

What the vow remembers

We walk in on silence
wearing names on small white badges,
but it is the vow that speaks first,
soft as breath
and older than policy.

The codes blink, the monitors hum,
but we are listening elsewhere:
to a child's unasked question,
to the unsteady clasp of a husband's hands,
to the room that waits
for what cannot be charted.

Even now, the systems swell,
glossy with ambition,
algorithms reaching
for what we once knew by touch.
Progress thins the air.

Still, we stay.
Sleepless, yes,
but not unlit.
Not unmoved.

In the breakroom,
someone laughs with their whole body.
Someone writes a name on a paper towel
so it won't be lost.
Someone prays
with their back to the microwave.

We are tired.
But we are not done.

Each morning,
the vow wakes before we do.
It gathers the pieces
we almost left behind.
It remembers
the first hand we held,
the first good death,
the first moment we were not afraid to care.

And in that remembering
we rise again:
not unbroken,
but still called forward,
carrying light in our palms
as if it were ordinary
to make something holy
of this work.

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