

SHALOM FROM HOME

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2015

There are cool people everywhere

Today marks the one year anniversary of my White Coat Ceremony at medical school, a monumental day in my journey toward becoming a doctor and an immensely stressful day in my life. It was move-in day, I was exhausted, I was in a fight with the person I was dating at the time, and the only people around who weren't total strangers were my parents and they have a knack for pushing my buttons in tense moments, as all parents do.

I was terrified that I was the only lazy kid who hadn't taken genetics in college, and I felt like the only person in the world on student loans. My best friends who loved me unconditionally and whom I loved unconditionally were spread far and wide across the country, and I couldn't remember how to make all new friends in an all new place.

Here is an excerpt from an email I received at that time from a mentor of mine, who has always given the best advice:

"In time people will start to let their real selves show. I guarantee there is someone in your class who is thinking the same thing, 'where are the cool people?' I know you'll find them. Finding cool people is like finding a drug dealer. If you are in a new town and you take drugs, you can find a drug dealer within a few weeks. You just have to look for the subtle cues (I don't do any drugs, so I don't know what those cues are). In your case, **it might be a funny sarcastic comment, a raised eyebrow from the quiet girl/guy when someone else is being a jerk, or the person who hasn't misplaced the "why", in why he/she wants to be a doctor.**"

Fast forward one year, to today. To this glorious, happy day. It started with me and my roommate (for a second year!) in our beautiful apartment chatting about last night. Then a yoga class with my best friend Victoria, then speaking on the phone with Elaine, who is starting medical school this year. Hearing her concerns reminded me of where I was a year ago, and how far I have come. My fears about failure have gone away, mostly, and I know that I am doing absolutely the right thing with my life. My anxiety about student loans is manageable because it is shared by so many of my peers. And sweetest of all, I have found the cool people. I have found the people who have not misplaced the why, the funny people, the endlessly interesting people. These are the people I miss when they are gone, and they miss me. The people it took too long to find, but thank goodness I did, because they were worth waiting for.

Knowing that I have found my people has let everything else fall into place. I wear "Jordana outfits" and fly the feminist flag high and proud. I have found my voice this year and learned to speak up against racial inequality. I met professors and doctors that hold these same convictions, and I took note of

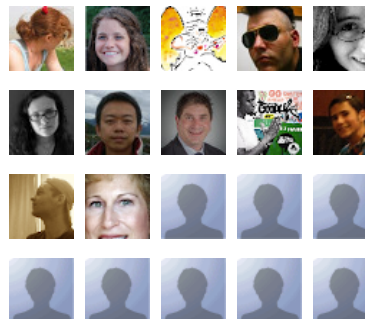
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There are cool people everywhere

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which students showed up at the White Coats For Black Lives events. I began to understand intersectionality in an entirely new way and at the same time, I learned who I wanted by my side during this period of discovery.

The biggest discovery this year has been that I would rather be fulfilled than have fun, but that working toward fulfillment is what brings me the greatest joy. My heart and mind are open to the struggles of other people and other groups, and that openness has allowed me to feel deep love. In the midst of fighting the racist/sexist/homophobic/classist/ableist/+ist system, the restoring factor has been my best friendships. No matter how discouraged I am after volunteering at the elementary school downtown, or how exhausted I am after the foot clinic, or disgusted after reading an oppressive article, or embarrassed after being part of a hateful discussion, I am rejuvenated by my people. Always. They are there for me, and I am there for them, and together we are going to make the world a little better or die trying.

In honor of Shabbat, here is my meditation for tonight, from Siddur Sim Shalom:

And the fountain is enriched The more I draw from it.

POSTED BY JORDANA AT 12:53 PM NO COMMENTS: 

LABELS: BLACKLIVESMATTER, MEDICAL SCHOOL, WHITE COAT, WHITECOATS4BLACKLIVES

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2015

How to ~~save~~ live a life

Almost through with a year of medical school and I wouldn't trust me with your diagnostic mysteries at this point. But here are some things I have learned along the way:

Study to LOTR soundtrack and cosmic post-rock on Pandora. Dance in your room to The Weeknd. Listen to pop on your shower radio and sing country in your car at the top of your lungs. Third Eye Blind still works for every possible mood. And their new single kills it.

