Do You Believe in Santa?

By Ramasamy Ramakrishnan Pravin

"Christmas Eve and I have to do rounds, God have mercy," the doctor lamented, rushing around the wards at 11 at night. Extremely miserable, he sat at the counter, scribbling on his notepad about how miserable he was. He had to skip his medical class's annual Christmas party and he was alone in the wards. Humming Christmas carols to himself, he browsed through the case notes of the patients he was looking after for the night.

Out of the blue, there was a ring for assistance.

"At this unearthly hour, who could it be?" he wondered. Trudging down the corridors, he entered a dimly-lit ward. An old woman greeted him.

"Good evening. I am the house officer on duty, Dr Howards, at your service," he introduced himself. The old woman smiled back and gestured to him to come closer to her. Half petrified, he approached the woman.

"Merry Christmas, son. By the way, do you believe in Santa?" she whispered into his ears. Perplexed, he smiled at her, and for a moment, thought she was suffering from dementia. Santa was not real. Santa had never been real. For years now, he had been disappointed that Santa was non-existent, and now this old woman was asking him a bizarre question at a strange hour.

How was he going to reply? Would breaking the truth to her break her heart? He decided to go with the flow, and agreed that Santa existed.

She smiled at him and replied, "These cold winters worsen my rheumatoid arthritis so each Christmas I land in the hospital. And when I ask the miserable house officer on duty the same question, he thinks I'm crazy and agrees that Santa exists, just because they are all afraid of breaking a poor old woman's heart."

Stunned by her answer, he was dumbfounded. He did not know what to say.

"Son, I have a daughter who is a doctor too. There was one Christmas Eve when she was on call. My, my, the whining and the moaning and groaning, it was as if she was in labour. I stopped her and told her that Christmas was all about the spirit of giving and what better way of giving back? Doctors give their lives to save the lives of others and that is the greatest gift of all. When I saw you walking around, you reminded me of my daughter. Both of you looked like the Grinch who stole Christmas," she chuckled weakly.

"I'm so sorry, Madam, I didn't mean to," he replied, remorseful of his actions.

"It's all right, dear, I just wanted to wish you a Merry Christmas. After all, doctors are only human," she held his hand and reassured him.

"Thank you, Madam," he said, as he stood up with a sigh of relief.

"One more thing, son," the old woman said, as he was about to leave.

"Yes, Madam?" he asked.

"We grannies are smarter than you boys think we are," she said, winking at him.

"Merry Christmas, Madam," he chuckled as he headed back to the counter, this time with a huge smile across his face. **SMA**

A first year medical student at Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, Pravin expresses himself creatively through writing. He says, "In medical school, one is exposed to a vast multitude of experiences which feed my creativity, allowing me to pen introspective poems and prose. For Christmas, it's all about the festivity, but let us not forget the underprivileged amongst us as well as the importance of adding mirth to the lives of patients within the capacity of doctors. Through medical fiction, I hope to share my passion for writing with the readers."