

A Place to Heal

by Christopher Schorr, MS2

stethoscope on her chest and back.

After a brief pause to auscultate, Dr. H issued an exciting assessment. “She sounds clear! I don’t hear any more crackles or wheezing, so this is a great sign.” The mother perked up; her shoulders visibly relaxing. “I’m always happy to see Maddie,” Dr. H continued as she leaned forward, gently taking one of the child’s fingers in her hand and waggling it, “But I’d be even happier to not see you in the hospital for a while. Now, go home and get some rest. Your nurse will be here soon to go over her paperwork.” The mother was ecstatic. She thanked Dr. H profusely, glancing up intermittently as her fingers rapidly tapped out a text on her phone, presumably to her spouse.

We exited the room, and I heard the heavy door slide close behind Dr. H. I turned and was shocked to see a look of frustration on Dr. H’s face. “She shouldn’t even be here in the emergency room” she said. I nodded as she clarified: “Coming into the ED presents its own risks to the most vulnerable patients I see, but for many families it’s the only way they can get care. Maddie’s lungs sound great and she has a greater chance of catching something just by being here.” As we left the room, I wondered aloud: Why had Maddie’s mother brought her all the way to the ED when she appeared to be nearly recovered from her sickness? Perhaps Maddie had no pediatrician, or the ED was the closest source of medical care for her daughter in East Baltimore? There are no easy answers, said Dr. H, and I agreed. She reached for the hand sanitizer dispenser. Squeeze. We walked down the hall to the next room.

Streaming down my face, they fall,

Invisible to all but me.

Silent tears that speak it all,

Of pain, hurt, and misery.

I lay here in this sterile room,

With machines that beep with every breath.

Each tear a symbol of my woe,

A sign of what lies beneath.

One day, a stranger walked in,

A soul with wounds just like my own.

We shared our pain, our hope, and then,

A friendship was born, a bond that’s grown.

Together, we laughed and cried,

We shared our joys and fears.

In this place where sickness prevails,

We found a home, a place to heal and cheer.

And now, as I look back and see,

How far I’ve come, I’m filled with pride.

For I have found a family,

In this hospital, where tears once cried.