



## A Bed by the Window

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Psychiatrist Peck, whose self-help book *THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED* has been on the best-seller list for six years, sets his first novel in an unusual locale: a nursing home. Willow Glen is well run by an efficient and wise administrator. Among the patients, many of whom are quite old, is Stephen Solaris, a young man who is completely paralyzed, unable to move or speak. Instead of a room he occupies a gurney in the hall near the nurses' station. Despite his handicaps, he is brilliant, having been discovered and moved from a home for the retarded; he is able to communicate via a letter board. His position in the center of activity is his own choice and symbolic of his unattached state. Stephen and his condition prompt both great love and great hate. Just as he is about to get his dearest wish—a computer which will allow him ease of communication—he is savagely murdered.

As Detective Tom Petri interviews the staff and residents of Willow Glen, he settles upon Heather Barsten, called by patients “the Angel of Willow Glen,” the young and compassionate practical nurse on duty the night of the murder. Heather, in love with the extraordinary Stephen, is so caring and direct with her patients that the dying want her to be with them at the end. She herself is a patient of Dr. Stasz Kolnietz, psychiatrist on the staff. As a student worker, he had discerned Stephen's intelligence and taught him to read.

As the background of these characters and others unfolds, Peck reveals hidden conflicts and desires. Good and evil are too patly personified, and there is even a suggestion of Satanic possession. Moreover, the solution is rather open-ended—the murderer is not apprehended. Is there to be a sequel?

In spite of these shortcomings, Peck's book is strangely satisfying. *A BED BY THE WINDOW* presents nursing home residents as interesting individuals with sexual and spiritual needs, still capable of growth and change.

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