

H E A L

Humanism Evolving through Arts and Literature



BETWEEN THE HURRICANES

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Department of Biomedical Sciences

spring



2019



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

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MORNING DREAMING

Gabriela Cintron, Class of 2022

I woke up this morning
and my house was a mess.
Everything was so squished
and my dog slept on my face
because we have no room
in this box of an apartment.
But it's okay because my
lucky numbers were 779 774 7
and I won the lottery
so I live in a mansion
and my dog is a tiger
with another bed for his butt
and everything is squeaky clean
made of gold. And I am rich,
also a president and queen of Spain.
But never mind because
I just opened my eyes
and now my tiger is a dog again
sitting on my face
and my house is a mess.

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HEAL is a place for medical students to share their growth and development, for faculty and staff to impart their knowledge gained from experience, and for members of the community to express how health and healing have impacted their lives.

We hope this work increases your appreciation for the art of medicine.

THE 5TH ANNUAL “HUMANISM IN MEDICINE” ESSAY CONTEST

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1ST PLACE

SPEAKING UP

by
Ariana Trautmann,
Class of 2020

It was the last week of my EMS elective. I was incredibly lucky to ride with one of the EMS captains who was eager to take me to any call that sounded interesting. We were called to a possible stroke. An 82-year-old woman with sudden onset unilateral weakness and expressive aphasia. The paramedic and EMT on scene were two I had met before. We actually talked earlier that day about the love we share for the medical field. The captain told me to hop in the back of the ambulance while they got the patient set up for transportation. I sat in the back next to the patient and smiled at her trying to think of how I could interact with this woman who couldn't speak. That's when I heard it. The crew was talking about the "f-ing stroke this woman is having." I was taken aback. Maybe I had misheard them? No. There it was again. They said it again, and again, and they were laughing. "I mean she's over here having an f-ing stroke." They were maybe a foot away from the patient and they were making jokes about her condition.

She may have had a stroke, I thought, but she's not deaf, what are they doing? I turned red. My cheeks have the unforgiving habit of gradually but surely painting themselves the color of any emotion I feel. Wasn't I just having a conversation earlier with the both of them about how much they love caring for patients? I know they have seen a lot. I know they might be burned out. I know they have seen the system be abused and misused, but I don't understand why they think it's okay to talk inches away from a patient about her probable stroke and joke about it.

In that moment, I wished I was bold. I wished I was the kind of person who could speak my mind if something irked me. I wished I was a better medical student. If I couldn't even speak up now in front of people I likely would never meet again, then what kind of doctor would I be? If I couldn't do something to stop this woman from hearing the words "f-ing stroke" being spat out repeatedly and carelessly behind her, then what good was I? Ashamed, I bit my lip. I was too meek to ask them to stop. Whoever said "the meek shall inherit the earth" clearly has never spoken to me. All I could think to do was distract her. I may

not have been able to muster up the courage to say anything, but I wasn't going to let her listen to it any longer. She wasn't able to speak, but her ability to comprehend what was being said behind her was indisputably intact as one could visibly see the tears that were pooling in her eyes as she heard the words "stroke, stroke, stroke."

"You look a little chilly. Do you want a blanket?" It was all I could think to say. A yes or no question. She could still communicate that way, after all. And she did look cold. She was pulled out of her own bed, from her home, into the pouring rain and into a freezing, metal truck. She gave a small nod yes. To my surprise, the truck finally became quiet. All that could be heard was the rumbling of the loud engine. The paramedic looked up at me, seemingly caught off guard and said, "Oh. Thank you." And she handed me a blanket for the patient. The conversation had ceased. No more was said about her possible stroke and they continued to perform their duties in silence. I sat by the patient and reached for her tiny, cold hand and she gave mine a tiny squeeze in return.

I did not ride with the ambulance to the hospital. Once all had been done in the back of the bus and the EMT was in the driver's seat preparing for departure, I turned to leave for the captain's truck where he had been waiting for me. I made sure she was still warm enough before I left and told her that they were going to take good care of her.

