

## Reflections of a Hospital Worker

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By Tom Smario

Sitting on a wooden bench  
in the subtle winter sunlight  
outside this hospital  
I've worked at for 27 years,  
careful to avoid the callous  
that envelops hospital staff  
too long employed.

We forget, underneath our carapace  
the emotions, the lives we touch  
and destinies connected to  
the faint shadows of all  
who enter and leave  
by the front door.  
Some come laughing in,  
others come crying out.  
Babies are born two floors  
above the morgue.  
We try to realize  
what we can do  
with what we should.

We have the technology  
to deny nature. We try  
to balance knowledge  
with wisdom. Doctors  
have to live with their  
decisions. They have to  
look into God's glass eye  
and see their own reflection.

I know anxiety and fear  
because I've had my own  
family here. I've sat  
at my father's bedside  
and tasted tears. Whenever  
I hear an overhead page  
"CODE 99," I stop and wonder  
if someone's leaving,  
or going to paradise.

I look down at my own nametag  
with my photograph on it  
and thank God it hangs  
from my breast pocket,  
not my big toe. Today  
I took a baby aspirin  
to keep my blood thin.  
Tears taste salty.  
Babies are born  
two floors above the morgue.



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