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Written Piece and Art by Antonella D'Ascanio

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WRITTEN PIECE AND ART BY ANTONELLA D'ASCANIO

When I first arrived at Massachusetts General Hospital to meet with my mentor I was captured by this beautiful view from the Yawkey Cancer Center building. Little did I know this view would become synonymous with my day-to-day activities in the hospital, encapsulating my experiences with patients and coworkers from September 2019 to May 2021. The view greeted me each morning as I stepped out of the elevator doors onto our clinic floor, and bid me farewell each evening as the short December days closed in on us. In January 2020 I watched the snowfall on the rooftops of Beacon Hill. Then, I found the city barren, no one on the streets except healthcare workers, as the chaotic February 2020 set upon us. Gazing across the street, I saw the restaurant Harvard Gardens giving out sandwiches to healthcare workers at lunch, and the news reporters bundled up on the corner ready to interview doctors and nurses. So much was changing within the hospital, the air charged with panic and apprehension, yet this view from our clinic floor remained the same. The white pear trees sparkled as spring set up upon the bricks of the Beacon Hill neighborhood. The leaves shook as the summer wind swept through Boston. The city stood resilient as time passed.

While the landscape depicts the stunning view from our clinic floor, it also represents the times I shared with coworkers and patients during the pandemic. The hallway creating this view was lined with chairs to sit overlooking the city. My coworker and I ate our late 3pm lunches here after our days of running around the hospital. We were always on to the next task, but never far from this view. We joked that the glass-lined hallway became our runway, our link between us and the rest of the hospital. Just down this hallway was the infusion unit. I sat there with our patients too, overlooking the city as we waited for a nurse to call them into infusion. Some conversations were very lighthearted; we talked about history, geography, book recommendations, systems of support, work, pets, and the notorious traffic in Boston. Other conversations required more delicacy as patients shared their reflections regarding disease remission or regarding continued progression of disease despite multiple lines of therapy. Some patients contemplated participation in clinical trials versus palliative care. When I was accepted into medical school, I made this painting as a tribute to all these conversations, shared with patients and peers alike, overlooking the view from our clinic floor. As I prepared to leave Boston, I gave out copies of the painting as a thank you to the many physicians and coworkers that inspired me there.