I couldn't be absolutely sure they would actually take good care of her in the remainder of that ride, but I had a feeling that somehow, even without being bold, I had gotten through to them. That day taught me that there are many ways to handle any given situation. Reflecting on that experience, I don't believe boldly scolding and shaking my finger at the two that were in the bus with me would have done any good. Causing a scene certainly would not have made the patient feel more comfortable. But the warm blanket did. Someone sitting by her and acknowledging her did. Being meek

did. In the end, less was truly more. It's often easy to forget other people's comfort and fears and lose it in the intricacies and duties required of one in the healthcare profession. I believe the paramedic and EMT from that day are actually good-hearted, caring people, who, at one time, never forgot to check on a patient's comfort and never joked about a patient's condition within arms distance from them. I have seen many healthcare professionals who seem to forget. Forget why they went into medicine. Forget the patient's comfort. Forget the patient.

My biggest fear is that one day, I too, will forget. In our clinical learning center, we're taught to always ask if the patient is comfortable before beginning an exam; it's become routine. However, it's important to remember comfort isn't just defined physically. I will carry the memory of this moment with me for the rest of my career. I will remember how I handled that situation and keep the patient at the forefront of everything I do. After all, that's why I went into medicine. I will not forget.



Dominique Williams, Class of 2023

The initial encounter went smoothly. I stepped into my preceptor's office, calculating the various outcomes of my next encounter, and proceeded to give a detailed outline of my patient. I eagerly awaited for a response as my preceptor diligently typed away on his phone. As my words became fewer, he peered over his email and smiled. I was unsure if he was elated that my rambling had ended or if he was pleased with my thorough report. He plainly said "Good, we will return to the room and you can discuss your plan of care with the patient." This was a reward unlike any other. I was floating as we walked across the hall, proud that I had proven my worth as a medical student. I was determined to give this patient the best care he had received all day. I knocked on the door, put on my game face, and walked inside.

"Hello again!" I wanted him to feel at ease so I asked if he wanted to discuss any other issues with the doctor before I proceeded. He kindly declined and rested back on his chair. I happily explained that most of his labs were good and then abruptly changed my tone when I showed him my disapproval of his high LDL

cholesterol. I questioned why the value had changed so drastically from his previous visit. He looked at me with reluctance and explained that he had been consuming meals from every fast food restaurant his sights landed on. He enthusiastically listed places like Popeye's, Zaxby's, Chick-Fil-A, KFC, and a slew of other similar places. Without hesitation I told him he should not be eating fried foods so often. I was adamant that this was a risk to his health. I was so passionate about helping him that I didn't realize my voice was forceful instead of suggestive.

He looked at me like a child who had just been reprimanded by his parents. The tone in his voice changed and he stated his next words so clearly I felt them resonate in my bones. "You don't understand." Immediately I felt my reaction, I was offended. How could I not understand? I was someone who tried sincerely to see other's perspectives. I held my tongue and continued to listen to what he had to say. He explained that he was recently released

from incarceration. The food they served was beneath any known edible substance. They are forced to eat slime called food because it was the next best option to starvation. Anything served was either expired, stepped on, rolled in dirt, or a mixture of all three. He continued to explain that when he was released, the food on the outside was a sanctuary he had been deprived of for all of those years. He explained that he didn't know when the next time he would get a meal like this was, so he was going to eat up as much as he could for as long as he could. I felt guilty but I still lacked empathy. I responded by saying I understood, but I still stood by my initial recommendation of avoiding the fried foods and consuming more vegetables. He gently said "I understand. I will do better." We shook hands and parted ways soon after.



My preceptor was composed, silent, and observant during the entire encounter. We returned to his office and he looked at me with his usual demeanor. I felt relieved that I had let the patient know how important his health was and expected my

preceptor to congratulate me on a job well done. He took a few moments before he spoke. The first words that followed were "I expected more." My mind went into full panic mode. I was rerunning scenarios of what had potentially gone wrong. He said, "For someone full of empathy, you showed our last patient none." I felt like a dagger had been thrown and pierced me straight in the heart. Had we developed two different memories from that last patient encounter? He explained to me the realities of jail and what our previous patient had endured. I felt like a monster. I lacked understanding with the one patient who probably needed it the most. I sat in my chair and licked my wounds as I replayed the situation the way it should have gone. That patient was one of the most kind and understanding people I had encountered on my preceptorship. Thanks to him, every patient I encountered after him has been welcomed with empathy and understanding. My only regret is that I didn't get the chance to treat him with the same honor.

