

Assorted Views on a Hopeless Doctor

Early Works of Garfield (SMA News, June 1989)

1. MY DADDY, THE DOCTOR

My daddy is a doctor.
He does not look like one.
He wears no ties and overalls.
He's not like a doctor at all.

When I have a temperature
He doesn't use a thermometer.
He places his hand on my forehead
Says: "Nothing much for goodness sake."

My little brother frequently falls down
Bruises and bumps all around.
But daddy says: "Please be calm.
This happens when you climb up and down."

Mommy lost her voice one day.
"You talk too much," daddy said.
"Shut your mouth for a few days.
Keep quiet and you will be OK."

Granny complains that she cannot see
Her legs are weak and she's giddy.
Daddy says: "Please do not worry.
That's not bad when you are eighty."

My daddy is a doctor.
I wonder what sort is he
For I have yet to see him
Prescribing medicine, you see.

2. MY HUSBAND, THE DOCTOR

My husband is a doctor.
He's not like one at all.
Works day and night, such long hours.
And yet we remain poor.

"Marry me," he asked a long time ago.
"One day I'll be famous and rich."
But the day it seems will never come.
I'm still working to supplement his income.

I don't crave for a ten-room mansion
A five carat diamond or a limousine.
But once in a while I rather like
A vacation and a change of cuisine.

I told him not to be fussy.
Treat all illnesses real or imaginary.
Nowadays we need a lot of money
To support a family decently.

Stop saying: "Man does not live on bread alone."
A married man's priority is his home.
Medicine's a high calling – no big deal.
A business proposition – that's for real.

My husband is a doctor.
He is an eccentric one.
Treasure, he says is in the mind.
But a little in the pocket will suit me fine.

3. MY EMPLOYER, THE DOCTOR

My employer is a doctor.
He doesn't look like one.
He appears more like a pop musician
Than a sober and caring physician.

His clothes are bright and loud.
When he speaks, he almost shouts.
Patients are depressed, he says, and need to be cheered.
So he tries to create a carnival atmosphere.

"Put on your best dress and make up your face
To lift up your spirit, this is the way
Superior to any mixtures, capsules or creams.
If you don't feel better already, try a tonic and gin."

"We are responsible for our problems
When we treat adults like little children
And children treated like adults, the aged like babies
Who in turn are handled like priceless jewelry."

My employer is a doctor.
He is a funny one.
He says if only everyone would laugh out loud
The medical profession would soon be bankrupt.

4. MY MASTER, THE DOCTOR

My master is a doctor.
He's not like one at all.
No reason to keep me unkempt and dirty
Although I'm only his pet dog.

In the beginning I had great expectations.
Besides a vet, what better relation
Than with a doctor, I carefully reasoned.
Few canines can hope to bear comparison.

I must admit that my doggy mind
Harboured fancy visions at that time.
Expensive biscuits, different brand meat
Well-groomed, riding in the car's back-seat.

But now I know the meaning of
When human says: "It's a life of a dog."
My master though gentle and kind
Treats me just like any canine.

Leftovers from the table is all I eat.
A cardboard box is where I sleep.
My role is simple and easy, he insists.
Just sound the alarm and amuse the kids.

My master is a doctor.
I wonder how good is he.
For certainly I do not agree
Creature comforts we dogs do not need.



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5. MY NEIGHBOUR, THE DOCTOR

My neighbour is a doctor.
I don't need him at all.
Why must he practise next door
Beside me and the makan stall?

Why must he set up next to me
Siphoning off my hard-earned fees?
I told him the neighbourhood is too small.
Three doctors already, no room for more.

I said, please withdraw before it's too late.
Wait a while for a new HDB estate.
He said, Singapore is a small island state.
Everywhere he goes, it's the same fate.

I said, be patient for a while.
Study hard and specialise.
He said, probably I didn't realise
He couldn't pass any exams even if he tries.

I said, it isn't pleasant to compete –
It generates ill will and deceit.
He said, with competition, patients will benefit.
We'll have to upgrade and be on our feet.

My neighbour is a doctor.
Is he really an honest one?
He said, don't treat him like an enemy.
Let's be tolerant and practise in harmony.

6. MY FRIEND, THE DOCTOR

My friend is a doctor.
He's not like one at all.
He doesn't carry a pager.
He's not available for calls.

He says the pager gives the impression
That you are a very important person.
But actually it is a bloody nuisance
And a source of constant irritation.

That no motivation or persuasion
Should make a doctor practise 24-hour consultation.
It is easy to understand the reason.
A doctor is also human.

It is also beyond his acceptance
That he should suffer unwanted interruption
In the middle of an interesting conversation
Or in the process of a biological function.

Calls should be made person to person
Not by a pager emitting sounds or vibrations.
If he is not available for consultation
He advises me to call another person.

My friend is a doctor.
He behaves not like one at all.
Carrying a pager, he says
Is like being chained to an iron ball.

7. MY PATIENT, THE DOCTOR

My patient is a doctor.
He's not like one at all.
Neurotic about everything.
I dread to have him call.

A pain at the back of his head
Bowels not open for one week
A cough with a pain in the chest.
He will not give me any rest.

I told him one fine day
Treat yourself in exactly the same way
As you would your own patients
With the same care and honest consideration.

He says, a doctor's life is not easy.
Dealing all the time with morbidity
Witnessing so much trauma and inflammations.
It's natural that doctors are the worst patients.

That's why some doctors appear so callous.
Lacking in understanding, hedonistic and frivolous
Or else so saintly, working with missionary zest.
It's a defensive mechanism, in a profession full of stress.

My patient is a doctor.
He's a mixed up kid.
I don't know what is in his mind
For he confuses me all the time.

8. NO HOPE, THAT DOCTOR

Friends, colleagues and relatives
You have just read the biased views
Of a dog and a minority few.
Now my defence is due.

Firstly, what they say is not foolproof.
Although there's some measure of truth
For we all tend to exaggerate
Especially dogs and doctors, children and mates.

Secondly, I'm really a victim of circumstances.
If my views are at odds with current practices,
Please show pity for a harmless dissident
Middle-aged and presbyopic.

Thirdly, to my dog, friends, relatives and other connections
Who suspect that I'm not paying them enough attention
Please be assured that my apparent lack of action
Doesn't mean I'm short of love and affection.

Fourthly, medicine is sometimes profession
Sometimes art, sometimes science and sometimes fiction
Sometimes rewarding, sometimes heartbreaking.
I try to humour sometimes a humourless undertaking.

But the truth is in our society.
We are measured only by what others see.
No other factor really matters.
That's why they say: "NO HOPE, THAT DOCTOR." ■

