

Author's Commentary

Spoiler Alert: If you have not read *The Ailing Nation*, please stop here and read the book before continuing. The material that follows is designed to enhance your experience if you have already read the book, and will likely detract from it if you have not. So, let's wait a moment so that those who need to exit may do so... For those who remain, I assume you have read the book, including the Playbill and Postlude. If not, please read those sections before proceeding...

First, I must acknowledge the result of the 2020 presidential election, which has greatly impacted the prospects of our nation's recovery. So far, I am encouraged by President Biden's display of humility, integrity, and compassion, and his self-proclaimed desire to coalesce the nation. I am even more encouraged by the development of H.R.1, a sweeping electoral reform bill that would protect voting rights, eliminate gerrymandering, and modestly expand public campaign financing, all of which would substantially address system defects in our ailing democracy. Time will tell if these encouraging signals evolve into an effective treatment regimen.

By now you have learned that I structured my book so that its organization would support its content. Hence, it is symmetrically arranged in two parts, each with three sections of three chapters. Each chapter is subtitled as an imperative, such as "Follow the Trail." After all, these lessons are meant to influence behavior. The first nine chapters lead to the phenotype of a great leader. The second nine chapters lead to the solution approach for our ailing nation. The purpose of the structure is to coalesce the parts of the book in support of the target state – an enlightened and activated national leader, i.e., voter.

To that end, I aimed for the content to be self-reinforcing, so I inserted repetitious elements and "call-backs" to create an internal scaffold of interconnected ideas. One approach was to make every invented patient name an anagram (word jumble) of an idea or chapter title in the book, starting with Natalie Ghintino, an anagram of *The Ailing Nation*. These appear in the Playbill as a list of anagram "partners." Obviously, this was a project all its own, and I enjoyed the many possibilities that came to mind. Three of the more whimsical names that I did not

use in the book were Ned Shyfleets (Deny the Self), Greg Writhnoth (Right the Wrong), and Will Rathfootle (Follow the Trail). I mention these here just to demonstrate that I did exercise some discretion in my choices.

A second approach was to create call-backs within most chapters, consisting of words or phrases of the chapter introductory piece (quote or poem) that are repeated in the chapter text that follows. This is most apparent in Chapter 17, because the nonsense words of *The Jabberwocky* conspicuously and whimsically lace the chapter text. But it also happens elsewhere. For example, Chapter 1:

Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand...
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.

From *King Lear*, William Shakespeare, c. 1606

*The presenter, perhaps a first-year trainee, would stand timidly at the podium – atremble at the whipping post - reciting the wretched tale of a patient...
The salacious details were divulged and then inspected from every angle.
If you wanted to kill the patient, why didn't you just pull out a gun and save us all the trouble?" Justice served.
Somehow, she had lost several pints of blood, and we still didn't know where it went.
For young learners riven with guilt, then, the natural response was to try to conceal mistakes.
That was not my fault either. Fate had sinned against me.*

I further developed the idea of callbacks by introducing more than two hundred echoes as repetitious elements, themes, metaphors, and catchphrases to noticeably, surreptitiously, or even whimsically reinforce the messages of each chapter. While some of these are obvious, most are subliminal. While some occurred by accident, most are very much intentional. The following is a list of more than 200 echoes that appear in the book.

ECHOES

1. The very first word of the text in Chapter 1, "Snickersnack" (p. 1), is repeated as the very last word of the text in Chapter 18 (p. 273) – the ultimate echo.
2. The triumphant diagnosis, "Colonel Mustard did it with a Lead Pipe in the Conservatory" (p. 54), is echoed by Philip DeSare, who had "mustered not a kernel of truth" (p. 44).
3. My first view of a major league baseball field, a "seemingly accidental collage of brilliant color" (p. 110), is echoed by Obama, who "entered Occidental College in Los Angeles" (p. 197).
4. The excess share of corporate income, industry's "false profits, if you will" (p. 153), is echoed by Donald Trump, "a tantalizing distraction. A false prophet." (p. 219).
5. The pajama-clad children who listened with pride to Neil Armstrong's words (p. 140) are echoed by the "convicts in horizontally-striped pajamas, bobbing up and down on the handle of the small railroad flatcar" (p. 175).
6. Donald Trump, who was the "free choice of an engaged electorate that was fully aware of his florid faults" (p. 218), is echoed by "Atlantic seawater gently lapping over asphalt Florida roadways" (p. 239).
7. The patient with alcohol withdrawal, who "would be disheveled, shaky, and agitated – in the delirious haze of severe alcohol withdrawal" (p. 55) is echoed by Vladimir Nabokov, "author of the highly praised novel, *Lolita*." (p. 145). The actual name for Lolita is Dolores Haze.
8. "A year later, as the project began to falter, visions of grandeur still danced in his head" (p. 217) is echoed by nursing leaders, who organized the thousand-plus registered nurses into their appropriate shifts and "settled down for a long restless night" as Superstorm Sandy approached (p. 133). Both are references to the holiday poem, *The Night Before Christmas*.
9. The dire situation during Superstorm Sandy, which "had now become a classic Hitchcock suspense thriller" (p. 129), is echoed *five* times: by the line, "I was imagining we were on a lifeboat, packed with survivors, while a sailor floundering in the sea petitions to come aboard" (p. 234), by Trump, who, during his first impeachment, became "a non-cooperator, a saboteur, an *obstructionist*" (p. 32), by the acute apprehension I felt "walking along the vertiginous catwalks coursing through the upper reaches of Cleveland Municipal Stadium" (p. 110), by the "perfect lens of the retrospectoscope" (p. 22), and by the line "Ironically, the only truth I knew in 1983 turned out not to be true after all!" (p. 92). *Lifeboat*, *Saboteur*, *Vertigo*, *Rear Window*, and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* were five films directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

