



The Special Patient

Aimee Inomata

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"Asylum mentality preserves what is called 'nonreciprocal observation.' One is observed without being able to observe properly. One's state of mind - mistakes, awkwardness, and transgressions - is catalogued, diagnosed, and studied; whereas one's own observations are held in suspicion and doubt and are called unsound, resistance, arrogance, transference, and the like. An examination by the insane of their conditions, including the state of mind and therapeutic intentions of all their caretakers, is more or less prohibited." Dr Edward Podvoll. This is the story of a man who did question those conditions and the woman who collected all the pieces of the puzzle he was supposed to be - the results of the 'non-reciprocal observation' - only to discover that much of it was wrong. It is a story of systemic power versus the will of the individual and how to maintain truth in the face of lies. The Special Patient is a nonfiction novel told through a mixture of narrative and exposition of despair, resilience and reconstruction but most importantly of hope – for those who have been told they will never recover from mental illness and that their normal lives are effectively over. It is also a story about a university academic who never imagined that the man of her dreams would be a Nietzsche-quoting ex-mental patient. Through him, she will be required to confront her own fears and prejudices and to begin a search for the truth of Holden's experience through access to his medical, criminal and psychiatric records that will lead them into places neither could have foreseen.

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