General

Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye
D. Bruce Foster
Macdougall Press
978-0-615-49388-6
Four Stars (out of Five)

In *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye*, Dr. D. Bruce Foster sets his story in a typical hospital emergency department filled with chaos, intensity, life-and-death decisions, and the bureaucracy that can take its toll on staff members.

As the main character in this medical drama, Dr. Alex Randolph spends his days in the emergency room of the Mason-Dixon Regional Medical Center. As department head, Randolph builds a cohesive team of professionals, but he is often in conflict with the hospital's corporate leaders. From heart attacks, diabetic comas, and advanced cancer to drug overdoses and crime victims, the physician and his team give patients the benefit of their knowledge and medical skills. While successfully building his team at Mason-Dixon, Alex's personal life is unsatisfying until he meets a nurse and young widow with two children. The day-to-day medical action carries the plot as their personal relationship evolves.

As might be expected, the corporate bureaucracy runs through all facets of hospital operatons at Mason-Dixon and often hinders the staff. For example, when Kevin Wells comes to the emergency room in the final stages of pancreatic cancer, Randolph discovers that no one has prepared Kevin or his family for the finality of the disease. The doctor explains to Mrs. Wells that her husband only has days to live, and that the decision needs to be made whether to let him die in the hospital or at home. Overworked doctors, nurses, and support staff race the clock to improve patient care and satisfy corporate goals. At the same time, everyone worries that they will displease the powers that be and become the next victim of a pink slip.

Drug wars enter the plot when a Latino male arrives with stab wounds. As the Crips and MS-13 gangs do battle, Randolph and his team are dragged into the middle of the wars simply by doing their jobs.

Dr. Foster writes from experience. Currently the medical director of an aeromedical helicopter service, he spent twenty-five years as chief of emergency medicine at a Pennsylvania

hospital. Although Dr. Foster has published two medical textbooks, *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye* is his first fiction title and he has done a commendable job. Characters are brought to life with ease and the plot moves steadily along in this entertaining drama. Foster creates emergency-room scenes that almost enable readers to smell and taste the fears and pressures of the staff, the patients, and their families. Unfortunately, the less-than-original title and ambiguous cover art may keep readers from investigating Foster's worthwhile story.

While not exactly the fast-paced thriller we might expect from the title and setting, those who look a little deeper will find a tale that resonates with real-life medical drama and includes the bonus of a credible love story. Recommended for those who enjoyed *ER* on television.

Pat Avery