10. The “chaotic cloud of electrical activity” in ventricular fibrillation (p. 88) is echoed by the “chaotic cloud of constant combat” in Donald Trump’s presidency (p. 215).
11. Debbie Shault’s emphysematous breaths, which were “oddly asymmetrical” (p. 165), are echoed by the “oddly symmetrical pattern of supply-side tax policy” (p. 248).
- 12.** The sound of three pricks of the bubble, “Snap, crackle, pop!” (p. 147) is echoed by the sounds of climate change: “Flowing sheets of ice crisply snapping free from majestic Alaskan glaciers? The crackling burn of ancient Oregon forests? It does not matter. No one is listening. Nobody seems to care. Trump pops the cork.” (p. 239).
13. The East River, which had “risen by at least a dozen feet and overflowed its banks - submerging the FDR Drive, which had now completely disappeared” (p. 134), is echoed by FDR’s blood pressure, which, at 240/130, exceeded its limits and took out our 32nd president (p. 85)
14. The gun invoked by the department chair “patriarch” at the M&M (p. 8) is echoed by the gun owned by the matriarch in my gun control discussion (p. 183).
15. The approving murmur that rippled through the room in the M&M conference (p. 12) is echoed by the approving murmur that rippled through the room during the sepsis review (p. 71).
16. The aortic valve’s “saloon doors” (p. 57) are echoed by Ronald Reagan’s channeling of John Wayne “swaggering into the saloon” (p. 195).
17. Non-compliant patients with schizophrenia, “society’s ‘misfits’ who have rejected all attempts at treatment” (p. 37), are echoed by “so many of my other Bellevue patients” who are “society’s castaways. Its misfit toys.” (p. 102).
18. “We have been outbid, outmanned, and outplanned” (p. 262) is echoed by “Let’s not throw away our shot!” (p. 264). Both are lines from the musical *Hamilton*.
- 19.** “Now that should have activated the flowsheet, right? Did we use the flowsheet?” (p. 71) is echoed by “Flowing sheets of ice crisply snapping free from majestic Alaskan glaciers?” (p. 239).
- 20.** The sincere apology, which is “a magical potion” (p. 14), is echoed by our antiquated tendency to “hide bad outcomes under an invisibility cloak” (p. 9) and by the “flock of Potteresque dementors flitting about in the stairwell” (p. 130). All are references to the Harry Potter books.
- 21.** “Indeed, it is nigh impossible to fully change a system from within – to paint the very spot one is standing on” (p. III) is echoed by “It is devilishly difficult to do this. To step completely outside our biased conceptual framework. To take a clean look inward with an open mind” (p. 27) and by Douglas Hofstadter’s *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*” (p. 145). The first two lines are references to Gödel’s incompleteness theorem, which states that one cannot fully describe a logical system using terms within it.

22. "We will just keep marching around in circles without getting anywhere" (p. 20) is echoed by Douglas Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (p. 145). Escher's famous prints show steps forever climbing in a circle without going anywhere.
23. Nate Tomen, who lay still "with open eyes and an enigmatic smile" (p. 37), is echoed by Gerald Menard, who sported "horn-rimmed glasses, short brown hair, and a faintly bemused expression" (p. 55) and by Leonardo DaVinci's accomplishments, "From the Mona Lisa to flying machines" (p. 145).
24. "The sequential process of denial, shame, and acceptance" (p. 121) is echoed by my post-election reaction, "December. I am thinking about the five stages of grief." (p. 147). Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief are Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance.
25. My personal "backup generator" (p. 1) is echoed by the hospital's backup generators in Superstorm Sandy (p. 128).
26. The "simple cocktail" by which I staved off desperation, exhaustion, and starvation (p. 1) is echoed by the simple cocktail for treatment of pneumocystis pneumonia in Apollo Greene (p. 101).
27. "A solid day and a half dashing from patient to patient, drawing blood, checking lab results, controlling blood sugars, inserting IVs, and writing notes" (p. 1) leads to the following five echoes: the blood I drew on Vigo Ferness (p. 98), the lab results I checked on Candice Staner (p. 11), the blood sugar I treated in Alec Secceño (p. 2), the IV I started for Philip DeSare (p. 42), and the note I wrote on Gerry Menard (p. 54).
28. "Not to mention embracing my craft, internal medicine" (p. 1) is echoed by the frigid ocean waters that "embraced" the "craft" of Donald Trump in my climate change fantasy (p. 239).
29. The cardiac catheterization procedure for which two Bellevue physicians earned the Nobel Prize (p. 2) is echoed repeatedly by cardiac catheterization cases throughout the book.
30. Prednisone balancing the scale (p. 2) is echoed by the simple calculus of medical decision-making, "balanced on the cosmic scale" (p. 180).
31. My Alphabet City arrival, "As my driver stirred me awake, I sat up and looked around" (p. 3) is echoed by Thomas Spectes, our cardiac arrest case, who was stirred awake up from his coma and looked around (p. 177).
32. The "alien and hostile world" of Alphabet City (p. 3) is echoed by my post-election hangover when "the world closing in around me was alien and hostile" (p. 124).
33. The "open corrido r" through which I tentatively stepped into the building (p. 3) is echoed by the open corridor through which the ACA was barely passed (p. 173).

