



# **A Five Hundred Pound Amoeba: and Other Psychiatric Tales**

*Steve Sobel*

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Jake Burnham is so depressed he can barely utter a word, let alone find the strength to get out of bed. He feels more like a five hundred pound amoeba than a human being. For Kevin, a delusional belief that a famous singer loves him brings relief from a world of stigma, poverty and put-downs. An intern, new to the emergency department, encounters a young woman who presents in extreme distress due to an imagined body defect. Through his girlfriend's voice mail messages, we join Keith in getting a sense of what it's like to be in a roller coaster of a relationship with someone suffering from borderline personality disorder. As a psychiatrist at a rural community mental health center, Dr. Steve Sobel encounters the gamut of psychiatric illnesses, including the most severe, as many of those afflicted with the most disabling disorders are only able to receive care in such a setting. In his collection of short stories and vignettes, *A Five Hundred Pound Amoeba and Other Psychiatric Tales*, Dr. Sobel describes how those suffering the frequently incapacitating consequences of psychiatric disorders experience their illnesses, how their loved ones are affected and how the clinician responds. By combining insight into the patients' perspectives with his psychiatric knowledge, he offers a uniquely informative and intriguing narrative. The stories provide an accurate portrayal of a diverse sample of psychiatric disorders with an emphasis on the more severe end of the spectrum such as psychotic disorders or treatment-refractory illnesses. Other stories describe disorders which are less familiar to laypeople and less commonly described in such narratives. Each story includes a "follow-up note" -- providing a glimpse into the viewpoint of the treating psychiatrist of each fictional case. Long-term outcome is revealed in the follow up note. Diagnostic and treatment considerations and other impressions are addressed. The stories are fictionalized accounts, but are consistent with Dr. Sobel's experience of actual cases.

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