



Malpractice

JJ Perry

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(270pp)

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From the hospital room to the courtroom, Malpractice is a suspenseful dramatic novel.

In JJ Perry's medical drama *Malpractice*, a young mother dies under the care of two doctors, and tensions arise as characters deal with the trial.

Admitted to the hospital with severe stomach pain and lightheadedness, Sarah, a tax accountant and the single mother of a nine-year-old girl with Down Syndrome, dies less than two weeks later. The doctors who had been taking care of her, Blackstone and Harrison, have opposite approaches to medicine, and Blackstone often undermines his teammate, which divides them and leads to a malpractice lawsuit.

Sarah's parents sue their practice for millions, claiming that Sarah would not have died if the doctors had been quicker to act. Over the course of three years, the characters struggle with the consequences of Sarah's death, both financially and emotionally.

Most characters have discernible but archetypal personalities. Sarah's ex, Doug, is lazy, insensitive, and selfish; Blackstone is tempestuous and proud. These help to distinguish them among the book's many names. Dialogue and personalities are both individualized, though they are sometimes exaggerated; Blackstone and Doug, for instance, are made to seem immature and rude to the extent that it becomes hard to believe that they haven't faced negative consequences for their behavior before. Characters are grammatically inconsistent within their conversations.

The story moves at a steady pace, though it features some gaps in time. Sections reach their natural conclusions before the plot progresses beyond them, and tension among the characters helps to propel it toward its cathartic, if too tidy, end.

Chapter numbers are sometimes skipped or duplicated, and changes between settings and perspective characters without transitions are jarring. Line breaks in the middle of sentences occur throughout. Medical jargon and legal terms are abundant and slow down some scenes. However, their definitions are easy to discern in context without interrupting the story.

Much of the book consists of dialogue, which is entertaining and purposeful, but which means that settings and imagery are neglected. It is often difficult to discern where or when a scene is taking place. Some actions are hard to picture and seem to come out of nowhere, such as one character pointing a gun, which had not been previously mentioned and is not mentioned again, at another in the courtroom. Such scenes seem more about generating shock than about contributing to the story.

Malpractice is a suspenseful courtroom—and hospital room—drama whose characters are easy to despise or to root for.

AIMEE JODOIN (May 13, 2019)

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