

PAULETTE

Captured each night by her family collages
Taped to the wall at the foot of her bed—
Feelings of hope mixed with fearful prognosis
Murmur in prayers from my heart and my head.

Bored with the beeps of machines and equipment,
Glad to search “heartbeat” each time the bed tips,
Glad for the chance to assist in her bathing,
Glad when I’m due to treat eyelids and lips. . . .

Back on the ward, we all labor with mothers
Birthing their babies full-term and aware—
Harder, this labor, of begging her hand-grasp,
Hoping she hears us and knows we are there.

Others take turns in the ICU vigil;
I work delivery, but never forget:
Even at home, in our prayers with the children,
I hear my kids saying prayers for Paulette.

“Honey!” my wife says, “Why didn’t you tell us?”
Here she throws open the news in the BEE—
“Praise God! Praise Jesus!” I shout as I see her
Holding her babe. “This is Christmas for me!”

— *David L. Hatton, 2/20/2000*