

## Savannah's Bethesda: Healing for All

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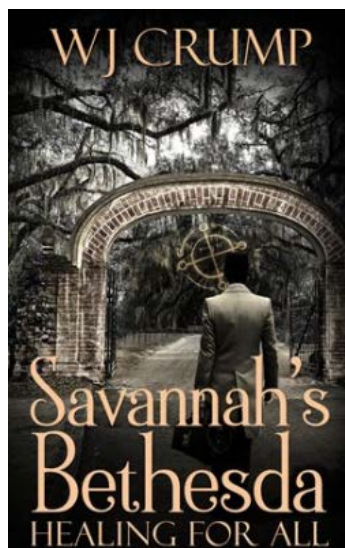
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**Book Title:** Savannah's Bethesda: Healing for All

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*Savannah's Bethesda* is a novel about an academic family medicine physician who is trying to find purpose in his life after some recent hardships. The story is told in the first person, blurring the line between autobiography and fiction. William J. Crump, MD, is a longtime academic family physician from Savannah. He has been in family medicine for more than 40 years, practicing full scope family medicine. He has served on the faculty of several medical schools and has published more than 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals focused on medical education and clinical subjects.

*Savannah's Bethesda* is the second book in his *Healing Savannah* series. The first book, *Savannah's Hoodoo Doctor: The Tyranny of Dogma*,<sup>1</sup> focused primarily on the origin of hoodoo tradition and its relationship to the biopsychosocial model of medicine. This book follows the author as he attempts to write a book about Savannah, GA, while on sabbatical. He is semiretired and starting to transition away from clinical medicine. During this transition, he finds that he has lost his identity, and his foray back to Savannah is an attempt to find his purpose. In his search for meaning, he visits Mae, a practitioner of hoodoo who happens to come by to clean his apartment a few times a week. Mae prescribes a root tea to help him open his mind. The result is a fevered dream, which the reader observes, with tangential thoughts and stories, a changing timeline, and some magical encounters and hallucinations. The main character remembers times from his youth and early days of practicing medicine but is also transported to the early days of Savannah, meeting with a spiritual guide. There is some suspense and mystery as the author tries not only to come to terms with his life but also to save the lives of some people from the past. The descriptions of the South and Savannah, in particular, are well written and leave the reader feeling the humid heat, the lush vegetation, the blooming magnolias, the Spanish moss, and the grand old houses and sites of the city. I was especially interested in his descriptions of Savannah of the past.

This book is not an easy read and requires concentration to keep some significant tangents and shifting timelines straight. However, once I was able to relax into my role as observer of this fevered dream of self-realization, I was able to better enjoy the book and the author's journey. I was interested in the description of hoodoo medicine early in the book, as well as the narrative on how modern medicine and diagnosis compare to medical practices in the late 1700s. I also enjoyed learning more about the history of Savannah and the way the author put me, as the reader, in the middle of Savannah of long ago, during a yellow fever epidemic. One aspect that could have used more exploration is the place of Savannah in the history of medicine with regard to racial disparities. A deeper dive would have been interesting as we continue to feel the effects of centuries of racial inequality.

*Savannah's Bethesda* is an entertaining combination of mystical self-discovery and historical education on the relationships among hoodoo, root medicine, and conventional medical practice, all framed in the setting of a Southern Gothic novel.

### REFERENCES

1. Crump W. *Savannah's Hoodoo Doctor: The Tyranny of Dogma*. Self-Published; 2022.