Get over your Vampire Diaries addiction by substituting with Once, Portlandia, House reruns, Call the Midwife, OITNB II and HOC III. Watch Walking Dead for the adrenalin rush when your own life is a little too calm. Enjoy Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt despite the problematic cultural appropriation, but remind yourself that it's comedy and that's what happens sometimes. Watch too much Arrested Development and ultimately download a computer application that allows you to speed up Netflix and watch episodes in 14 minutes.

Try to read before you go to bed. Surprise no one by loving The Casual Vacancy by JK Rowling, Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn, The Red Tent by Anita Diamant, a collection of feminist fairy tales from around the world, Drown by Junot Diaz, and All Eyes are Upon Us: Race and Politics from Boston to Brooklyn.

Don't stop there. Continue your predictable patterns by going to see The Skeleton Twins, Into the Woods, and Selma. Go to the Manlius Art Cinema and sit in a moldy chair while crying your eyes out to Boyhood. Fight off the feminist crisis that is brought on by Interstellar and try to have some fun. Go to see Pitch Perfect 2 with your sorority sister from college and totally get the jokes going over the tweens' heads.

Take walks around SU and remember your days as a collegian with fondness and nostalgia. Stroll along Marshall Street and get fro yo and Starbucks and try to avoid strangers who want something from you. Drink at Faegan's after a big test with the rest of your class and eat Varsity salads when you realize you haven't consumed a vegetable in a week. Get Thai take out when life gets you down and when it's really bad just go sit at the bar at the Thai place and eat curry and it will make everything a little brighter. At first you may be discouraged by the selection of restaurants in this somewhat worn down city, but you'll find gems like Lofu and Modern Malt, Lemongrass, Small Plates, Pastabilities, Empire, Recess, Alto Cinco, Tang Flavor, and Dinosaur BBQ. Order root beer when they have it on tap and make everyone try fried green tomatoes.

Take a Medical Humanities class taught by a bad ass emergency room doctor who also loves plays and finds a way to make everything relate back to medicine. Go to see The Piano Lesson and leave at intermission due to looming homework. Sit through Vanya, Sasha, Masha, and Spike in total confusion. Go to see Hairspray on your birthday and realize you should see a happy musical every year on your birthday. Sit with your classmates at The Vibrator Play and judge by their reactions that nothing much has changed. Read the first half of The Yellow Birds and go see the author, Kevin Powers, speak at SU. Die and go to heaven when Eve Ensler comes to speak about how her battle with cancer connects to the universal struggle for sexual liberation of women.

Go to concerts. Funk brings people together. If you know the band, show up early and cheer loudly. The Westcott Theater and Funk n Waffles will not steer you wrong.

Join the debate team. Get put on the side opposite your natural opinions. Then prove yourself wrong.

If you get the chance to sit it out or dance...
Dance at the Diwali festival and discover your true calling is Bhangra. Get five girls together and make up a dance to Bye Bye Bye, call yourselves The Back Door Boys, find some fake mustaches, and wow the crowd at the school's benefit Drag Show.

Step up your hygiene game. This isn't college. The infinite joys of daily showers will be revealed to you in time. Make your bed every day and wonder why you didn't start doing that earlier. Wash your sheets more often than you think you need to, because you need to. Decorate your room intentionally with a color scheme and forethought. Put letters from friends up on your bulletin board. Occasionally write back because it feels so wonderful to receive real mail. Emails can be fun too if you get a pen pal and discuss topical articles from the unexplored depths of the internets.

Sign up for a rabies vaccine study and make a little cash while you're advancing science. Pay no mind to the hematoma lining your cubital fossa. It will fade, and the nurse that misses your veins every time is also the one who brings you apple juice and nutter butters.

Get involved in the community. Join Reading Buddies and go to Dr. King Elementary once a week to read with a third grader. Try to explain why the Pinkalicious series books are creating damaging and inflexible gender scripts for young girls. Notice that the library at an almost all-underrepresented-minority school named after Martin Luther King is filled with stories about white kids.

