

TESTIMONY OF Ted Closson
In Support of LD 673,
An Act To Create the Insulin Safety Net Program
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services
March 30, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Ted Closson, I live in Bristol. If you'll give me a moment of your time, I'd like to tell you about my friend Shane Patrick Boyle.

Shane was a gentle person, soft spoken, easy going. He was writer. He wrote comics about superheroes and community life, sometimes intertwining the two. This is actually how we met. We were both active in a creative writing program at the University of Houston in Texas back in 2010. And we took a couple of these classes together over the years I knew him. In his free time, Shane would bike everywhere. For those unfamiliar, that's an activity in "car centric" Houston where you take your life in your hands just rolling out of your dooryard. But he was safe, wore his helmet, and seemed to love the outdoors and exploring the city.

Shane was well known and well-loved within the small community of people he had lived for over a decade in Houston. It was through him that I got to know some of the other artists within the vibrant, hidden gems that turned out to be Houston's scene. I remember having breakfast with him in a restaurant we'd been shown that was tucked away under an overpass on a dead-end street. You had to knock on a door to gain entry and when you got inside it was this hidden oasis with a courtyard, a stage, and this crazy jumbled diner atmosphere.

Shane was a wonderful, kind human being.

Two days after Shane's mother passed-- he'd left Houston to take care of her in Arkansas-- a friend and neighbor reported online that they'd found him collapsed and unconscious in his apartment. By the time he reached the nearby hospital it was too late. I remember collapsing in my kitchen when I told my wife the news.

I had no idea Shane was a diabetic. Thinking back, I remembered a GoFundMe campaign he'd run. I think I had seen it, but hadn't been paying enough attention. It was still waiting online when I went looking. For two weeks, the last two weeks of his life, he'd been \$50 short of the money he needed for his insulin. Many of his other friends had missed it as well.

The symptoms for diabetic ketoacidosis, the condition which overtakes the body of a Type1 diabetic when insulin becomes unavailable are vomiting, abdominal pain, shortness of breath, confusion; the blood becomes acidic and bodily organs begin to fail.

Shane died in horrible pain.

After all of this happened, I wrote and illustrated a comic about Shane. It's been seen in a lot of places. I've submitted it electronically as part of my testimony. At the conclusion of the comic I spoke about a vision of care, of civic virtue, of community, and the social contract. I was hoping at the time that my words were general enough that they could speak to every American who would read them.

But when I wrote those words, I'll confess, I wasn't thinking about everyone. I was thinking about the people who'd raised me, who I'd grown up around. I was thinking about a state and a region I'd returned to after living all over the country. It was Maine. It was you. It was us. It was the people I'd witnessed when there was hardness and difficulty, who came together in crisis, who cared for and sheltered one another. I still believe that's who we are.

My friend Shane is gone. A law like this would have saved his life. But it's not too late for others here in Maine. I encourage you to commit to a piece of legislation that embodies this spirit in LD673.

The following work
first appeared May 25, 2017,
at thenib.com.

A GOFUNDME CAMPAIGN IS NOT HEALTH INSURANCE

Written and Illustrated by Ted Closson.

For Shane.



WE MAY DISAVOW
COMMUNITY IN
MANY PLACES,



BUT IT'S HOW
WE ACTUALLY
GET THROUGH
MOST OF
OUR TROUBLES.

