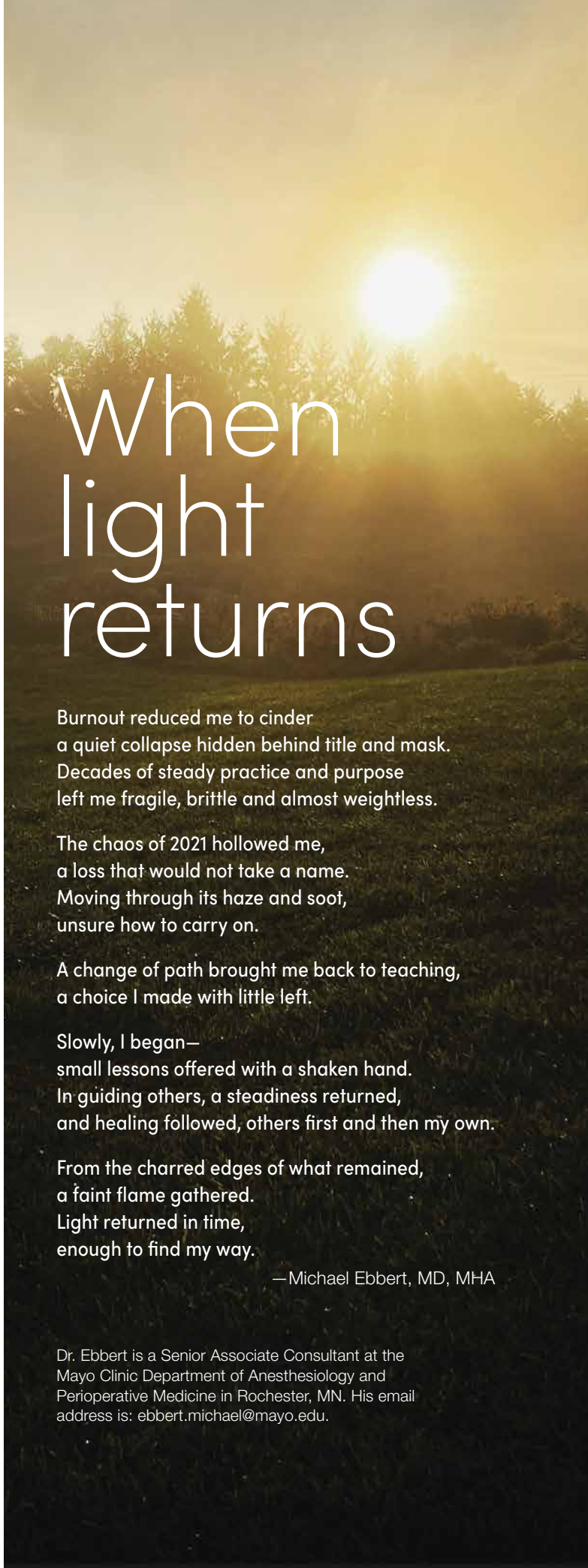
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When light returns

Burnout reduced me to cinder
a quiet collapse hidden behind title and mask.
Decades of steady practice and purpose
left me fragile, brittle and almost weightless.

The chaos of 2021 hollowed me,
a loss that would not take a name.
Moving through its haze and soot,
unsure how to carry on.

A change of path brought me back to teaching,
a choice I made with little left.

Slowly, I began—
small lessons offered with a shaken hand.
In guiding others, a steadiness returned,
and healing followed, others first and then my own.

From the charred edges of what remained,
a faint flame gathered.
Light returned in time,
enough to find my way.

—Michael Ebbert, MD, MHA

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