

Soundtrack of a Resuscitation

Category: Nursing

written by Kyra Alvarez | January 29, 2026

Knock-knock. The thumps sounded like someone from beyond this world knocking on his chest.

I thought of Bob Dylan's *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*.

As I pumped the heels of my hands into my patient's gaunt chest, I hummed *Stayin' Alive* to keep the rhythm of my strokes consistent.

Before I was a nursing student, I didn't know CPR was so violent. So the first time I cracked someone's chest in the ICU when I was a new graduate nurse, I almost stopped for a moment, surprised by the way my arms had plunged into the man's body.

I got home that morning after my 13-hour night shift without remembering the drive. It was as if I had teleported from the hospital to my apartment.

My patient had made it. But I didn't feel anything. And that terrified me.

Compassion fatigue. That's what they call it. I was only five months in, after a shortened four-month orientation, and I already felt something that nurses typically feel after years in service.

I crashed onto my bed and stared at the ceiling. No thoughts, only a buzzing in my arms, the aftershock of the impact, a dull ache in my palms, and eyes that wouldn't blink.

Then came the tears. They sprayed out of my eyes as I wailed aloud. It was a dam finally breaking. I passed out with my dirty scrubs on.

When I awoke, my eyes swollen, my head aching, it was about time to leave again for work. Despite seven hours of deep sleep, I was still exhausted. And yet something in me propelled me out door and into my car for more.

I wanted to see if my patient was still alive. And when I saw him, awake, with color, with a heartbeat ticking on the monitor, I remembered again: This is why I do what I do.

And somewhere in my head, another familiar line echoed: *It's a beautiful night to save lives.*

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