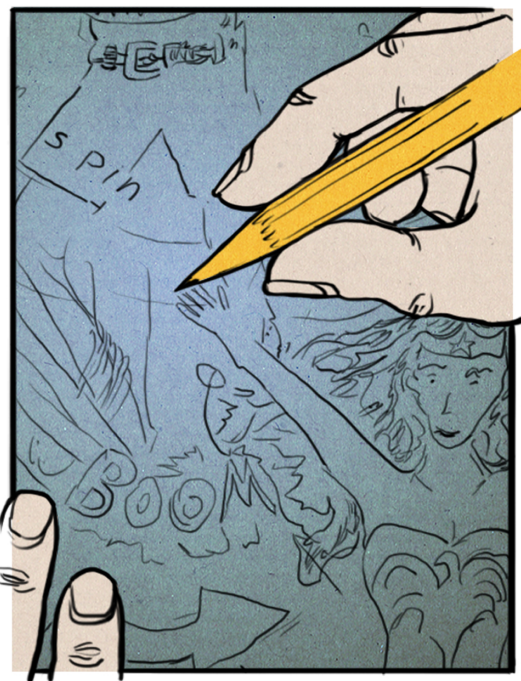


WE EULOGIZE IT
IN LITERATURE
AND ART INSTEAD OF
POLITICAL THEORY.

I MET SHANE
FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN A COLLEGE COMICS
WRITING COURSE.



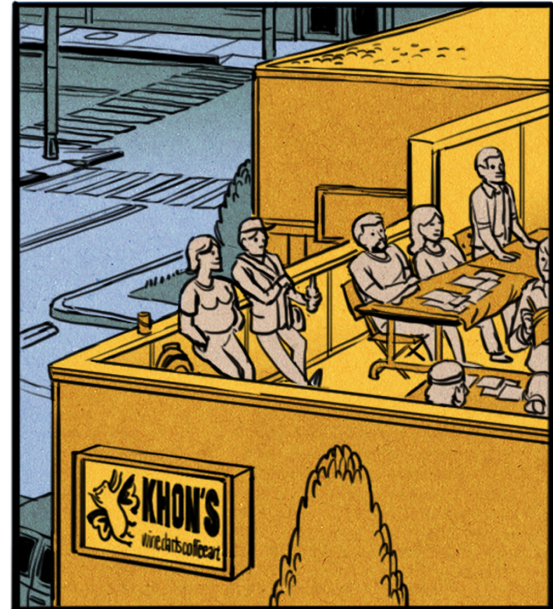
HE WAS SOFT SPOKEN;
WROTE SWEET,
STRANGE STORIES
CENTERED ON
LIFE IN HOUSTON
AND SUPERHEROES;
AND FOUNDED ZINEFEST...



...AN EVENT
DEDICATED TO
PROMOTING ZINES,
MINI-COMICS, AND
OTHER FORMS OF
SMALL PRESS ART,



ZINEFEST HAD GROWN
INTO A COMMUNITY
REPRESENTATIVE OF
HOUSTON'S CREATIVE
UNDERCURRENTS.



IT WAS ABOUT
THE PEOPLE
WHO CREATED THEM,
WHO READ THEM,
LOVED THEM.

IT WAS ABOUT
MORE THAN ZINES
AND COMICS.

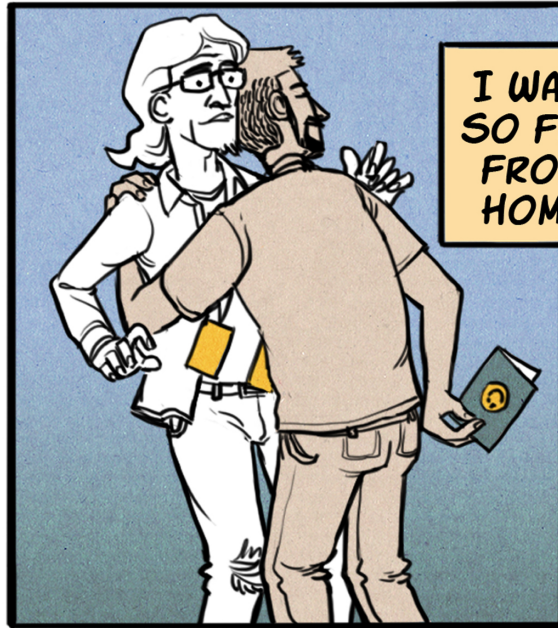
INSPIRED IN PART
BY HIS EXAMPLE,
FOR MY MFA THESIS,
I CREATED A MINIATURE
COMICS CONVENTION
AND INVITED CREATORS
FROM ALL AROUND
HOUSTON THAT I KNEW.



