

I See You

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Think about it, son—
the father says,
hands folded the way they once rested
on the cold rail of a hospital bed
while monitors counted
what no one could hold still.

The room is quiet now.
No alarms.
Only age moving through him.

Think about it.

A sculptor works against resistance.
Stone refuses before it yields.
The hammer listens as much as it strikes.

A painter studies light,
learns brightness is nothing
without what darkens beside it.

A poet bends toward silence,
ear close to what won't speak.

And what does a good ICU nurse do?

He shapes order out of panic.
Reads what flickers beneath the surface—
a fingertip cooling,
a rhythm misfiring,
a breath arriving half a second late.

Listens to the body
finishing sentences

the mouth cannot.

You weren't off-path.

The studio was harsher, that's all.

The lights fluorescent.

The canvas breathing.

His voice slows here,

careful as dosage.

His thumb rubs the ridge of his knuckle

as if feeling for a pulse that isn't there.

For years your medium was vigilance—

families folded into plastic chairs,

the hum of machines,

the fragile math of survival

balanced between numbers and instinct.

You painted in restraint.

You sculpted in steady hands.

You wrote in the margins of midnight

where no one was looking.

That kind of work alters the rhythm.

The brush waits.

The canvas stays stretched.

Because survival signs first.

Because someone has to.

He looks at you then—

not correcting,

not instructing—

but like one nurse meeting another

outside at dawn,

both pretending the shift was manageable.

And now something natural is happening.

The part of you that swallowed feeling
so your hands wouldn't shake
is loosening.

The poems aren't new.
They're pressure released—
chart notes unwritten,
grief stored in the forearms,
love deferred until the body said enough.

You think you're imagining
another life.

His breath catches here.
Just slightly.
A hand grips the sheet
then lets go.

No.

You're watching the life you lived
come back into one body.

The man who held pressure bags at midnight
and the boy who wanted color.

The nurse who learned to read dying
and the artist who never stopped seeing.

Nothing was abandoned.
Some parts just stood watch
while others worked.

Now the noise is lower.
The alarms farther away.

There is space again—
not to measure a pulse,
not to restart a heart—

but to sit beside a life
without gloves,
and feel it
beating in your own hands.