**Two-Way Street**  
By Elyse Marriner (BSN 2017)

His hummingbird heart, resounding staccato beats  
His labored breathing, a low growl rattling the tiny frame  
His flushed skin, restless turning, lungs fighting, clambering  
The peace of sleep interrupted by illness

Fragility, instability – icy fear grips my chest  
If I touch him, will he shatter through the cracks?  
My preceptor realizes, acknowledges, encourages  
My awkward mistakes, tentative touches fade away

I take him in my arms, create intimate closeness  
Ready, longing, to build something from nothing  
Hope leaping wildly, a ricochet off my ribs  
Affection compounds assessment

Shared warmth  
We settle into the rocking chair  
One motion, common connection, back and forth  
Two lives, former strangers, intertwined by this moment

His chest flutters shallowly, desperate to draw in air  
Beneath him my chest rises soundly, reassuring, steady  
Profound connectedness

*My heart singing, eager for new direction  
My lungs taking in deep gulps of air, fresh vivacity  
My thoughts, racing with possibilities, vast and limitless  
I fight to calm the excitement building within

Later I return, stroke his soft curls  
The room filled with people, listening to this, assessing that  
Clothed in isolation gowns, a sea of pale yellow  
His head turns slowly, his gaze is searching  
This baby boy is lost  
Melted chocolate eyes lock in on my own  
I am found  
Regardless of the mask, he remembers our shared experience  
A rare smile lights his face and lights my world

What we give of ourselves to our patients they also offer to us in return  
Sometimes the simplest of moments can have the most profound impact on our being