

A Battle for Hope

Blood shot eyes from the tears she has cried.
Bruises and scratches from a mask that has become an asset.
She tells herself she's saving lives but all she sees are those who die.
Patient's pour through the doors looking for an ounce of hope.
She takes a moment on the stairs, prays to anyone willing to hear.
One more breath as she pulls up her mask and walks back into chaos.
A man brought in, his wife begging to stay, "I'm so sorry ma'am it is not safe."
His oxygen is too low, a ventilator is the only way to go.
His face filled with terror, he gasps, "will I ever recover?"
In the next room is a woman in her forties, the virus attacking her body slowly.
Two teenagers hooked to ventilators, no idea if they will wake later.
Every coworker moving at the same rhythm, finding the strength for all of them.
The patients they promised to help who were not given the choice in the hand they were dealt.
Twelve hours down and she crawls to her car, she clenches the steering wheel and says, "not now."
She holds back the tears and catches a glimpse of her battered expression in the mirror.
The car pulls into the driveway and she watches her son play.
It's been several days since she's hugged him, but she knows it's the right thing.
Walk in through the garage, just to take it all off.
Shower and change for dinner in isolation.

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Two teenagers lost their battle last night, her coworker cried, "this isn't right."
Another packed emergency room, the virus continues to loom.
People on stretchers watch body bags exit.

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Every room filled with death; she can't take a breath.
The horror fills her sleep, but she refuses to let them see her weep.
She tells herself to stay strong, knowing this is all wrong.

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The women in her forties, seems to be recovering slowly.
A grandfather is breathing on his own, his grandkids call to make sure he's not alone.
The emergency room has slowed down and there is a sense of hope spreading around.
Local restaurants have kept the staff well fed and "thank you" cards have covered the front desk ledge.
Five more patient's discharged, they leave with a cheer so large.
Her shift ends and her mask is removed but she no longer cares about the skin that is bruised.
She catches a glimpse of herself in a mirror, but this time she's smiling from ear to ear.