

## ★ Heart in the Right Place: A Memoir

CAROLYN JOURDAN. Algonquin, \$23.95  
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Former U.S. Senate counsel Jourdan writes of giving up her fast-paced life in Washington to work in her father's family medical practice office in east Tennessee. "For forty years, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week," she writes, "Momma and Daddy ran a homemade, low paid 911 service for a large rural community. There was no such thing as a day off, ever." When her mother had a heart

attack, leaving the front desk unmanned, Jourdan returned home to help keep the area's only doctor's office afloat while she recovered. What began as a two-day stay stretched out indefinitely, forcing Jourdan to learn to "calmly register nice people with hard jobs who routinely came in covered in hog or chicken blood." Missing Washington, she wrestles with questions of courage and loyalty, belonging and identity, and living with meaning and purpose. The demands of her new job test her, from the drama of triaging the waiting room and the tedium of negotiating the Medicare coding system to the loss of several favorite patients. In the end, she finds that she is after all her parents' daughter, possessing strength that earned her mother the nickname "Sarge," as well as her father's selfless devotion to this working-poor community. Jourdan's dispatches from the reception desk make for a stirring, beautiful memoir that is alternately hilarious and heart-breaking, and ultimately a triumph. (June)