Representation MATTERS

Shalom Chege, Class of 2022

Representation saves lives. Representation lifts folks up from the ground and gives them a reason to dream, to hope. Representation provides vision, and vision fuels dreams.

As a young, black, immigrant woman in the STEM field, representation made all of the difference. My father, a young, black immigrant physician, was the reason why I never doubted that such a career was made for me as well. My entire life, I grew up assuming, taking for granted that I could be a doctor. I was not intimidated by the academic rigor, the years in school, the long nights, the loans you take out, any of that. Why? Well, because my daddy did it.

And he always told me I could do it too. Representation matters.

However, until my senior year of college, I didn't fully understand representation's importance. Then I had the honor and pleasure of co-teaching a liberal studies math class in a nearby county's high school during the fall semester of my senior year. The children in my class were typical high school students—excepting the fact that they attended school in a poor county. Thus, the resources afforded to them from elementary school until the time they walked into my class were slim at best.

In the early days, it was a disaster. The students didn't trust us, or like that we expected much more from them than previous teachers had. Defiance was rampant and performance was abysmal. At the peak of my frustration, it finally struck me that I was the problem, not them. Here I was, in a classroom of predominantly black students, standing at the front as a black student myself and taking absolutely no steps to really get to know them or allow them to get to know me.

So the next day, I walked into the classroom, sat down on top of

a desk and asked, "Well, what do you want to know about me?"

What followed was an extremely awe-inspiring conversation. These children asked everything you could imagine—where I was born, who my parents were, where I have lived—until finally, one of them got up the courage and yelled from the back, "So what you mixed with?"

I was stunned. I blinked and looked up, so he immediately began to apologize, but I said, "No, you have nothing to be sorry for."

So then I stood up and asked the class, "How many of you think I'm part white?" Nearly every hand in the room went up.

I had to hold on to the chairs to stop the trembling in my knees as my heart broke for all of these students. I tried to look into as many faces as possible and saw nothing but sincerity and curiosity. Here I was, a dark-skinned black girl teaching their class, but the world had taught them already, at such a young age, that this level of success must be correlated with some hidden whiteness.

I cleared my throat. As I spoke, I made eye contact with every single student in the classroom. "I am black, like you. Just like you. I'm not part white or anything else. All of the stuff I've talked about doing, like applying to college, I did so well because of, not in spite of, who I am. That means all of you have that in you, too, and my goal in this class is to make you see it. Someone told me long ago that I was smart enough to do anything I wanted, and before I walk out that door for the last time y'all are gonna believe that too."

A holy hush fell on that classroom and I know God was there with me, with all of us. In the coming months I got questions about SATs, college applications, careers, and not because I was some sort of brilliant educator. I cannot pretend that I did such an incredible job teaching them that immediately they began looking up colleges and technical schools.



I believe what happened in that classroom on that day was representation. The kids finally had a picture of what they would look like if they ran full speed towards greatness. Most importantly, they saw it was something very possible to do. It clearly wasn't super hard or impossible. Why? Well it's simple—because I had done it. And I was there to tell them that they could do it, too.

I think about those kids almost every day, and how they defied all expectations by raising the class average from a D on the first test to an A by the time their final for the semester came around. I did not lower the bar. I did not, as many people suggested, “dumb the class down” for them. I taught them advanced material at an advanced pace and they absorbed all of it, proving just how incredible they were.

Towards the end of the semester, as I was handing back homework assignments, I told one student that his aptitude for word problems pointed towards a possible career in physics.

“Really, Ms. Shalom?” he asked with a big grin. “Hey, maybe I wanna be one of those who teach physics at college! Like your professors!”

“Absolutely! You would be an amazing physics professor,” I replied.

Immediately, his friends exploded into laughter and I turned around, baffled. He seemed to be deep in thought, but the rest of them were literally bent over, in tears.

