

Pathfinders

You are the nurses and midwives.
Through the corridors
you flow like vital fluids.

You are earthbound gods and goddesses,
the matron saints,
the techno-druids,

pathfinders
through our conditions,
custodians of passage and portal.

Almost superhuman,
you push against your limits
till we forget you're mortal.

You ease us into life,
steer us down the birth canal,
applaud our first breath,

pull us back when we teeter,
hold us when we cross over
into life, into death.

Down the dark tunnel of the nightshift,
a young nurse
hears her loneliness throb,

forgets herself to make each person belong
on a homesick ward:
all part of the job.

You collect more than data,
gather stories,
ears tuned to the patient's secret fears,

inhale the camaraderie at the coffee dock,
share black coffee, black humour,
the day's crises, the night's tears.

You are the movers and shakers,
the cycle breakers,
the note-takers,

answerers of buzzer and bleeper,
wakers of the heavy sleeper,
wrestlers with the Grim Reaper,

information condensers,
monitors of the sensors,
indispensable dispensers.

You lift us when we are
most immovable,
turn us, make us shift from the bed,

hook us up and unhook us,
read machines but look beyond them,
bring us back from the dead.

With visitors banned,
you were the loved ones,
the last human touch,

clasping a hand, holding a phone
so someone could say 'Dad,
I love you so much.'
You were the birth partner
breathing through labour
to joy and relief,

or when the news hurt,
you held the silence,
sharing the grief.

Dark straits to navigate
but you'll set your course calmly,
steer safely, help us cope.

You've been here before. Or some nurse has.
You'll look up, map the journey,
hitch your trolley to a star of hope

ends

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