Volunteer at the foot clinic at the men's homeless shelter downtown. At first you will be scared to use the dermablade but soon it will become second nature. Learn that taking a medical history is as much about giving a listening ear as it is extracting data for a record. Things that used to seem gross don't seem so gross when you think you might be helping someone.

Join the White Coats 4 Black Lives movement and participate in the silent protest at school. Learn why #blacklivesmatter matters. Learn from others at the student-led forum on the social determinants of health.

Go home for the holidays. Nothing says Rosh Hashanah like finding people your own age at Temple Beth El and whispering through mussaf. Learn to like lox enough to not be shunned at community events. Admit you have a problem when you experience symptoms of withdrawal from your cool mint cliff bars during Passover.

Be continuously awed by the amount of information you have learned and will learn (and forget, and learn, and forget, and learn again). Take microbiology, cell biology, immunology, neurology, physiology, histology, anatomy, pathology, and maybe some more classes you can't remember. Learn how to take a history and do a physical exam and that it is not as easy as it looks. Succeed in gross anatomy with your secret weapon: an anatomy coloring book. Spend so much time doing this that you have a favorite muscle (gastrocnemius--because it looks like a whale's tail), a favorite tendon (extensor digitorum superficialis), nerve plexus (brachial), and artery (iliac and its branches). Make the histological slide of the female ureter your iPad wallpaper because it looks like pretty pink antlers.



Take care of your own body while learning the ins and outs of how it works. Go to boot camp with your best friends. Live for the butt cycle at the end of Tabata. Do 600 work outs in the RA office and try your hand at acro yoga with your work out buddies. Drink lots of water and by water I mean seltzer. Thank God and the Occupation for Soda Stream. Experiment with dry humor.

Experience the great outdoors and the fermented fruit of the earth. Ride a horse and feed the fish at Mary's. Taste hard cider at Beak and Skiff orchards. Visit Green Lakes with mom. Take in the views from the Seneca Lake wineries on the class wine tour. Personally uncover the hidden diamond that is Cazenovia and Oweria Vineyards.

Purchase a killer black jumpsuit and wear it dancing.

Roll 30 med students deep whenever you go to a* bar or a** club.

*the

**the

Become a fiend for trivia. It's okay if you're on the B team most weeks because it's about the journey not the destination. Coleman's gets rowdy and you might get riled up. Remember to use your big girl voice when telling your team the answer, otherwise they won't believe you. Saltine Warrior is lower stress and they also have fried spicy raviolis. Win-win. Well, win-win-lose. Your team isn't that good.

Salsa. Bachata. Merengue. Cha-cha. These may not all be verbs but they are when you're at Johnston's Ballybay with DJ Machina and the Upstate crew.

Bear witness to the miracle of life. Shadow on the delivery floor on your 24th birthday and welcome a baby girl into existence. Take an elective that pairs you and a classmate with a couple expecting a baby. Get paired with the best classmate and the best moms and the best twins the world has ever seen. Follow them through months of pre-natal visits and the birth and check ups that follow. Feel a wave of instincts rush over you when you hold and bounce the baby girl while her brother sleeps peacefully.

Make new friends but keep the old. Visit Cornell for O-week and Homecoming and the Big Red Bar Mitzvah. Celebrate Elysha's graduation and come back for big-little reveal. Surrender to the inner fangirl at the Maccabeats concert. Never miss an Amy Siskind appearance in Ithaca and make a brief camio over Slope Day Weekend. Squeeze in one last Table Minyan, Shabbat Dinner and sunset on the slope complete with lukewarm champagne.

Rediscover Dashboard Confessional in anticipation of their upcoming tour with Third Eye Blind. Prepare your body and mind and soul for June 20th.

Make the most of winter. Go skiing. Get back to your roots and whip out some moves at the old ice rink. Visit Lake Placid and watch synchro at the 1980 rink. Skate on Mirror Lake and shop on main street.

Struggle with the hints of a quarter life crisis. Ask your advisor about a nose ring and she'll tell you that your patients might get distracted by it. Settle for a cartilage piercing instead. Swear to yourself you'll clean it twice a day for four months. Live up to that promise for a full week.