34. The card table around which the burly Hispanic men were sitting (p. 3) is echoed by the card table under which the puzzle piece has fallen in my search for the truth (p. 259).
35. The poker players in the tenement building (p. 3) are echoed by the poker player “moocher” who does not ante into the pot in our health care analogy (p. 169).
36. The “speckled band” of light issuing from the doorway (p. 3) is echoed by the Sherlock Holmes reference, “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (p. 147).
37. Paul Morgan being socially “plugged in” (p. 5) is echoed by the left ventricular assist device that could be plugged into the nearby electrical closet in Superstorm Sandy (p. 132).
38. Matt Tener’s “nice and tidy” resolution (p. 5) is echoed by the elusive “nice and tidy” diagnosis for Gerry Menard (p. 57).
39. Matt Tener’s faded red baseball cap (p. 4) is echoed by the Cleveland Indians’ professional baseball team (p. 110). In the 1960s, they wore red caps. This may seem random but I did make Matt’s cap red for this purpose.
40. The bizarre conclusion I “leapfrogged” to (p. 7) is echoed by the 30% of hospitals in New York State over which we leapfrogged in our efforts to improve patient satisfaction (p. 78).
41. The M&M participants “rubbernecking at the grisly scene” of a case gone awry (p. 8) are echoed by Republicans rubbernecking at the grisly scene of the ACA rollout (p. 173).
42. Every “thread” that was followed in my M&M (p. 12) is echoed by the loose thread that bedeviled me in Chapter 18 (p. 252).
43. Nixon’s brilliant “Checkers” speech (p. 13) is echoed by the “checkers of the checklists,” who eliminated defects in the hospital (p. 179).
44. The utterly “toxic” conditional apology (p. 14) is echoed by the toxic assets that plagued financial institutions in 2008 (p. 200).
45. The puzzle piece that has been misplaced, “lying on the shag carpet under the card table” (p. 259), is echoed by the careless figure who might “flick a cigarette ash onto the shag carpet” (p. 267).
46. “I basked in the glow of my team’s great victory” (p. 110) is echoed by “the muted glow of flashlights” by which pharmacists counted out pills in Superstorm Sandy (131).
47. Seth Feylend, who presented with “the other pathognomonic (tell-tale) sign of AIDS – Kaposi’s Sarcoma” (p. 102,), is echoed by the flicker of lights that was the “tell-tale sign that we had lost our power” (p. 128.)
48. Our desperate quest in AIDS care, “We yearned for that magic wand, but a cure eluded us” (p. 105), is echoed by the impending loss of electrical power during Superstorm Sandy, “At midnight, we would all turn into pumpkins” (p. 129). Both are references to *Cinderella*.

49. My forgiveness of myself “for falling short in the indelible moment that separates the ordinary from the great” (p. 121) is echoed by our Supreme Court that was “headshakingly short of the mark in the indelible moment that separates the ordinary from the great” (p. 265).
50. Joseph McCarthy’s provocative speech that he delivered in “Wheeling, West Virginia” (p. 30) is echoed by Keith Tasker “wheeling his way in through the front door under his own power.” (p. 166).
51. The Munchausen patient who “feigns illness in order to receive treatment” (p. 44) is echoed by the abdominal abscess that might “feign a stomach flu” (p. 70).
52. “Colonel Mustard did it with a Lead Pipe in the Conservatory” (p. 54) is echoed by the “lead irrigation pipe” that is obstructed in my analogy of a coronary obstruction (p. 87).
53. “No stone could be left unturned” (p. 54) is echoed by the Biblical phrase “Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid.” (p. 174).
54. My missed opportunity with Will Thomason, “neither of us confronted the elephant in the room” (p. 117), is echoed by “You may now approach the porcelain elephant in the room to ask the obvious question.” (p. 260).
55. My relief upon the arrival of the Emergency Department residents, “I imagined I was in J.R.R. Tolkien’s Middle-Earth at the battle of Helms Deep” (p. 137), is echoed by “The simple lever that can move a mountain. Our precious.” (p. 264). Both are references to *The Lord of the Rings*.
56. The anonymous edifice deep in the heart of Alphabet City that “could swallow me whole” (p. 3) is echoed by the growing chasm that “threatened to swallow whole the entire U.S. economy.” (p. 199).
57. The movie of my future life that was the “dramatic, fateful, heart-breaking tale of a doctor-in-training caught up in a most unfortunate coincidence of timing and bad luck” (p. 99) is echoed by my “sneak preview of the movie that was about to play out about the unexpected demise of this cardiac patient caught up in a most unfortunate coincidence of timing and bad luck” (p. 134).
58. The Hispanic man who “just continued to stare at me blankly” (p. 4) is echoed by Gerry, the accountant, who “gazed at me from his hospital bed with a blank expression” (p. 55), and by Brian, my resident, whose “eyes widened as he read my blank expression” (p. 95).
59. The Hispanic man who was “holding his cards” (p. 3) is echoed by the the phrase “What would the Trump-branded casinos be without Trump? In the end, he still held all the cards.” (p. 211).
60. Alec’s blood sugar, which was “carefully calibrated by this delicate balance of two medications” (p. 2), is echoed by the “simple calculus, balanced on the cosmic scale” (p. 180).

61. “The severe bleeding that might be experienced by my patient- perhaps in a vital organ, like the brain” (p. 10) is echoed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s “fatal cerebral hemorrhage” (p. 85).
62. “It is devilishly difficult to do this. To step completely outside our biased conceptual framework” (p. 27) is echoed by “We had already learned that improving patient survey results was devilishly difficult” (p. 73).
63. The questioner who challenged Michael Cohen, “No one can see this guy as credible...He’s a fake witness” (p. 32), is echoed by my resident who recognized my Munchausen patient, “He’s a fake!” (p. 43).
64. The state of our nation as described in the introduction, “Then...something happened. We fell off our trajectory,” (p. 1), is echoed by Reagan, who “returned to acting but not on his previous trajectory” (p. 188).
65. The Root Cause Analysis which dominates Chapter Two is echoed by my description of Reagan, “rooted firmly in a cause that he articulated clearly and consistently” (p. 189).
66. The Affordable Care Act (ACA), “affectionately (or derisively) known as Obamacare” (p. 166), is echoed by Reagan’s proposed space shield, “derisively nicknamed ‘Star Wars,’” (p. 190).
67. Our economic progress, which “slipped from its once-blistering pace,” in the introduction (p. 1), is echoed by jobs in Chapter 14, which “were disappearing at a blistering pace - 700,000 per month” (p. 199).
68. My assertion in Chapter 3 that “In those days we did not have official forms to document a “Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order” (p. 41) is echoed by my assertion on election night that I was “not prepared to hear that the cancer has spread” (p. 124).
69. “Her case history is a perfect illustration of the complexities of inpatient care and the value of a retrospective review of a case after an unhappy ending” (p. 9) is echoed by “Although we had finally determined the ‘root cause’ of Gerry’s symptoms, he was still at risk for an unhappy ending” (p. 58).
70. The Hispanic man who was “leaning forward with a cigarette suspended between two fingers of the hand holding his cards” (p. 3) is echoed by “principles are the two towers from which that bridge is suspended” (p. 179).
71. The “shadowy, obscure, anonymous edifice deep in the heart of Alphabet City” (p. 3) is echoed by Bellevue, which “had become a haunted hotel, inhabited by sinister forces” during Superstorm Sandy (p. 130).
72. The impact on the patient that was “equally clear – a straight line from input A to outcome B” (p. 134) is echoed by the statement that it “is not difficult to draw a straight line from McCarthy to Trump through Roy Cohn, master of the public smear” (p. 221).