HE GOT ME A CARD
TO CELEBRATE
THE OCCASION.

I REMEMBER
HUGGING HIM.

THANKING HIM.



I WAS
SO FAR
FROM
HOME.

NO ONE FROM
MY FAMILY COULD
BE THERE FOR
MY SHOW.

SHANE MADE IT
A LITTLE EASIER.



I GRADUATED AND
LEFT THE CITY,
BUT HE AND I WERE
STILL PRESENT IN
EACH OTHER'S LIVES.



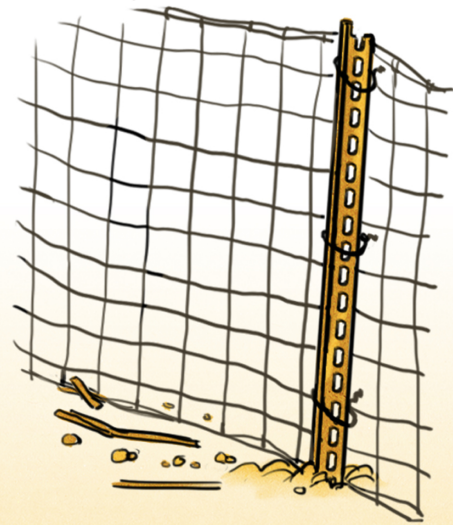
WE CELEBRATED
SUCCESSSES, REPOSTED
EACH OTHER'S MEMES,
FUNDED ONE ANOTHER'S
KICKSTARTERS.



WE SUPPORTED
EACH OTHER
AS PEOPLE
ONLINE DO.

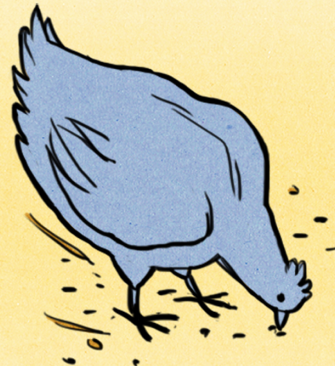
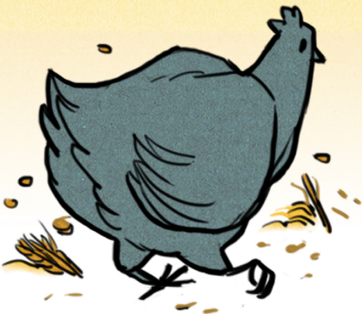


AND YET
SOMEHOW
I MISSED
THINGS...



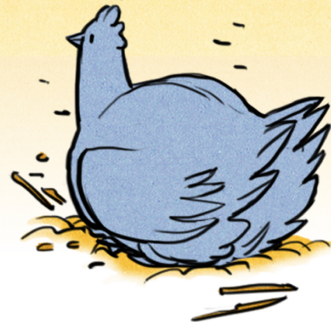
I KNEW HE
HAD MOVED.

I ASSUMED IT
WAS TO TRY
SOMETHING NEW.



SO MANY PEOPLE
WERE SEEKING
A PLACE FOR
THEMSELVES
AFTER COLLEGE.

I NEVER
THOUGHT
ANYTHING
OF IT.