Go see Nico and Vinz with Chelsea at the free Pepsi concert in Rochester. They only have one song and you're not sure what Pepsi is doing about the Superbowl a week early in Rochester, but it's cool anyway.

Find yourself at a dinner party turned bluegrass jam in your hometown with kids you've known since second grade and their parents. On your way out, pass three Priuses. Get into your Prius and drive home to your cats and the other Prius waiting in the garage.

Visit New York and remember why you don't live there. See dear friends and "watch" a Cornell hockey game. You will not see a single goal in real time because you will be engrossed in anything besides watching the hockey game.

Get a massage. Celebrate Holi and spend the next three days washing it out of your hair and ears. Drink wine with your friends while trying to get through 50 Shades of Gray. Celebrate Galentine's Day with a brunch. Play an icebreaker using weird medical information about yourselves. Make time for your friends when they visit, because this is Syracuse, and if you don't show them a good time, no one and nothing will. Attend house parties and themed parties. Go bowling with your class and manage not to bring shame to your family. Rewatch The Heathers and try to incorporate some of those golden lines into your daily use.

Spend a little too much time summing up your year in a bizarrely constructed second-person command blog post. But you'll be glad you did.

POSTED BY JORDANA AT 9:33 PM 1 COMMENT: 

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2015

What would you do if you weren't afraid?

I should be studying for my upcoming test, but I did something today that I want to remember for a long time. I did something that scared me.

I wasn't going to write the poem, but I wrote it. I wasn't going to submit the poem. I submitted it. I didn't expect it to get noticed, but it got Honorable Mention. I was definitely not going to have my name associated with it, and

wanted it published under "Anonymous." Then I was asked to read my poem at the awards ceremony with the other poetry and prose winners, and that was definitely not ever going to happen.

But today at 4pm, without telling anyone, I slipped off to the awards ceremony. I listened to the other amazing pieces. I got my picture taken with the certificate and with the other winners.

Then I read my poem. My highly personal poem. It is about a journey that I am on that I am not completely comfortable with, and sharing that with a room full of doctors, faculty, and second year medical students was honestly terrifying.

I love public speaking, I love the sound of my voice in a microphone, I get a little high when I look out into a crowd and I know people are listening to me. But today, my voice shook and my palms got sweaty. It was the genuine emotion I had been trying to convey for an entire semester in an acting class I took at Cornell.

There are not too many things in this world that scare me. There are certainly things that challenge me, and things I just think are dumb (skydiving, snake charming...), but rarely have I felt this visceral fear. I did not know how people would react to my poem. I did not know if they would understand me or where I was coming from or what I was even talking about. I was so scared of being *judged*.

It didn't occur to me until just now (and aha! that's why we write, isn't it?) that as I was listening to the other students and faculty members reading their poems and their prose--I did not judge them at all. I was only impressed, moved, humbled, made to think. They presented us with real human emotions, different points of view, snapshots into the lives of ordinary people who have extraordinary humanity.

And when I finished reading my own poem, the sheet shaking in my hands, I looked up to the whole room clapping. And when the event was over and we mingled over cake, all the fellow writers came up to me, and so did some audience members, to say how they thought my poem was very powerful or moving or brave.

I didn't feel brave, but now I do. I am so proud of myself for doing something that scares me, and I hope I do it again soon. And to anyone reading this, the question I pose to you: "What would you do if you weren't afraid?"

POSTED BY JORDANA AT 3:41 PM NO COMMENTS: 

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2014

Fighting social injustice from within and without

This time last year, I was devouring every article I could on misogyny and sexism. My passion for gender equality grew with each passing day. I became a madwoman, obsessed with calling out the overt and covert anti-woman messages in our society. I decided to do something about it, and organized an event on campus, started a hashtag to document the low representation of women in leadership/STEM/politics/business/everything, and took every conversation as a teachable moment to educate my poor friends about the horrendous injustices against women that occur in the world around us on a daily basis. As a woman, a member of the oppressed group, I was in a unique position to speak my truth and express the societal plague from my personal point of view. At some level, I was protected because I brought my own experiences to the table.

