

## The Weekend Nurse's Lament:

By: Ashley Scott

I peeled back the dressing I'd placed seven days before,  
Still there, edges curling, ignored.  
"Good thing that you're here then," management said with a grin,  
While the wound continued to fester, eating trust from within.

Sixteen souls, maybe twenty, all calling my name,  
But I'm drowning in this factory of shame.  
No time to learn stories, fears, or joys,  
Just pills in paper cups and mechanical noise.

I waved at Mr. Johnson as he ate his last meal,  
He waved back and smiled—God, I still feel  
The weight of that moment, so simple, so pure,  
Before he died alone while I cared for one more.

I was changing a dressing two doors away,  
Doing exactly what I should that day.  
Ten minutes later, his body still warm,  
I found him slumped over, no longer in form.  
My hands pumping his chest, doing what I'd been taught,  
While his dinner sat waiting, the last meal he'd bought.  
One-and-two-and-three-and-four, compressions in vain,  
His warmth slipping away with each strain.

The paramedics came but they wouldn't take him away,  
Said he'd been gone too long, nothing more they could say.  
Then the police arrived like we'd committed a crime,  
Taking licenses, stealing time.

"Did you check on him? When did you last see him breathe?"  
As if I wasn't already grinding my teeth  
On the guilt they assigned when the fault was the floor—  
Twenty patients to one, sometimes even more.  
Just ten fu\*\*ing minutes between wave and death,  
Between his last smile and his last breath.

I was just doing my job, giving excellent care  
To another patient who needed me—I couldn't be everywhere.  
No time to cry in the bathroom's harsh light,  
No moment to process what wasn't right.

"Get back to med pass," the clock doesn't care  
That a man died alone while I wasn't there.  
They wanted a robot, but I was still human inside,  
Each weekend I'd return to this professional suicide.  
Where good nurses have their souls flayed,  
Where compassion's a luxury that doesn't get paid.

Yes, cancer had claimed him, his time running thin,  
But he deserved dignity, not a system's sin.  
Not one nurse drowning in impossible math,  
Where good care means choosing which patient's path.  
I couldn't unsee those dressings unchanged,  
Couldn't unhear how they made me feel deranged

For expecting the basics—time to provide  
The care that I'd sworn to before my soul died.  
So I left with my license, but not with my heart,  
That facility kept pieces, tore my ethics apart.

Sometimes I still see him waving at me,  
Those ten precious minutes when he ceased to be.  
Not from my neglect, but from ratios that kill—  
From a system grinding against our will.  
The system that failed him almost killed me too—  
Moral injury isn't just burnout, it's truth.

For every nurse haunted by those final goodbyes,  
For every wound dressing that nobody eyes,  
For every good soul that says "fuck this" outright—  
This isn't our failure. We're done being polite.