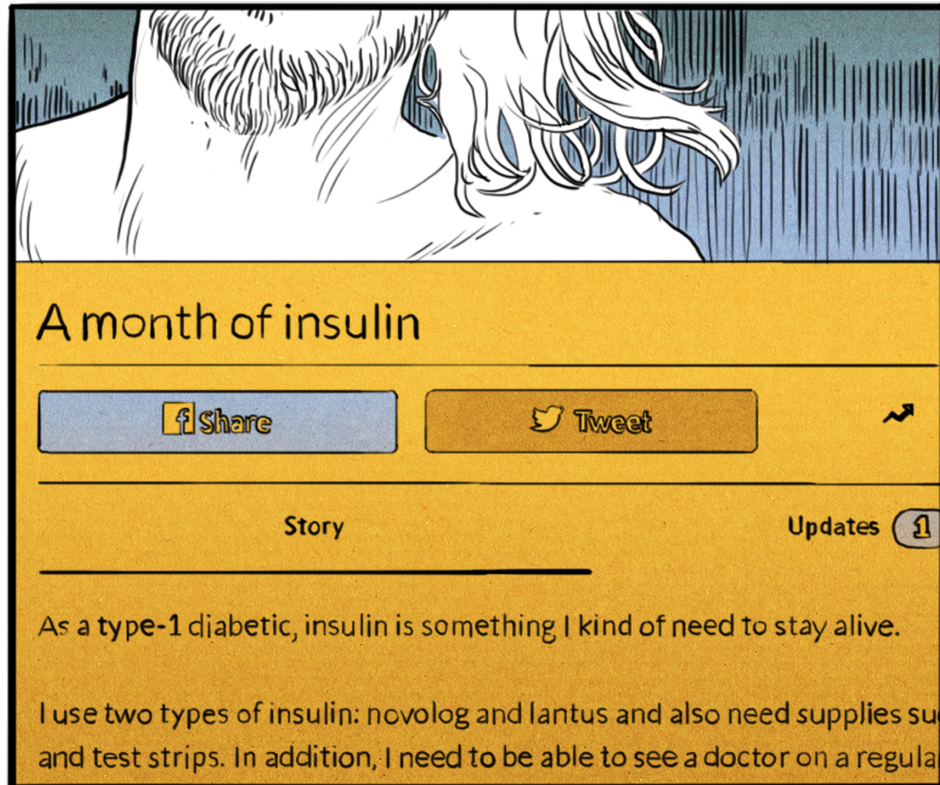
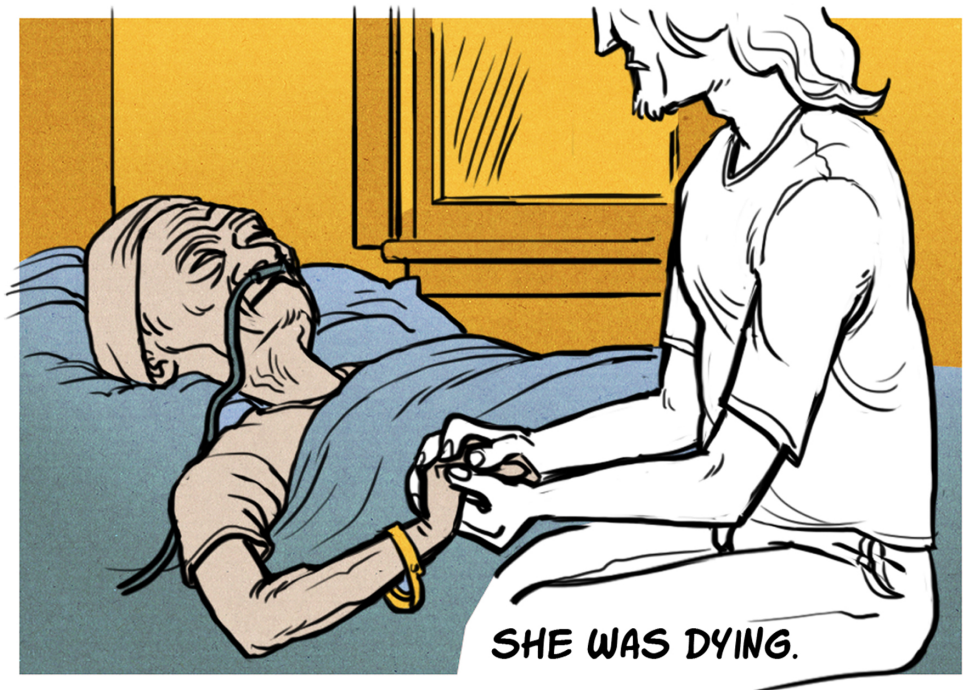
I'D LEFT
THE CITY MYSELF
BECAUSE I
COULDN'T
AFFORD IT.



