Christmas at the New ICU

William Palmer

I stand by the bed rail, wearing a tie for my father—red with blue rings.

A tube in his throat, he can’t talk.

He grabs the tie and pulls me toward the ridge of black stitches along his chest.

I don’t know what to do. Is he showing me how to enter the great wound?

Has our ragged healing finally begun?

At the end of our time I kiss his forehead.

At the electric doors I stretch and wave.

An hour later two nurses set him in a chair and leave him there.

His trach tube kinks. He turns blue.

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