Now, I am applying that same fury and passion to a different issue: racism. I am trying to educate myself with articles and books (thanks to my mother for sending "All Eyes are Upon Us: Race and Politics from Boston to Brooklyn"), participate in demonstrations (<http://www.localsyr.com/story/d/story/upstate-medical-students-demonstrate-against-police/16388/lx10odt1EEWjQ7UZjBIs-w>), and speak out whenever possible to draw attention to the pervasiveness of this issue.

While I am applying all that I learned during my self-proclaimed Feminist Awakening, in terms of learning the language of the movement, reading the essentials, and most of all, bravery in the face of those who do not see what I see, there is something different this time. I am on the outside looking in. As a white ally, my focus is now on acknowledging my own privileges, listening to the experiences of others, and encouraging other white would-be/could-be-allies to do the same.

Essentially, the most difficult and most important part of my activism now is shutting up.

Of course, this is not my natural state. I am more of a fist in the air, lead the charge sort of gal. But the more I read and hear about racism, the more I realize the experiences of people of color are totally incomprehensible to me, specifically because racism is so deep and so pervasive that I cannot even imagine the constancy of oppression. Each person's story confirms to me that I will never be able to relate to the pain and fear that comes with being part of a racial minority.

My hope is that as more white people shut up and listen, more people of color will be able to share their experiences. An example of this is the #alivewhileblack hashtag on twitter, which is really worth a read (<https://twitter.com/hashtag/alivewhileblack>). I don't know what it is going to take to make people believe that racism is alive and well in our country, but before we can come to that conclusion as a group, I do not think there is much hope of combatting it.

POSTED BY JORDANA AT 11:14 AM NO COMMENTS: 

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2014

Learning on the Job

I'm taking it as a good sign that during the three hours I spent at the foot clinic in the homeless shelter today, I only looked at the clock once, and that was to make sure I would have time to see another patient.

I was late and frazzled when I arrived. I had just shoved easy mac down my throat after spending 9 hours at school and I had forgotten my keys in my room and had to have an RA unlock my apartment. I was having trust issues with my GPS and really heightened parking anxiety until I pulled into the lot of the men's homeless shelter here in Syracuse, a five minute drive from my building.

A man greeted me in the parking lot. He was very friendly. I assumed he was staying at the shelter, but he told me he was security and would make sure I got in OK. Later, he was talking to someone about recently getting out of jail. He was sweet to me and not inappropriate in any way during the clinic. I figured it was better to have him on my side than not.

On the way to the room where we held the clinic, I passed by two large dormitory rooms. There must have been thirty beds in each, bunked. I passed the "lounge," where the lights had been turned off and some men were sitting around watching tv, presumably. Everyone was in good spirits and greeted us. The medical students come once a month on Thursday evenings and are very well received.

I got introduced to the other students, the podiatrist, and the MD running the clinic. We were all wearing Upstate t shirts and jeans, except for the doctor who wore a white coat. The clinic was a small room with tables and chairs set up, which also doubled as the computer lab. There were inspirational Christian quotes on posters on the walls. At any given time, we had five patients in the clinic room. We all sat on folding chairs.

Patient confidentiality is a little hazy to me at this point, so I'm going to err on the side of caution and not tell you about them. But I will tell you--they lived at the shelter. Some worked, some didn't. Some had hypertension and family history of heart attack, some didn't. They were all self-conscious about their feet. Their feet had fungus in them and on them, and thick, painful callouses. I can't imagine what it is like to walk all day in the same old ill-fitting boots and same old socks.

We took their medical histories and asked them what brought them in. Some wanted toenails clipped, some wanted their fungus treated, some had pain and didn't know why. I worked with a second year med student to take the histories and do the physical exam on the foot. We would put a drape down on our laps and have the men put their feet in our laps on the drape. I was instantly comfortable with this. I loved inspecting the feet, checking for strength and sensation, reflexes, pulse. I was fascinated by the fungus but tried not to get too excited about it. The smell was definitely there but did not affect me in the slightest.