BUT I NEVER KNEW
HE WAS A DIABETIC-

-NEVER HEARD HIM
RELATE IT TO ANYONE,
OR TALK ABOUT
THE STRUGGLE TO
FIND MEDICATION.

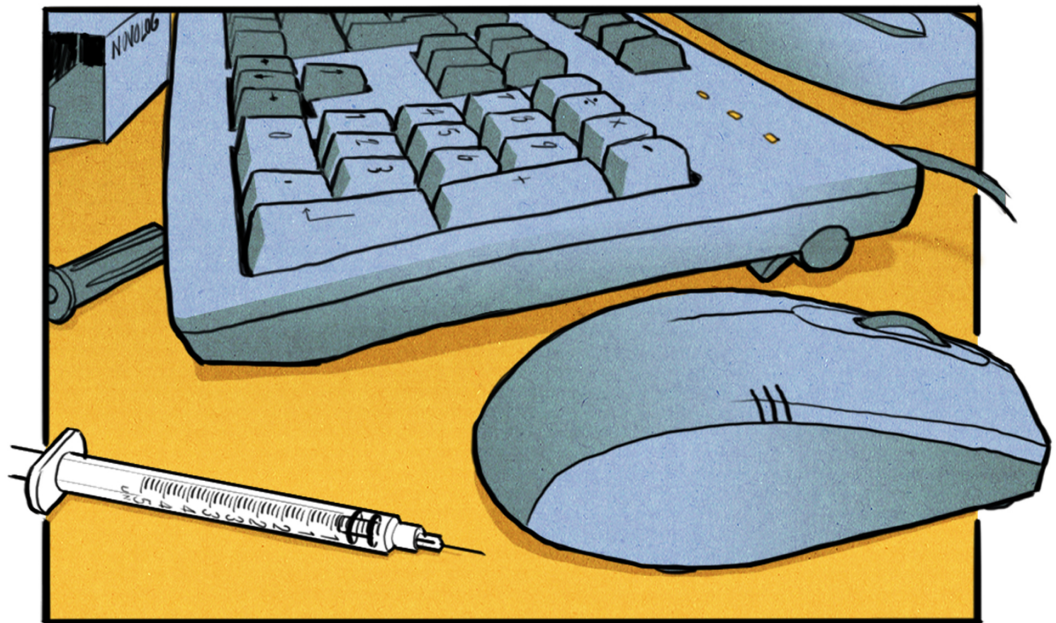
SHANE LEFT THE
URBAN SAFETY NET
HE HAD COBBLED TOGETHER
IN TEXAS BECAUSE
HE NEEDED TO GO
HELP HIS MOTHER
IN MENA, ARKANSAS.



WITHOUT A JOB,
WAITING FOR ACA INSURANCE TO KICK IN,
IN ARKANSAS SHANE TURNED TO THE
CROWDFUNDING SITE GOFUNDME
TO CAMPAIGN FOR HIS INSULIN
WHILE HE CARED
FOR HIS MOTHER.

HE WAS \$50 SHY
OF HIS GOAL
FOR OVER
TWO WEEKS.

MANY OF
HIS FRIENDS
WERE UNAWARE
THE CAMPAIGN
EVEN EXISTED.



SHANE PASSED AWAY
ON MARCH 18TH
OF COMPLICATIONS FROM
TYPE-1 DIABETES.

HIS MOTHER
HAD PASSED TWO
DAYS BEFORE.



I'VE SINCE READ UP
ON DIABETIC
KETOACIDOSIS.

