

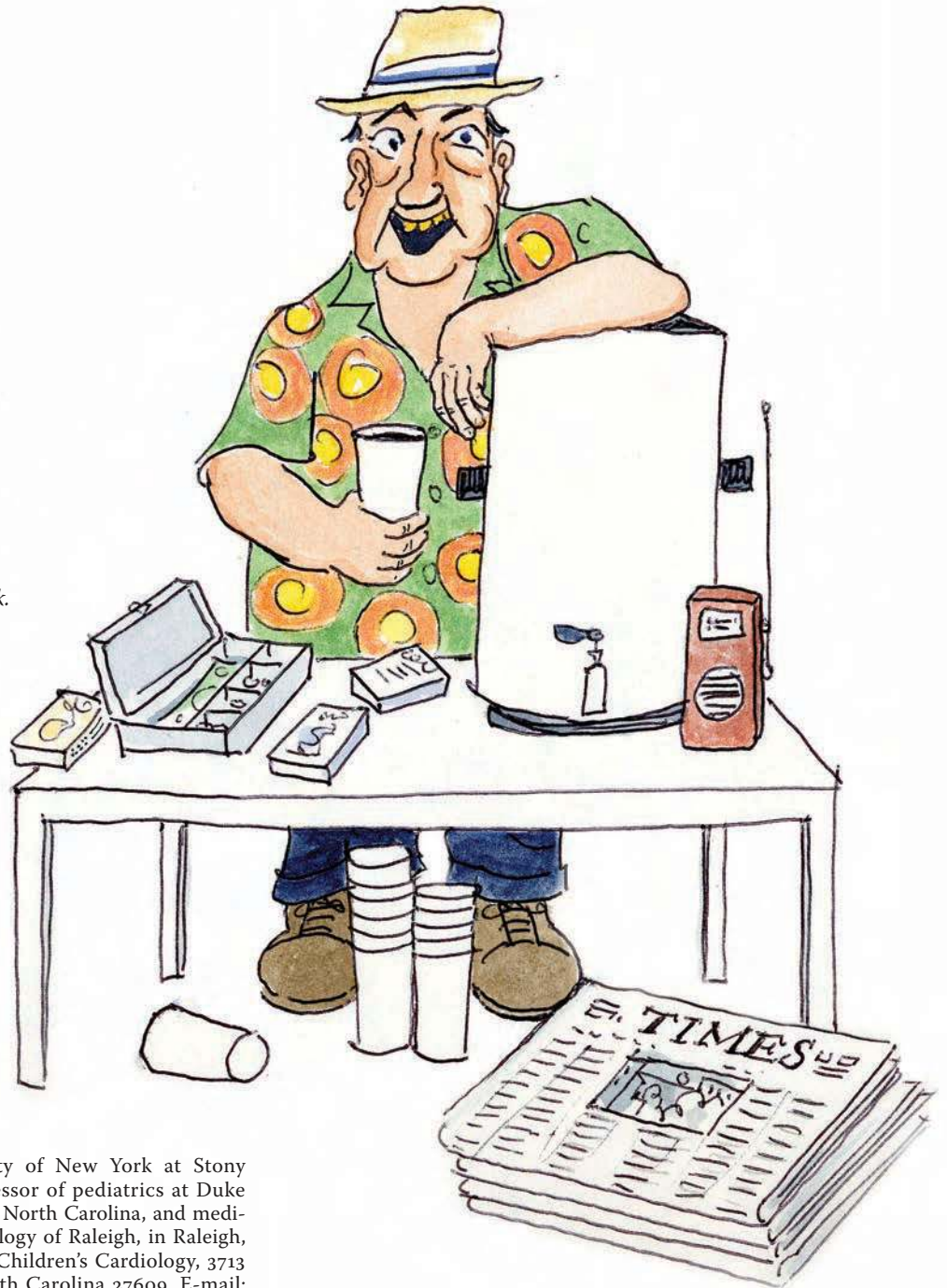
# Flutter

*Near the 7-train station  
on 46th street,  
the king of Roosevelt Avenue  
sold coffee and cigarettes,  
and made change  
in the lithium light of rush hour.  
Against the double-flat grey  
of the bodega door,  
with Etta James testifying  
through his transistor radio,  
he watched us go subterranean.*

*I remember him,  
with music in his veins  
and caffeine in his smile,  
with gold in his jaw  
and cobalt in his eyes,  
with copper in his skin.  
I remember him  
with a racing form,  
and Swisher Sweets  
stuffed in his pocket,  
his hands stained with the Times' ink.*

*We spoke incidentally,  
in lottery numbers  
and boxscores,  
and I complained  
about my on-call hours.  
And only once,  
he told me more:  
he hated the pills;  
he missed the be-bop,  
the fluttering in his chest,  
that reminded him of love.*

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