73. The oxygen I gave Stanley Loritan to “fortify his blood cells” (p. 94) is echoed by the singleness of purpose that combines to “fortify the body, and concentrate the mind” (p. 145).
74. The line “Was I truly ready to be a doctor? Should patients *ever* trust me?” (p. 7) is echoed by “Are we a nation that deserves *anyone’s* trust?” (p. 51).
75. The patient in the Intensive Care Unit, who was being treated “for respiratory failure with mechanical ventilation” (p. 19), is echoed by the hospital’s ventilation systems, which failed in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. “The ventilation systems were toast” (p. 129).
76. Woody Hayes, the “legendary football coach for the Ohio State Buckeyes” (p. 78) is echoed by the line “I was so proud to be a Buckeye!” (p. 111).
77. The lines, “our frontline staff have always harbored universal fears about the consequences of speaking up. As hospital leaders, we all review these findings with dismay.” (p. 27), are echoed by Barak Obama, who was “selected as the first Black president of the Harvard Law Review (p. 197). I feel I must apologize for this one but I did do it on purpose.
78. The four burly Hispanic men who “were hunched over a card table” (p. 3) are echoed by the pharmacists who “toiled, hunched over a common table” in the dim light during Superstorm Sandy (p. 131).
79. The description of a cardiac catheterization, “then thread the catheter back up through that vessel into the aorta” (p. 87), is echoed by myself and a colleague, who “threaded our way to the north end of the ground floor to the main stairwell” during Superstorm Sandy (p. 134).
80. The clinical reasoning that is “analogous to identifying the assailant in the game of Clue” (p. 54) is echoed by the line, “the secret passage that connects the Study and Kitchen in the game of Clue” (p. 275).
81. The “venerable Cleveland Municipal Stadium,” which I visited with my dad, and which had a capacity of 80,000 fans (p. 110), is echoed by Invesco Field in Denver, Colorado, where Obama “delivered his convention speech to a crowd of 80,000” (p. 198).
82. The outcome in the case of Nate Tomen: “this meant building rapport to overcome his instinctive mistrust of hospitals and doctors. And that is exactly what happened. We earned his trust.” (p. 39) is echoed by Obama, who “would need to win the trust of adversaries who didn’t naturally support our foreign policy interests. And that is exactly what happened. He earned their trust.” (p. 203).
83. The lines, “And only by systematically bridging our differences will we achieve coalescence. All planned. All implemented. All on purpose.” (p. 144), are echoed by Obama, “His final decisions were the product of careful analysis and meticulous preparation. All planned. All implemented. All on purpose.” (p. 207).

84. The abscess that formed “within the heart muscle itself” in Gerry, the accountant (p. 58), is echoed by the abdominal abscess that “might feign a stomach flu” (p. 70)
85. The line, “If you have ever seen the film, *Memento*, you will recognize the bizarre condition my patient had” (p. 56), is echoed by the manila envelopes we safety-pinned to each patient’s bedclothes, “a memento of sorts from their Sandy experience” (p. 138).
86. Candice Staner’s internal hemorrhage from the anticoagulant (p. 11) is echoed by Vigo Ferness’s internal hemorrhage (p. 100).
87. Nate Tomen’s myocardial infarction (p. 36) is echoed by Stanley Loritan’s myocardial infarction (p. 86).
88. Stanley Loritan’s apology, “with his face turned up to the ceiling and eyes tightly shut, as if he was squeezing out the truth one word at a time.” (p. 84), is echoed by Apollo Greene, who “eked out the following statement, one word at a time. ‘They....are....trying....to.... kill....me.’” (p. 101).
89. “The downward spiral of the patient, as small missteps snowballed into a massive tragedy” (p. 8) is echoed by the beginning of Obama’s first term, “there was no end in sight to the downward spiral” (p. 200).
90. “I first came to Bellevue 37 years ago as a lowly intern to begin training in my specialty, Internal Medicine” (p. 11) is echoed by the line, “even the lowly intern has ‘standing’ to assert that t-PA should be used” (p. 92).
91. The senior person who gave the final word at the bedside, “the patriarch. The alpha male.” (p. 92), is echoed by the “Trumpian alpha male who blustered made-up facts with absolute conviction” (p. 89).
92. “Natalie gave us a full confession. Case closed.” (p. 24) is echoed by my missed opportunity to confront Will Thomason, “I soon thereafter submitted a positive evaluation of his performance. Opportunity missed. Case closed.” (p. 117).
93. The quote that could “be any physician’s motto - in two parts. Be sure you’re right...” (p. 68) is echoed by the line, “Our attitude would best be expressed by the motto, ‘We are here to save your butt, not to kiss it’” (p. 72) and by the line, “This could be our motto: all languages are accepted here” (p. 111).
94. “But for two years now, a mysterious illness had been stalking gay men” (p. 96) is echoed by “Brooding in the Atlantic for more than a week, Sandy had stalked the eastern seaboard” (p. 126) and by “our deerstalker cap” (p. 149).
95. The psychiatry patient who was deeply sedated after taking the wrong medication, “In fact, he was barely breathing” (p. 29), is echoed by Juan Verdad, barely breathing in the ICU with “the breathing pattern that shortly precedes death” (p. 103).
96. Joseph McCarthy’s death, “From that point on, he became a pariah, largely ignored until he died of liver disease” (p. 31), is echoed by Seth Feyland’s death,