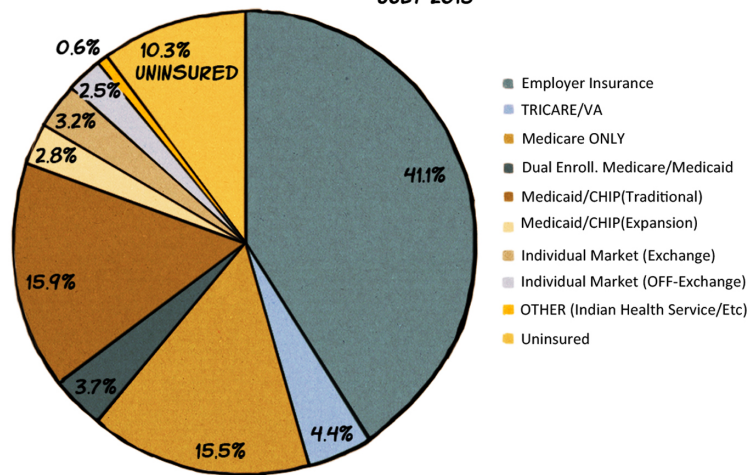
THE SYMPTOMS
ARE HORRIFIC.

VOMITING,
ABDOMINAL PAIN,
SHORTNESS
OF BREATH,
AND CONFUSION.

SHANE DIED IN
HORRIBLE PAIN.

**THIS IS HEALTHCARE
IN THE UNITED STATES.**

**A PIECEMEAL SYSTEM,
COBBLED TOGETHER FROM
THE MARKETPLACES,
GOVERNMENT GRANTS
TO CLINICS, MEDICARE,
MEDICAID, PRIVATE AND
PERSONAL DONATIONS,
WORKPLACE INSURANCE,
AND ON AND ON.**



**THIS IS HOW WE CARE FOR
OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER.**



**I THINK OF
MY BROTHER,
BETWEEN JOBS
IN RURAL MAINE*
WITHOUT INSURANCE.**

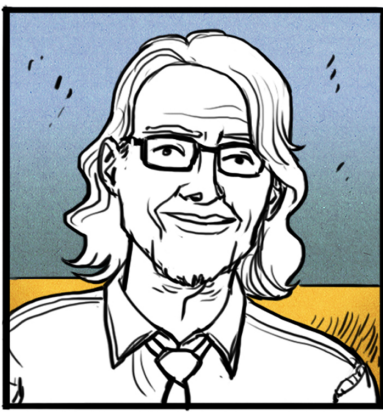
***A STATE THAT
HAS REFUSED TO
EXPAND MEDICAID
UNDER THE
CURRENT GOVERNOR**



**MY SISTER, WITH HER
HEART PROBLEMS.**



**MY SPOUSE, WITH A
FAMILY HISTORY
OF DIABETES.**



I THINK OF SHANE.

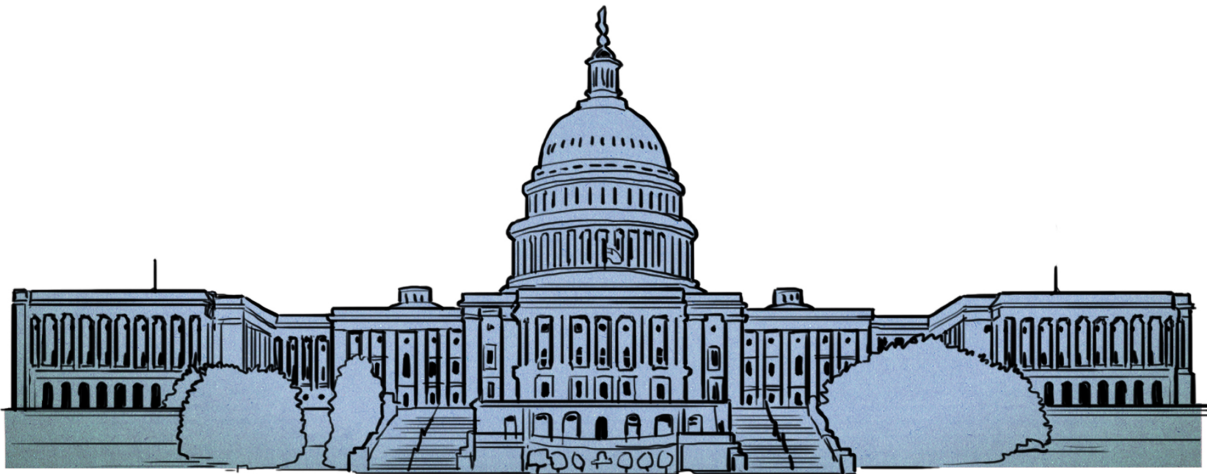


I THINK OF SHANE DYING.



