

Two-Way Street

By Elyse Marriner (BSN 2017)

His hummingbird heart, resounding staccato beats
His labored breathing, a low growl rattling the tiny frame
His flushed skin, restless turning, lungs fighting, clambering
The peace of sleep interrupted by illness

Fragility, instability – icy fear grips my chest
If I touch him, will he shatter through the cracks?
My preceptor realizes, acknowledges, encourages
My awkward mistakes, tentative touches fade away

I take him in my arms, create intimate closeness
Ready, longing, to build something from nothing
Hope leaping wildly, a ricochet off my ribs
Affection compounds assessment

Shared warmth
We settle into the rocking chair
One motion, common connection, back and forth
Two lives, former strangers, intertwined by this moment

His chest flutters shallowly, desperate to draw in air
Beneath him my chest rises soundly, reassuring, steady
Profound connectedness

My heart singing, eager for new direction
My lungs taking in deep gulps of air, fresh vivacity
My thoughts, racing with possibilities, vast and limitless
I fight to calm the excitement building within

Later I return, stroke his soft curls
The room filled with people, listening to this, assessing that
Clothed in isolation gowns, a sea of pale yellow
His head turns slowly, his gaze is searching
This baby boy is lost
Melted chocolate eyes lock in on my own
I am found
Regardless of the mask, he remembers our shared experience
A rare smile lights his face and lights my world

What we give of ourselves to our patients they also offer to us in return
Sometimes the simplest of moments can have the most profound impact on our being