“What's so funny?” I asked.

“Nothing, Ms. Shalom,” he said, lifting his face up to mine, “It's just that no one ever took me saying that kind of stuff seriously before. Usually, they kind of just laugh.”

BOK TOWER

Roddy Bernard, Class of 2019



SLOW MOTION

Cordy McGill-Scarlett, Class of 2020

LADYBUG

Stephen Quintero, MD
Department of Family Medicine and Rural Health

In the golden meadow,
In the warm sun I lay.
Trying to lighten my burden away,
My troubles and sorrows flickered the more,
Til my head and my heart were nothing but sore.

Then suddenly a tickle on my left hand,
The little black feet did softly land.
It was round and orange with two little black spots,
It was tiny, so small; no more than a dot.

It crawled up my finger to the very top tip,
Where it waltzed a little circle and then seemed to dip.
Why around it went then down and then up,
All the way back to the tippy tip top.

Was it sent for me or here merely by chance?
I wondered and pondered as I watched it dance.
My heart was warmed and my face had a smile,
The burdens I'd suffered had gone for a while.

This littlest creature had held back the rain,
With its strange little dance, it erased all my pain.
With one last scurry it went to the top,
Then it turned and it faced me and came to a stop.

Then it curtsied and dipped and with a small bow,
Seemed to declare it was finished for now.
Two little curtains parted with grace,
They hid the smallest of wings, barely a trace.

In the spark of a moment it flew through the air,
Swaying this way and that way and with it my cares.



SPRING BLOOMS
Casey Gentile, Class of 2022

MAINTAINING THE PEACE

Shellon Baugh, Class of 2023

It is dark outside.
The wind is calm and I
fall asleep.
I should have watered
the plants or let
the dog out but I forgot.
They'll be alright, though.
I'll do it tomorrow.
The wind is calm and
it's dark outside.
Someone just whispered.
I think there is someone
in my house.
I thought I locked the door.
Maybe if I crawl under
the bed, they won't find me.
Footsteps are getting louder.
I'm under the bed and
I see the shadows made
by the moonlight on the bodies.
Should I stay quiet?
I should stay quiet because
the wind is calm and
it's dark outside.

SELF- ANALYSIS

Roddy Bernard, Class of 2019

More or less
Less is more.
That is unless
I desire more.

Reassess
My inner core.
Weightless stress
Prevents I soar.

