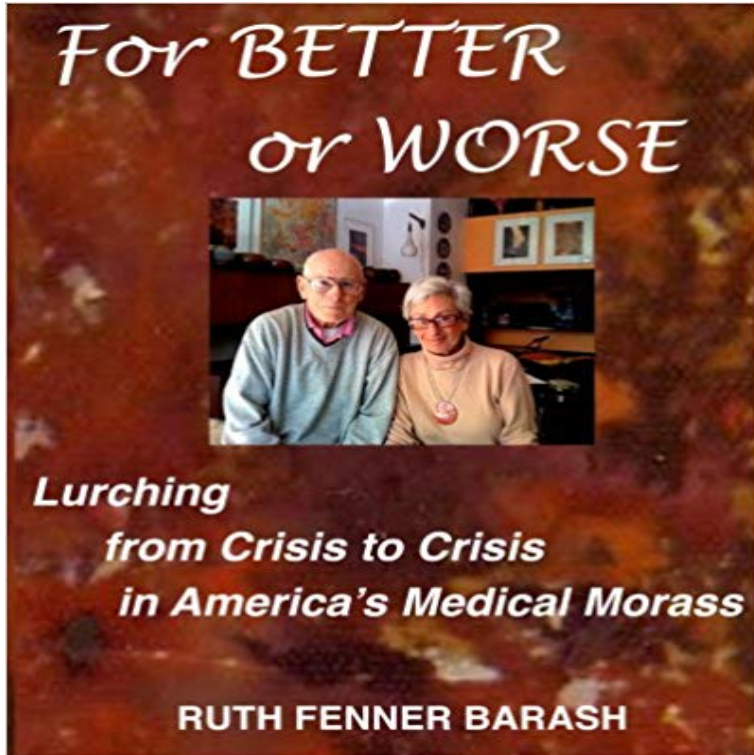


For Better or Worse: Lurching From Crisis-to-Crisis in Americas Medical Morass



Philip and Ruth Barash, a long-married husband and wife, try to keep their heads above the quicksands of illness and care. Their journey is a critical and moving look at a medical system that prioritizes itself above its patients. FOR BETTER OR WORSE is the story of a man who, not through his own choice, overused the medical system, whom the system abused and who suffered a horrible dying. Its a lament about the sick state of our wildly expensive MD/hospital/pharma complex that prioritizes itself and doesnt deliver the goods for the patient. We all like to think we have good doctors, and that if we were hospitalized, well be competently cared for. We also like to think Santa will bring us nice presents if weve been good children. This story, unfortunately, is your lump of coal. IS THIS THE MEDICAL SYSTEM WE WANT? As the national debate on health care heats up, this may be an apt, albeit anecdotal, addition to the discussion, beyond the immediately personal: the absurd financial costs of useless consultations and interventions; the wrenching emotional costs; the lack of respect for a patients time and convenience; above all, despite alleviation and palliation, the pain that was so rarely purged, even when healing was no longer the target: it should all be part of the conversation. DEATH PANELS To talk about death panels is clearly a provocation; but its time to be more realistic about the many sick and elderly who might wish to exit on their own terms rather than be forced to go through the miseries that Philip endured. DYING WITH DIGNITY We all know that every story will conclude. But how? The peaceful end of fairy tales, the promised dignity in dying, was not Philips story. Death is not the problem. Thats a universal given, neutral, and we are each free to make of it what we wish. Philips problem, and the problem many of us may be doomed to face, is the seemingly

endless getting there, a dying we dont want.

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