For one man with pain, this was the first time in a very long time he had put his feet up. He said the elevating felt very good. While my second year partner went to go get a razor for the callouses, I had a while to wait with this patient. He was embarrassed about the smell and appearance of his feet and wanted to take them off my lap. I could tell he felt relief from the

elevation and human contact though, so I told him I would keep palpating and testing for sensation while we waited. By the time my partner came back with the razor, I had a connection with this patient and he was happy to let me hack away at his thick callouses (which I found quite therapeutic...for myself).

I'm not sure if anyone else feels this at the doctor's office, but I love having my neck checked, my back palpated, being asked to breathe in deeply, the quiet and assuring tone of voice my doctor uses as she narrates the exam...I fell into this pattern with my patients tonight. There was an MD there to treat the fungus and advise in the management of diabetes, but I was able to give these patients attention, a listening ear, and a soothing touch.

Two summers ago, I participated in an experience that made me highly critical and even skeptical of service. I carry those critical thoughts with me whenever I engage in an experience like this, or my weekly "Reading Buddies" program that I have started doing at the elementary school nearby (I read for an hour on Wednesdays with a third grade girl). I try to have a realistic view of what I am able to give to people, what they need from me, and how those two things intersect.

I believe that tonight was a great example of a time when I had something to give, there was a need for it in my community, and there was an outlet for me to safely and effectively deliver that service. Working with a team that included a podiatrist and an MD, as well as in the context of a highly structured and long-standing program, made me feel confident that I was part of a service program that improved the lives of the people it serviced, and not just those who served.

A. E. Housman (1859-1936). A Shropshire Lad.

FROM far, from eve and morning
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I.

Now—for a breath I tarry
Nor yet disperse apart—
Take my hand quick and tell me,
What have you in your heart.

Speak now, and I will answer;
How shall I help you, say;
Ere to the wind's twelve quarters
I take my endless way.

POSTED BY JORDANA AT [6:24 PM](#) NO COMMENTS: 

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2014

Live and Learn

My high school music teacher said a lot of profound things, and that's why I continued taking his classes and playing in ensembles and embarrassing myself on the music theory AP exam. But he said something that really resonates with me today, sitting here studying in the first month of my first year of medical school.

He said that adults who had never learned to read music or play an instrument before were less likely to learn it not because they didn't have the skills, but because it had been so long since they had been so so so bad at something. They didn't want to start by playing Hot Cross Buns. They didn't want to take moving on to Jingle Bells as a sign of their accomplishments. They didn't want to learn how to read a new language of lines and dots. They didn't want to be a fourth grader squawking on a trumpet at age 45.

I'm now at the bottom once again. I'm squawking loudly on my trumpet. My eyes are crossing as I consider that all of this knowledge will one day truly be mine.

The particular subject I'm studying now (well, I took a break from it to write these thoughts down), embryogenesis, reminds me that this learning is possible. I distinctly remember learning about the three germ layers in auto tutorial biology in my first semester at Cornell four years ago. I was truly awed by the human body's ability to differentiate and orient its cells in such a way that most people come out with two arms at their sides and two legs beneath them and eyes on the front of their face. When I learned about the concentration gradients of signal molecules that set up front/back left/right and up/down axes of the body, I was filled with wonder. Could humans, with all our technology and advancements and self confidence, could humans have created such a system? Could we have designed a body that would develop perfectly and beautifully on its own?

Every day I marvel that the human body produces structures and systems that are far superior to any material replacement that we can create. Our plastics and our teflons and our magical mixtures of metals are no match for bone or tendon or tissue. I do hope that we get there someday. I hope that we are able to give people replacement body parts that outshine what nature is able to provide and improve the quality of life or extend the length of life for anyone and everyone who needs it.

Today, though, I stand humbled at my body's ability to continuously rejuvenate itself, develop, grow, strengthen, recover, and learn. I would like to say a special thank you (and apologize) to my brain for all that it has been up to the past several years and in the future. On one hand, I can't believe I've chosen of my own free will to go back to square one, feeling like I know absolutely nothing and perpetually overwhelmed by the idea that one day I will know all of this (the contents of the binder in front of me, or the contents of what I will learn in medical school and residency and beyond).