- “Thus, Seth remained tethered in place, blind and bedbound for his final months, and then passed away quietly in his hospital bed” (p. 103).
97. The “win-win strategy to preserve autonomy *and* achieve a successful outcome” for Nate Tomen (p. 39) is echoed by the win-win scenarios for gun control and abortion (p. 186).
 98. The “subtle clue, an apparently unrelated and absurdly trivial detail that alerted us to the correct diagnosis” (p. 58) is echoed by “the ‘minimal’ characteristic that defined the groups, an absurdly trivial distinction that wasn’t even true” (p. 113).
 99. “The staff are so focused on treating the patient, they neglect to record the success of their efforts” (p. 72) is echoed by “Apparently, we were so focused on the medical condition, we forgot about the patient” (p. 76).
 100. The patient, who was in “no-man’s land during her dwell time” (p. 76), is echoed by the collapse of the political center that is “distressingly reminiscent of the decline of the middle class” (187).
 101. Our repeating theme of the systematic approach, “Left brain stuff” (p. 70), is echoed by our progress through patient surveys, “Right brain stuff” (p. 75).
 102. “Little did I know I was about to step into the epicenter of one of the great and terrible health epidemics of the 20th century” (p. 96) is echoed by my first trip to a major league baseball game, “I had landed in Oz” (p. 110). In some versions of the children’s classic, the wizard describes himself as “Oz, the Great and Terrible.”
 103. The “self-destructive sickness” of Munchausen (p. 44) is echoed by the “self-destructive state” that is “the harbinger of death to a septic patient” (p. 70), which is, in turn, echoed by Bellevue Hospital, which, during Superstorm Sandy, had “total body malfunction, an incestuous collaboration between all her failing systems to do her in. The harbinger of death.” (p. 129), which is, in turn, echoed by the nearly-forgotten patient, our nation, who ails from “total body malfunction, an incestuous collaboration between all her failing organs to do her in” (p. 238). A 3-echo chain!
 104. My advice, “The key to surviving a 36-hour shift was simple: Pace yourself” (p. 1), is echoed by my self-admonishment in the writing of this book: “I must repeatedly restrain myself, must check my pace” (p. 196).
 105. My advice to “Pace yourself. Nourish yourself. Keep your head down.” (p. 1) is echoed by my description of coronary artery flow, “an export tax of sorts, to nourish the pump” (p. 86).
 106. My advice to “Keep your head down. Pay attention.” (p. 1) is echoed by Will Thomason’s decision “to put his head down, find a new path, and move on” (p. 120).

107. My advice to “Focus. Learn your lessons.” (p. 1) is echoed by my observation of humans in a time of crisis, “Each person becomes three with astonishing focus, strength, and endurance” (p. 139).
108. My patient experience advice to “cater to our ‘client’s’ personal needs for a comfortable bed (p. 72) is echoed by the historical role of Bellevue “to provide a warm bed, three square meals, physical comfort...” (p. 106).
109. My “wry note to self: always read the transfer documents” (p. 45) is echoed by my “wry note to self: next time, call the National Guard *first*” (p. 135).
110. The line “Hence, a physician cannot get to first base, cannot pass Go” (p. 39) is echoed by the Trump Plaza: “Soon after it opened in 1984, the boardwalk casino-hotel hit financial trouble” (p. 209). Both are references to the game of *Monopoly*.
111. Obama’s rhetoric, which was “matched by an eerily prescient nod to economic instability, income inequality, and health care access” (p. 197), is echoed by “Trump’s own words – eerily prescient from his childhood” (p. 212).
112. A controversial political issue that can “tickle the mind and tug at the heart at the same time” (p. 67) is echoed by “timeworn memories that tickle the brain and tug at the heart” (p. 271).
113. One of three simple questions about income inequality, “does it matter?” (p. 149), is echoed by the same question about a coronary obstruction, “why does it matter?” (p. 160).
114. The patients who had no money at all to pay for a television, “so they lay in bed all day staring at the ceiling - completely bored” (p. 77), are echoed by Stan Loritan, “Whenever Stan spoke, he would tilt his head back, look up at the ceiling, and tightly close his eyes” (p. 84).
115. The two sides of the brain, “Art and Science. Yin and Yang. Two parts to the whole.” (p. 66), are echoed by the description of leadership, “This is just as true in politics as it is in Medicine. We need the Yin and the Yang.” (p. 108).
116. Jesus’ words, “And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth” (p. 174), are echoed by our hospital’s approach to cardiac arrests, “for which the goal is to roll away the stone and bring the patient back to life – a modern day Lazarus, raised from the dead” (p. 178), and by the line from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, “To say: ‘I am Lazarus, come from the dead’” (p. 258).
117. Alphabet City, which was “an alien and hostile world” (p. 3), is echoed by my homesickness at summer camp, “when the world closing in around me was alien and hostile” (p. 124).
118. Our challenge in Superstorm Sandy, “Unfortunately, we would be setting this all up in the dark” (p. 129), is echoed by our lack of testing early in the pandemic, when we were setting our response in place, “and we were still in the dark” (p. 222).

