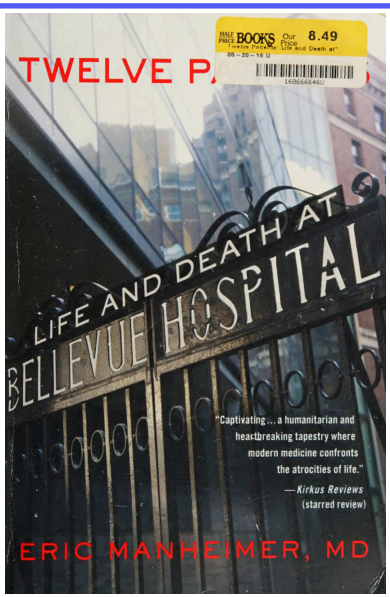


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For Diana

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TWELVE PATIENTS

The One-Strike Law

The view from my office at Bellevue Hospital looks north up the Eas River. The south side of the UN building rises like a thin polishe and, and it cuts through the arc of the 59th Street Bridge that reache ast over Roosevelt Island and then to Queens. On the southern tip o Roosevelt Island, I can make out the skeleton of the smallpox hospita ow in ruins. FDR Drive pulses with white lights heading south as ook out at seven o'clock on a still-dark morning. Red taillights strin orth in the dark evenings as people head back to the outer suburb ocked in their cars.

The old Bellevue psychiatry building, now a men's homeless shelter rames my window on the left. The building is stained with water an eglect. Just to its right is the New York University School of Medicin vith its laboratories, classrooms, and hospital beds. Hidden beyon ne construction site exactly in the middle of my view is a small whit ent. The site had been our northern parking lot until September 11 001, when air-conditioned freezer trailers were moved in and sur ounded by a chain-link fence. Guards monitored access. The remain f the dead from 9/11 were brought to be identified, their DNA mea ared against the DNA extracted from toothbrushes and clothes. I eminded me of the ZAKA in Jerusalem (the Hebrew acronym of a raeli organization that aids disaster victims), who came to the site o suicide bombing wearing their tzitzis and collecting brain matter an ngers into plastic bags for burial, so that the souls of the dead woul e able to join their people when the Messiah came.

The tent is still there as I look out my same window eight years ter, though the refrigerated trucks and guards are gone. The view i

being progressively obliterated. The Economic Development Corpor
tion has taken over our north-side parking lot and leased the area to
California company to build a biomedical laboratory building. I figu
I have about another three months before the UN disappears con
pletely, and with it the medical school, along with the old psychiat
building *cum* homeless shelter.

When most people hear "Bellevue" today, they picture an ol
fashioned insane asylum—but that is just one aspect of this cit
within-a-city where I spend my days. For aficionados of *Law & Ord*
or *Nurse Jackie*, Bellevue is synonymous with psychotic killers perp
trating random acts of violence. But Bellevue is the oldest hospital i
the country, 275 years old. It is also arguably the most famous publ
hospital in the United States. The first maternity ward, first pedia
ric ward, first C-section—Bellevue is full of firsts. Its public sanit
tion programs date back to the Civil War. Yellow fever, tuberculosi
typhoid, and polio epidemics were brought under control here. Famou
for psychiatry, Bellevue also pioneered child psychiatry with the fir
inpatient unit complete with a public school for children. Two Bellevu
physicians won the Nobel Prize for heart catheterization. The first ca
diac pacemaker was developed at Bellevue. So was the early treatme
of drug addiction.

Today, the hospital continues to work at the cutting edge of pub
lic health issues—HIV, lethal flu, potential terrorist epidemics. Bell
vue also has a hundred-bed prison unit to care for prisoners of Rike
Island, the largest prison complex in the country. As part of the cit
hospital health system, we look after the needs of all New Yorkers-
from Park Avenue to the tenement housing of recently arrived Fukie
ese immigrants, survivors of torture, and everything in between. Wit
thirty thousand discharges and half a million visits in our hundre
plus different outpatient clinics, we see the effects of global problen
often before most people know the problems exist: outbreaks, vi
lence, climate change, tobacco, drugs, and the fast-food industry. W
are known for many things, in particular our emergency room. If a c
gets shot in Manhattan, his first choice is often Bellevue. If a diplom
gets attacked at the UN, he gets taken to Bellevue. If an investme