I THINK OF \$50.

WE HAVE NOT ENSHRINED
THE NOTION OF COMMUNITY
INTO OUR FOUNDING DOCUMENTS
AS MANY OTHER NATIONS HAVE.

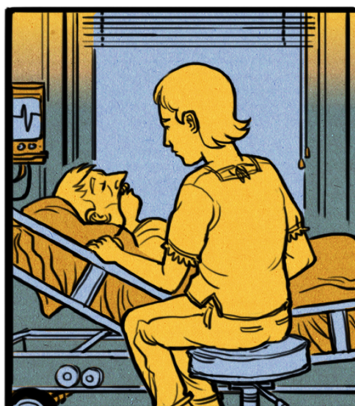


(MANY OF WHOM, I IMAGINE,
OFFER A BETTER QUALITY
OF LIFE AND HEALTHCARE
TO THEIR CITIZENS)

BUT THESE
THINGS ARE NOT
ALIEN TO US.



AS AMERICANS,
WE UNDERSTAND
THE FUNCTION
OF COMMUNITY.



HOW WE
PROVIDE FOR
EACH OTHER.



I SEE MY FRIEND'S
PASSING AS EMBLEMATIC
OF OUR FAILURE TO
REMAIN TRUE TO OUR
SPIRIT AS A NATION,



...TO CIVIC VIRTUE,

...TO THE SOCIAL
CONTRACT,

AND MOST IMPORTANT,
TO OURSELVES
AS A COMMUNITY.

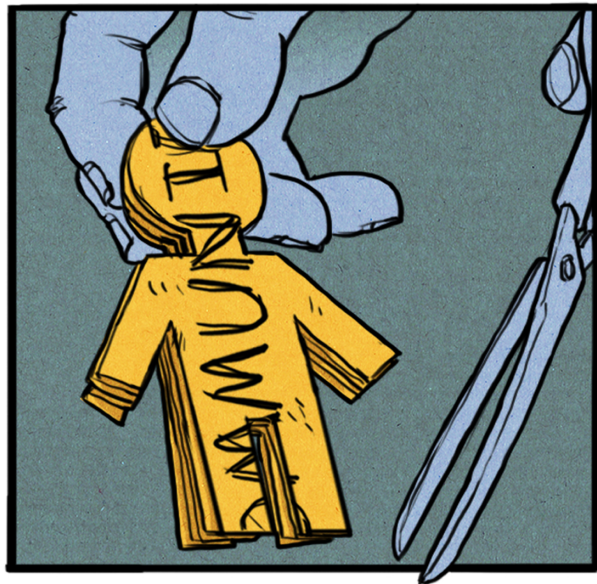
COMMUNITY SHOULD
HAVE BEEN A
FACET OF SHANE'S
MEDICAL CARE

AND IT WASN'T.



IN TRYING TO
STAY ALIVE HE
LEVERAGED EVERY
KIND OF COMMUNITY
HE COULD:

NETWORKS
OF CLINICS,
FRIENDS ONLINE,
SOCIAL MEDIA
CAMPAIGNS,
HEALTHCARE
MARKETPLACES.



BUT BECAUSE CARING
FOR EACH OTHER
ISN'T A QUALITY
OF THE AMERICAN
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM,

HE'S DEAD.



CARE IS NOT
DEFINED BY ITS
ABSENCE,

BUT BY ITS
PRESENCE.