119. “The evidence-based approach has given us an effective remedy for “truthiness,”” (p. 92) is echoed by the line, “In other words, without a description of healthiness, we cannot tell if we are sick” (p. 244).
120. “In this breach of trust, I learned a valuable lesson about what it feels like to be on the *receiving* end of a deception: as a child tricked by his older brother, as a worker cheated by her employer, or as a citizen deceived by a national leader” (p. 45) is echoed by references to Donald Trump tricking his brother Robert (p. 208), cheating his contractors (p. 211), and deceiving his constituents (p. 214).
121. The reference to the CPR performed on Thomas Spectes, “Why they did not throw in the towel while the opposing side was running up the score” (p. 176), is echoed by our political arena and its “overwrought emphasis on hand-to-hand combat, trouncing the opposition, and running up the score” (p. 267).
122. Philip DeSare’s elaborate ruse, “His masquerade had actually led to severe harm and permanent disability” (p. 44), is echoed by the trickery of sepsis, “A kidney infection might masquerade as a kidney stone” (p. 70).
123. The Munchausen patient, who “feigns illness in order to receive treatment, even to the point of self-harm” (p. 44), is echoed by the abdominal abscess that “might feign a stomach flu” (p. 70).
124. Will Thomason’s charm, “He had me at hello” (p. 47), is echoed by my search for the causes of income inequality, “In other words, we will follow the money” (p. 149). Both are references to the movie, Jerry Maguire (“You had me at hello” and “Show me the money!”).
125. Juan Verdad’s discomfort, “He was fidgeting on the edge of his seat, bobbing up and down” (p. 40), is echoed by the “convicts in horizontally-striped pajamas, bobbing up and down on the handle of the small railroad flatcar” (p. 175).
126. The frustration I felt with Philip DeSare’s case, “I was extremely vexed. And so was my supervising resident as we went down one blind alley after another.” (p. 43), is echoed by the resuscitation of Thomas Spectes, “the ED attending and residents worked desperately through every possible step in the algorithm. Down one blind alley after another.” (p. 176).
127. “Bam!” (p. 127) is echoed by “Now let’s kick it up a notch” (p. 241). Both are catchphrases used by Emeril, the celebrity chef.
128. The minimal group paradigm, which is “baked into our DNA” (p. 122), is echoed by having an explicit mission “baked into our DNA” (p. 236).
129. American achievements of coalescence, “We should not be surprised by these historical examples” (p. 140), are echoed by our 52-word mission statement, which “is quite a mouthful, but we should not be surprised” (p. 244)
130. Thomas Spectes’ dire situation as he “was deposited by EMS staff, who were fully aware that his odds were slim indeed” (p. 175) is echoed by the case for having a well-defined goal, “It is so much easier to overcome insurmountable odds when you have consensus on the target state” (p. 237).

131. The shortfall in dwell time, “The gap, then, is 3 hours. Simple math.” (p. 74), is echoed by the challenge of our nation’s mission, “it is easy to identify the gaps between our current and target states. Simple math.” (p. 246).
132. Trump’s outrageous transaction that completely wiped out his trusting investors, “One wonders how this can even be legal” (p. 212), is echoed by the practice of gerrymandering, “Brillig but slithy. One wonders how this can even be legal.” (p. 253).
133. My encounter with racism, “an inconvenient blemish on an otherwise successful college career” (p. 49), is echoed by my description of my hospital, “For all of her warts, foibles, and blemishes, Bellevue has always stood tall as a house of healing” (p. 271).
134. The line, “Most patients can sense insincerity when they feel it, even if you cannot tell how they know it” (p. 41), is echoed by Will Thomason’s admonition, “You don’t realize that we know it’s racial, but we do. We always do. And we know that you don’t really know that we know.” (p. 120).
135. The marriage of art and science, “That sweet spot is the holy grail of decision-making” (p. 181), is echoed by our vote, “The holy grail of every politician ever born.” (p. 264).
136. The political opponents who “don’t even agree upon the facts that describe our *current* state. . . We can’t even agree on who we are.” (p. 80) are echoed by our nation’s challenge, “On what planet could we, America, even *begin* to agree on our target state, the place we are all trying to get to? What am I thinking? We can’t even agree on who we are.” (p. 240).
137. The line, “This is a question best left for the reader, but I will note, as an experienced physician, that we have not cured suffering” (p. 107), is echoed by the line, “As for the upper tier of the target state: knowledge, harmony, and leadership, I will leave scoring to the reader” (p. 245).
138. My description of a conditional apology, “You don’t even have the sense of decency to name the one offended?” (p. 14), is echoed by Joseph Welch’s question put to Joseph McCarthy, “Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last?” (p. 31).
139. The ICU alarm fiasco, which would “likely have recurred repeatedly until we finally came to our senses” (p. 26), is echoed by our hospital’s corruption of its mission statement, “It remained so for nearly a year - until we finally returned to our senses. And our purpose.” (p. 237).
140. The ICU alarm that would “set off a flashing light at the central nursing station” (p. 19) is echoed by the ambulance carrying Thomas Spectes after his cardiac arrest, “And then they raced through Manhattan streets with lights flashing and sirens blaring” (p. 175).
141. One of the answers to the inquisitive child’s why question about the sun “Because it is fiery hot” (p. 18) is echoed by a memorable line from Reagan’s

- 1982 speech to the British House of Commons, “Must civilizations perish in a hail of fiery atoms?” (p. 191).
142. The Best Picture Award envelope that was misread at the Academy Awards (p. 21) is echoed by the patient information envelope that our staff member misdirected to the medical records room during Superstorm Sandy (p. 138).
143. Our temptation to give in “to a charitable impulse and let Natalie off the hook” (p. 25) is echoed by Will Thomason at our moment of truth, “But he didn’t let me off the hook either” (p. 120).
144. The Academy Awards La La Land debacle (p. 21) is echoed by my comment about defining a national target state, “Is that even possible? I must be in La La Land.” (p. 240).
145. Joseph McCarthy’s innuendos about potential communists in government (p. 30) are echoed by the McCarthyesque doubts that Donald Trump fostered about Barak Obama’s heritage. (p. 214).
146. The question, “How come not a single person lost a single paycheck?” (p. 31), is echoed by the deduction of the Medicare tax from every employee’s paycheck (p. 170).
147. Nate Tomen, whose arms were “folded across his chest, the way he might be in a coffin and just as perfectly still” (p. 37), was echoed by the underwater coffin that Donald Trump escaped from due to his financial shenanigans (p. 212) and by our beloved head nurse, who “was lying in repose on his hospital bed, much like he might have been in a coffin at a viewing” (p. 234).
148. The medical conditions that are “the pantry staples of most community hospitals” (p. 37) are echoed by Reagan, who “continued to peddle familiar staples from his political pantry” (p. 189).
149. The answer to a why question from the inquisitive child, “Because the sun warms the earth” (p. 18), is echoed by Thomas Paine’s reference to “the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot” (p. 124).
150. The third ingredient of integrity, “be reliable - as dependable as the sunrise” (p. 41), is echoed by Reagan’s final message to the American people, “I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life” (p. 193).
151. Philip DeSare, my “well-described case of a bizarre psychiatric condition named for Baron Munchausen” (p. 43), is echoed by Trump, “a serial confabulator. Like a Munchausen patient” (p. 214).
152. Philip DeSare, “one of the most famous cases on the eastern seaboard” (p. 43), is echoed by Superstorm Sandy, which “had stalked the eastern seaboard” (p. 126) and by “Atlantic City, the Las Vegas of the eastern seaboard” (209).
153. The meeting that was in an “uproar as a cacophony of dissenting voices filled the room” (p. 48) was echoed by the command center that was “hot, noisy, and hectic – a cacophony of conversations and interruptions” (p. 136) and by the

