

## Anatomy of a Kidnapping

*A Doctor's Story*

Steven L. Berk, M.D.

Four hours. That was the amount of time between looking down the barrel of a gun and finding myself free along a silent highway lined by cotton fields. In the time period that seemed eternal, my unique experiences as a doctor created an indescribable bond between myself and my captor. I looked upon the situation just as I looked upon a medical emergency: I took a deep breath, hid my panic, and tried to solve the situation.

**IN MARCH 2005, DR. STEVEN BERK WAS KIDNAPPED** in Amarillo, Texas, by a dangerous and enigmatic criminal who entered his home, armed with a shotgun, through an open garage door. Dr. Berk's experiences and training as a physician, especially his understanding of Sir William Osler's treatise on *aequanimitas*, enabled him to keep his family safe, establish rapport with his kidnapper, and bring his captor to justice.

This harrowing story is not just about a kidnapping. It is a story about patients, about physicians, and about what each experience has taught Berk about life and death, mistakes, family, the practice of medicine, and the physician-patient relationship. It is a story about how Berk's profession prepared him for an unpredictable situation and how any doctor must address life's uncertainties.

This phenomenal memoir evokes Lewis Thomas and Richard Selzer in its insights into medicine, but it is also the suspenseful drama of an encounter with a criminal that could have ended badly. One moment in [Dr. Berk's] life is ultimately decided by a lifetime of experience as a dedicated physician and teacher.

Truly a harrowing, wonderful and ultimately a redemptive tale.

—ABRAHAM VERGHESE, *author of Cutting for Stone*

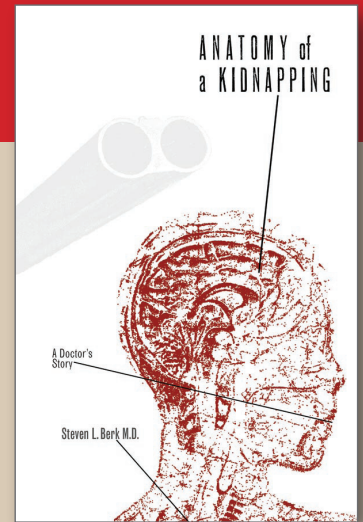
Not only is Dr. Berk a master of writing an interesting case history, his ability to tell a story is strikingly rich, deep, and engaging. I laughed, I cried, and came away thinking this is a story that has to be told. I started reading it and I could not put it down—or I probably would not have been able to fall asleep that night without knowing how it ended for Dr. Berk but also for [the perpetrator].

—VICTORIA SUTTON, *Paul Whitfield Horn Professor, Texas Tech School of Law*

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**STEVEN L. BERK, M.D.**, is dean of the Texas Tech School of Medicine and provost of Texas Tech Health Sciences Center. As a physician certified in infectious disease and geriatrics, Berk has treated an outstanding diversity of patients in his forty-year medical career.



*One physician's tale of physical and psychological survival*

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