



The Day Hospital

Sally Read

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Across one day in London, twelve elderly men and women sit in flats, walk, or wait, and speak about their histories, their hopes, their loves, their disappointments and griefs -and above all seek to express who they are and what their life has been. Most are immigrants -Irish, West Indian, Polish, Italian, and German, struggling with a feeling of rootlessness. Drawn from Sally Read's experiences as a community psychiatric nurse in central London, these twelve monologues are the voices of schizophrenia, dementia, depression, and anxiety. Authentic and moving, they form a vivid portrait of the capital -its richness and its sadnesses, its waves of immigration, and its living witness to the devastating effects of World War II. Four of the voices are Jewish refugees who arrived in London as children, leaving parents to die in Nazi-occupied Europe. Candid and vivid, these monologues make us privvy to entire lives through a poetic voice that is at once brutally realistic, and beautifully realised. Above all, these poems give marvellous expression to people whose speech, memory, and coherence is often marred by illness. The result is a stunning insight into other people's stories, and how we may come to measure our own.

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