I did it before though, that's what college was for. It taught me that I could learn anything. I learned that I could learn to do a 4x4 Rubik's Cube, that I could learn how the eye transmitted sensory information to the brain, that I could start from zero and learn how the egg formed and how the sperm formed and how that made a human, that I could learn how to be a feminist

or anything else I wanted to be. And now I want to be a doctor. So here I go.
Pay no attention to the six year old squeaking on a violin behind the curtain.

POSTED BY JORDANA AT 9:17 AM NO COMMENTS: 

THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2014

Welcome to Medical School

"This is your education. Who do you think you're fooling?"

--Dr. Paul Shanley on "just getting by" and learning material just enough to know it for tests.

He explained a scenario in which a student would get by in the first two years medical school then experience a sensation of vague apprehension in the clerkship (3rd and 4th) years of medical school. The student would continue to avoid participation and shrink to the back of the group. By the time that person is a doctor, he or she feels totally unprepared to be a physician and is sent out into the world unable to fake what he or she should have been learning the whole time.

So, this is what I'm going to avoid doing.

Today is my fourth day of medical school. Lectures begin at 8am every day except for Thursdays, and my whole class of 154 people attend every lecture together. The class is 36% women, which is unusual for medical schools these days, but we have conjectured it was more due to the women opting to go elsewhere rather than admission statistics.

The lectures are dense but not hard to follow. Before class began, I was terrified of not being able to understand a word of lecture or just getting so lost that it was useless. Fortunately it has all been quite interesting and the school gives us very detailed hand outs of every lecture that we keep in binders, so I've been taking notes on those as well as on notebook paper.

We have an hour for lunch every day. The cafeteria in the school is all right and very cheap. Today I tried the cafeteria in the hospital with some friends and I was very excited by all the options, and my black bean burger was great. Yesterday during lunch I sat in on a Neurosurgery Club meeting, in which food was served, a third year spoke because he had just completed his Neurosurgery clerkship, a Neurosurgeon/Professor spoke and showed videos of his procedures, and there was a panel of residents. I found the procedures in the video very interesting and satisfying, but a seven year residency (including two years of research) isn't too appealing to me. Everyone has said it is really important to keep your mind open to different specialties though!

As for people I've met, I'm very very happy. My class is small enough so I feel like I am getting to know a good number of people at a reasonable pace, but large enough to feel like I still have many wonderful people to meet. 90% of the class is from New York State, and a great number of my classmates took two years or more between undergrad and coming to medical school. My classmates have done interesting things and come to medical school with

many interesting perspectives. I feel young and inexperienced in comparison.

My apartment mate and I have been getting along swimmingly, and we have a very pretty apartment in Geneva Tower, the student housing high-rise. She and I have been making friends together and apart, so we are building a web of lovely people with whom we study, eat, work out, and go out. Dancing last weekend was very fun and I am hopeful about the downtown Cuse bar scene. I think I will only go out once a week, because I lose my voice from the loud music and my sleep schedule gets all wacky, but I will look forward to it when I do!

The work outs have been some of the most fun I've had in the past week at Upstate. I've been to two "boot camp" classes and today I attend a Tabata (High Intensity Interval Training) class, which are all taught by second and third year medical students. It's a great way to meet people, exercise, break up my studying with something productive, and have some fun. Even though I do not have the stamina (yet!) for all the exercises, I have a big smile on my face as I attempt them. Today, the medical student leading our class told us to rest on our "sit bones" for an ab exercise, and everyone laughed. Then she replaced it with the technical term, like for real the technical term, which I don't know, and everyone laughed again. It's very humbling to be associated with such smart and accomplished people.

I love putting on my badge every morning that has my ID and says "MEDICAL STUDENT." You have to look really closely on the ID to see that I'm a first year, so I know that no one can tell what year I'm in as I walk through the hospital to get to class. I feel a bit proud and at the same time a bit like I am just pretending. I hope that the latter will go away soon.

That's all I have to report for now. I miss the scenery at Cornell and I miss my cats and my family and my friends from home and college and Israel. But, I can tell this is going to be amazing, and these friends are going to get right up there with my dearest, oldest friends. I'm impatient to get in the swing of things and have best best best friends and know everyone and feel like I belong, but in the meantime, I will soak it all in with a smile and try my hardest and enjoy being a freshman again.

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