truth, “which at times is merely a faint signal buried in all the noise - a cacophonous din of political flak” (p. 163).

154. The clueless king who “marches stark naked in a procession before his subjects” (p. 52) is echoed by society’s rules, “It is also not okay to drive on the wrong side of the road, smoke in a restaurant, blare loud music on your lawn, or go naked in public” (p. 182).
155. The boy in the crowd, too young to know better, who cried out, “The emperor is wearing no clothes!” (p. 52), is echoed by my summary of Trump’s performance in this simple, devastating truth, “The emperor is wearing no clothes” (p. 217).
156. My description of a satisfying diagnosis, “it can be a truly spectacular ‘Eureka’ moment” (p. 53), is echoed by Ronald Reagan, who graduated from Eureka College in 1932” (p. 188).
157. The patient having a lumbar puncture “curled up on his side like a fetus” (p. 53) is echoed by “those who consider the fetus to have the status of a newborn baby” (p. 184).
158. My memory test for Gerry Menard, “Picture in your mind a red balloon, a teacup, and an umbrella” (p. 56), is echoed by a percutaneous coronary intervention, which “expands the vessel with a tiny balloon” (p. 87), by the physician “who has seen a case go down the rabbit hole” (p. 7 – reference to the Mad Hatter’s tea party), and by the five Why questions about rain (p. 18).
159. Juan Verdad, who “apparently had not read the textbook. He seemingly had nine lives.” (p. 40), is echoed by Gerry Menard, “As we like to say in our profession, the patient doesn’t always read the textbook” (p. 56).
160. The “rhythmic and regular lub-dub, lub-dub” of Gerry Menard’s heart (p. 57) is echoed by Captain Trump’s false assurances, which “fade into a faint, gurgly lub-dub” in my climate change fantasy (p. 239).
161. The father’s problem in my favorite joke, “Dad thinks he is a corpse” (p. 59), is echoed by the lack of progress in the resuscitation of Thomas Spectes, “After a half-hour of effort, it became clear that they were literally beating a dead corpse” (p. 176).
162. The doctor, who “grasps the father’s thumb and pricks it with a needle” (p. 59), is echoed by my unfortunate incident with Vigo Ferness, “I felt a sharp prick on my thumb and saw a bright red drop of blood appear” (p. 98) and by the three pricks of a bubble by which my post-election fantasy vanished, “Snap, crackle, pop!” (p. 147).
163. The surge of adrenalin I experienced in the aftermath of the needlestick, which “imprinted this event in my memory for all time” (p. 99), is echoed by “the rush of adrenalin when we entered the stadium” (p. 110).

164. The cytomegalovirus eye infection that left Seth Feyland “completely and permanently blind” (p. 102) is echoed by my cognitive deficit, “The glaring blindspot of an experienced practitioner” (p. 259).
165. The “burdensome death certificate” that I advised my intern to complete in advance (p. 104) is echoed by the “bona fide birth certificate” that Obama was pressured to produce (p. 214).
166. Stacy Hippocrates’ actions to “report her own error to her supervisor, essentially blowing the whistle on her mistake” (p. 29) is echoed by “Someone with access who is brave enough to raise his hand, blow the whistle, or otherwise stand up against prejudice” (p. 120).
167. The physician’s privilege “to hold the sacred key that unlocks the magic door to reveal the inner sanctum” (p. 106) is echoed by Will Thomason’s assertion that “Black people are often stuck on the outside without access to the inner sanctum” (p. 120).
168. My prediction about Juan Verdad, “Above all else, I was sure of one thing. This patient would not last the night.” (p. 103), is echoed by my prediction about the cardiac patient during Superstorm Sandy, “Above all else, I was sure of one thing. This patient would not last the night.” (p. 134). In both cases, I was 100% wrong.
169. The work that is done in a hospital “to make staff feel empowered to raise their hand and “stop the assembly line, to interrupt a procedure in progress” (p. 22) is echoed by our determination to efficiently evacuate our hospital in Superstorm Sandy, “No more pussyfooting around. This was going to run like a factory assembly line.” (p. 138) and by World War II families who “bought war bonds, rationed rubber products, and staffed the assembly lines” (p. 140).
170. The opening line to my climate change fantasy, “March is the cruelest month” (p. 239), is echoed by musings about our nation’s terminal diagnosis, “Our shadow at evening rising to meet us?” (p. 280). Both are derived from T.S. Eliot’s epic poem, *The Wasteland*, which opens with the line, “April is the cruelest month” and shortly gives rise to the words “your shadow at evening rising to meet you.”
171. Stanley Loritan’s blood pressure, which achieved the “Rooseveltian threshold of 240/130” (p. 85), is echoed by the Churchillian type of courage that was not needed to pass the Affordable Care Act (p. 173) and by the Stalinesque despots that “bring eventual catastrophic harm to themselves and the people they govern” (p. 122). Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin were the leaders of the Allies in World War II who met at Yalta to plan for the post-war era.
172. My line about Philip DeSare, “I would certainly understand if he was all of those things (p. 42), is echoed by my line about myself two pages later, “But I was none of those things” (p. 44).

