

# Bystander

Category: Listening

written by Danielle Davidson | February 28, 2022

I stare straight ahead at the computer screen, trying to blend in with the other medical tools in the room: IV drips, ventilator, feeding pump, chest tube canisters, nurse. I listen to my patient's mother read to him.

She's reading from a book my mother read to me many times. Listening to the story sends me back to my childhood. I'm cuddled up in my mom's arms, in my pink flannel pajamas, in my parents' warm, familiar bed.

I glance over to look at the vital signs on my tiny patient's monitor. His mother has squeezed in between his crib and the ventilator. She is smiling at him and holding his hand—the only part of him that is tubeless and safe to touch.

I know my patient isn't aware of the story. He is heavily sedated, very sick, and only one week old. But I have to believe he hears his mother, as she reads to him from the classic picture book *Love You Forever*: "As long as I'm living, my baby you'll be."

I force myself not to cry tears that don't belong to me.

*Danielle Davidson*

*Jacksonville, Florida*