surgeon and author “Davis has perfectly captured the broader arc of movement from awkward, insecure novice to competent, often morally exhausted, clinician, with a poet’s touch.”—Amy M. Haddad, PhD “In her breathtaking collection of essays, Cortney Davis reveals ‘the details of flesh’ that comprise the core of a nurse’s experience. Writing with the power, precision and careful observation of a seasoned clinician and the sensitivity of a poet, Davis guides the reader along the challenging path of her career.”— Richard Berlin, poet and physician “Cortney Davis has an uncanny ability to give voice to the profound act of everyday nursing and its power in transforming the lives of people. Somehow, she sees the shadows and ghosts that fill our bodies and souls and makes sense of them, showing us that the divide between patient and provider is an artificial one that can get in the way of true understanding. The Heart’s Truth reminds us of the power of reflection and narrative and challenges us to reclaim these ways of knowing in the interest of healing our patients—and ourselves.”—Diana J. Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN, Editor-in-Chief, American Journal of Nursing

What is it like to be a student nurse washing the feet of a dying patient? To be a newly graduated nurse, in charge of the Intensive Care Unit for the first time, who wonders if her mistake might have cost a life? Or to be an experienced nurse who, by her presence and care, holds a patient to this world? Poet and nurse practitioner Cortney Davis answers these questions by examining her own experiences and through them reveals a glimpse into the minds and hearts of those who care for us when we are at our most vulnerable. The Heart’s Truth offers the joys, frustrations, fears, and miraculous moments that nurses, new and experienced, face every day. In these finely wrought essays, Davis traces her twin paths, nursing and writing, inviting readers to share what she discovers along the way—lessons not only about the human body but also about the human soul. Rich, intimate, and never shrinking from the realities of illness, the grace of healing, or the wonder of words, The Heart’s Truth will inspire student caregivers, intrigue readers, and affirm those who have long worked in nursing, a profession that Davis calls “odd, mysterious, humbling, addicting, and often transcendent.”

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