173. Reagan's assertion that "the march of freedom and democracy...will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash-heap of history" (p. 191) is echoed by Donald Trump who I predict "will be consigned to the ash heap of history" (p. 218).
174. A sincere apology, "which is a magical potion" (p. 14), is echoed by the magical thinking that hampered the Trump administration during the COVID pandemic (p. 66).
175. The magic carpet of wishful thinking (p. 147), is echoed by the two-humped Bactrian camel that our nation has turned into (p. 266). Magic carpets and camels are two forms of desert transport.
176. Members of the RCA team, who "scour the medical chart, line by line, for additional clues" (p. 20), are echoed by members of the sepsis SWAT team, who meet together, "poring over the electronic medical record, carefully constructing a time-line" (p. 71).
177. That we are "most effective when we use both sides of our brain (p. 67) is echoed by additional witnesses who testified on both sides in the Clarence Thomas hearings (p. 118), by "Lincoln's compassionate view toward suffering on both sides in the Civil War" (p. 143), and by my offense to "a great many readers from both sides of the aisle" (p. 182).
178. The loss of seven astronauts in the explosion of Space Shuttle Challenger (p. 192) is echoed by the loss of seven Bellevue staff members due to COVID-19 (p. 234).
179. The debris that was "swirling furiously in a vortex" during Superstorm Sandy (p. 127) is echoed by the trauma slot, which is a "superheated vortex where life battles death in a cosmic tug of war" (p. 175).
180. Donald Trump, who "prattles from the parapets of his narcissistic palace" (p. 109), is echoed by Bellevue, which is a "mystical palace of great pathos, of heart-wrenching suffering and life-affirming heroism" (p. 271).
181. Rendering a "a pure judgment about a fateful error without lacing it with the prejudicial knowledge of its eventual consequences" (p. 27) is echoed by my aim to render "a pure judgment about the fateful decision" to elect Trump "without lacing it with the prejudicial knowledge of its eventual consequences" (p. 213).
182. Trump's ban on the use of the term "evidence-based," for which "he might as well have put a stake in my heart" (p. 217), is echoed by the Supreme Court's decision not to slay the gerrymander, "They might as well have put a stake in my heart!" (p. 265).
183. The someone within the enclave who introduces "the chink that becomes the crack that grows into the rift that opens the door" (p. 120) is echoed by the "crack between the doors" through which our nurses ran the IV tubing during the COVID pandemic (p. 227).

184. Superstorm Sandy (p. 125) is echoed by the “perfect storm” of the 2009 recession (p. 199) and by the “perfect storm” of Donald Trump’s win in the 2016 election (p. 124).
185. Bill Clinton’s economic accomplishments, “Some wrecking job!” (p. 156), are echoed by Barak Obama’s rescue of the American economy, “Some wrecking job!” (p. 201).
186. Ebenezer Scrooge’s “unearthly visitor” (p. 142) is echoed by Ronald Reagan’s “unearthly ability to win the support of the American people” (p. 206).
187. The “unforgiving days” of January (p. 172) are echoed by the “unforgiving sea” into which Trump’s lifeboat sinks (p. 250).
188. The coronary blood flow, “an export tax of sorts, to nourish the pump” (p. 86), is echoed by the capital gains tax that was slashed to encourage investment in Supply Side Economics (p. 155).
189. The appeal to our base instincts, which is “simply fuel to the flame” (p. 122), is echoed by the Plague and its tendency “to rage the more, as fire will do by laying on fresh combustibles” (p. 220).
190. The “Great Reveal” of a clean diagnosis (p. 53) is echoed by the “Great Reveal” of the mystery of growing income inequality (p. 155).
191. Juan Verdad, who “was a chestnut sparrow – always flitting about, lighter than air” (p. 40), is echoed by the “flock of Potteresque dementors flitting about in the stairwell” (p. 130).
192. The times we have failed to act, “Have dithered while the house burnt down” (p. 68), is echoed by the act of “waiting until your house burns down before purchasing home owner’s insurance” (p. 169).
193. The hollow needle that is inserted into the spine during a lumbar puncture (p. 53) is echoed by the eye of the needle through which the Affordable Care Act had to pass (p. 173).
194. The nurses who “actually silenced the alarm so that it would not continue to annoy the staff (p. 25) are echoed by the evacuation of Bellevue during Sandy, at which point, “the hallways darkened, and the alarms fell silent” (p. 144).
195. The Munchausen patient, who is “attracted to medical attention like a moth to a flame” (p. 44), is echoed by Paul Krugman, who is “drawn to the truth like a moth to a flame” (p. 162).
196. “Medical history, physical exam, test results, diagnosis, and treatment – the well-tempered quintet” (p. 80) is echoed by Douglas Hofstadter’s *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*” (p. 145). Bach gave the title “The Well-Tempered Clavier” to a collection of preludes and fugues dated 1722.
197. One consequence of gerrymandering, “the electoral butterfly effect” (p. 254), is echoed by Vladimir Nabokov, “a prolific contributor to our scientific understanding of butterflies” (p. 145).

198. My ghastly scenario of Matt Tener "lying in the gutter" (p. 5) is echoed by the Republican Party, which drank to excess, left my mother, and was "lying in the gutter" in the final chapter (p. 268).
199. Gerald Menard, who "could not store new facts, make new friends, or accumulate new knowledge. He was unable to learn." (p. 62), is echoed by our national ban on gun safety research, which leaves us "unable to learn about this topic" (p. 196.).
200. The East River, which "had risen by at least a dozen feet and overflowed its banks" (p. 128), is echoed by Trump, who overdrew his bank accounts - in a manner of speaking (p. 211).