

2022

Fiction of a Medical Student

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Recommended Citation

Rips, A. (2022). Fiction of a Medical Student. *Quill & Scope*, 14 (1). Retrieved from

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Crystallize your rage.

The missed birthdays and anniversaries, the dinners, the family reunions, the parties your friends will remember fondly for years to come, the late nights and boozy brunches, the afternoon picnics shaded from the midday sun, the weekend getaways you canceled on because that exam was right around the corner.

The hundred mumbled apologies you give your friends. They forgive you as their disappointment leaks from behind their eyes.

They say they understand. "You're in school after all, and isn't medical school hard? No one said it would be easy, we understand."

And perhaps they do understand and the tension you feel is simply a projection of your own discontent. But perhaps not.

On golden weekends you reenter the fold of their lives, letting yourself transform for a moment back into a life you once lived, the person you once were or perhaps hope to become. But this person is just a shadow, a trick of the evening light gone as your Sunday wanes. You return to your short white coat, your question banks, and flashcards.

You tell yourself it will get better; the sacrifices you make now will reward you later. Just one more exam and all your dreams will be realized. You will be a good little medical student and become a good resident in the specialty of your dreams. For how long have you held onto that hope? You cling to that desire. You guard it with your excuses, while you watch the rest of your life pass you by.

And so, you tell these little lies to yourself, to keep the hard truth at bay. You crystallize your rage and self-hatred, surround it with a veneer of professionalism. Straighten your head against the dead weight of your stethoscope bearing down across the back of your neck. You ready your disappointment with a smile as you open the door to see your next patient.

In Response to "Fiction of a Medical Student"

What an awful piece of writing! For this magazine to print such an item is an affront to good taste. How can such a person honestly claim to be a medical student? Do they hate medical school? Do they hate patients? Do they hate people? I for one would not want this person as my doctor. Perhaps a career as a veterinarian would be more suitable.

Personally, I love medical school. I enjoy making diagnoses (most of which are usually correct). I look forward to town halls and the freedom to share my opinions with the entire class, which of course they agree with because my opinions are always the correct ones to have. I appreciate how helpful my enthusiastic classmates (the ones who take their education seriously) are when I ask for their notes on a Friday night. I am fond of taking care of patients because they look to me for guidance, as I always know what is best for them. In fact I have often found my expertise to be greater than many of my residents!

My classmates consider me somewhat of an authority, so I speak for all of them when I say “Fiction of a Medical Student” is NOT how we feel. We are professional, humane, curious, intellectual, well-adjusted, diversity-conscious, critical, feeling, kind, focused, engaged, inclusive, compassionate medical students and I will not have any maladjusted, angry individual diminish our reputation.