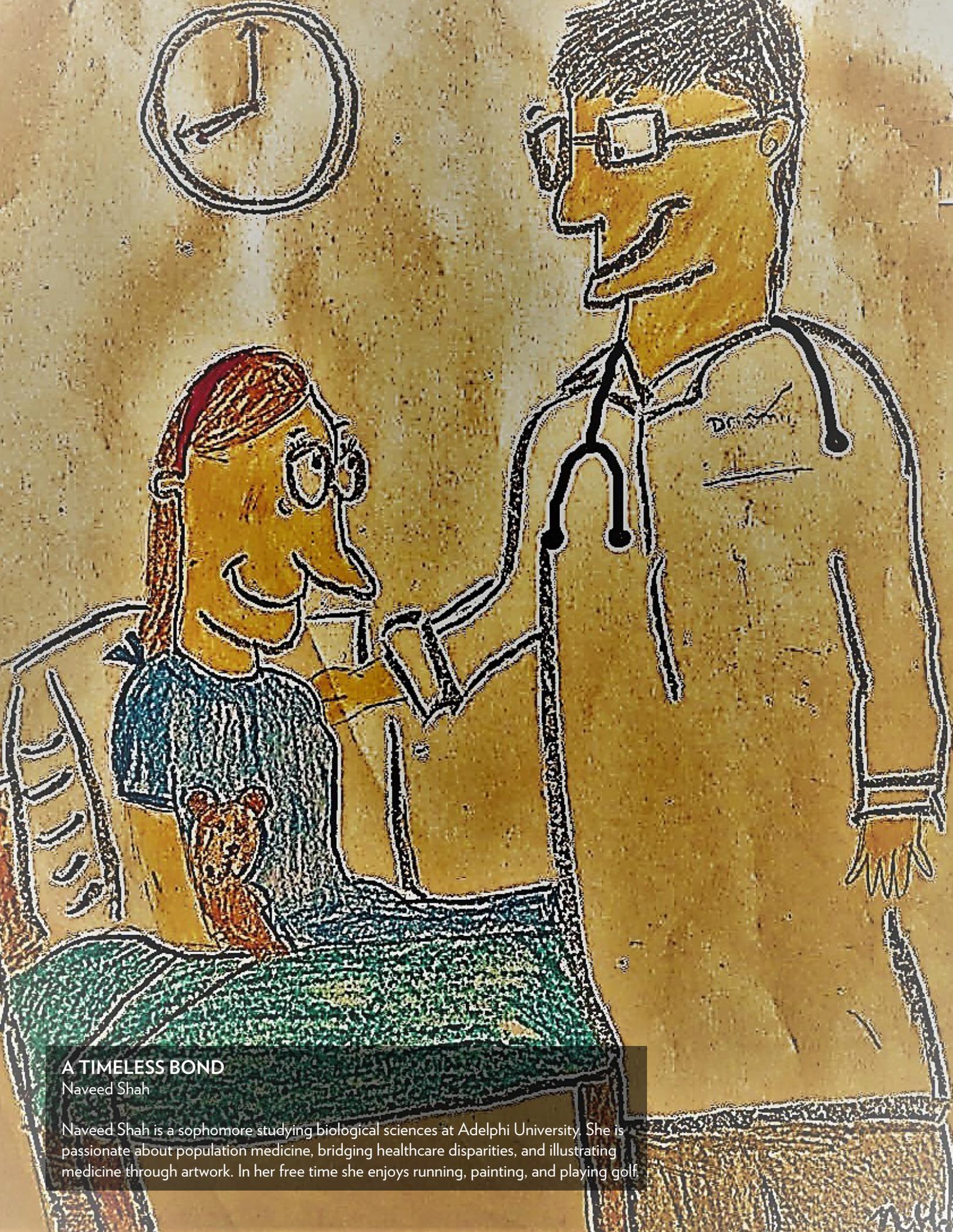
New distress.
Self-fought War.
Ideal success,
Not as before.

Defy the guess.
Not anymore.
Proudly confess
What I care for.

Happiness
Opens doors.
Cleans a mess
Calms the shores.

So happiness
I will explore.
For with it
Life is more.

Author's note: As we grow in the medical field, we become aware of previously unknown opportunities. Career choices based on salaries and the desire to win recognition through awards can shift the way we approach our medical career. Our original intentions of why we pursued medicine are tested. However, we should reflect and consider if altering the path is what will truly lead to our ultimate happiness.



A TIMELESS BOND

Naveed Shah

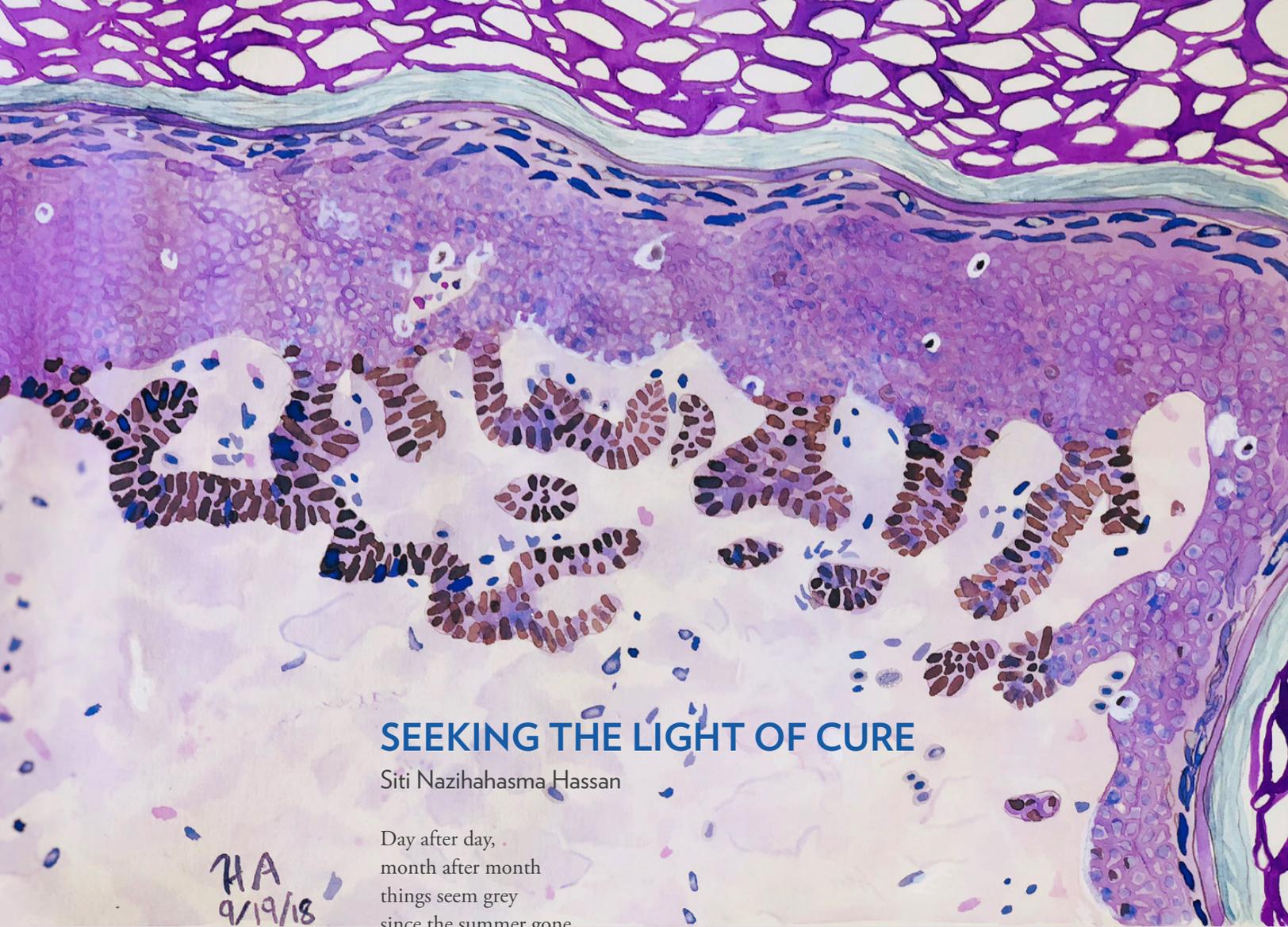
Naveed Shah is a sophomore studying biological sciences at Adelphi University. She is passionate about population medicine, bridging healthcare disparities, and illustrating medicine through artwork. In her free time she enjoys running, painting, and playing golf.



TROUBLED WATERS
Grady Powell
Office of Information Technology



THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM
Abigail Schirmer, Class of 2022



SEEKING THE LIGHT OF CURE

Siti Nazihahasma Hassan

Day after day,
month after month
things seem grey
since the summer gone

Those wicked cells,
aggressive and progressive
dividing and resistive
stopping life like a beast
deep beneath the thickest of skin

My heart thumps fast
seeking for answers
what is the cure?
will the knife do?
or the radiation rays?
or the magic bullet?
or just sit and pray?

To kill, we need a triad of spells
blocking the cycle, so it won't flourish
inhibiting the proliferation, so it won't conquer
inducing the apoptosis, so it won't spread

This journey will never end
hope keeps moving
work keeps going
in search of that meaningful turning point
when life is not a joke
to surrender for that thing we call 'cancer.'

SOLAR LENTIGO
Hana Ahmed, Class of 2019

HA
9/19/18

Siti Nazihahasma Hassan is a PhD student in Neuro-Oncology at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Kelantan, Malaysia. She is currently working on cotreatment targeting to kill glioma-like stem cells in Malignant Glioma. Research is her atmosphere, Music and Arts are her soul.



LOOKING GLASS
Julianna Kacheris, Class of 2021