Morning Rounds In The SICU

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I open the heavy, wooden door to the unit. On my left are the patient rooms, equipped with minimal privacy; to my right are members of the healthcare team shuffling around. I continue toward my destination, a small room containing a couple desks and computers dedicated to mid-level providers, but cannot help but notice how eerie the unit is. Although there are at least fifty individuals within this space, it is relatively quiet, aside from the occasional blips emitting from the numerous machines all the patients seem to be hooked up to.

As I peer into a patient's room, I notice infusion pumps, a ventilator and an endless expanse of tubing coming from all directions. A monitor displays various waveforms floats at the head of the bed. The bedding has a wallpaper-quality pattern on it that feels oddly comforting, despite the patient's weak body sprawled upon it.

I watch the patient's chest rise and fall in a rhythmic, forceful manner. There is a line straight down the center where the surgeon gained access to the heart. A wave of awe washes over me as I think back to the open-heart surgery I witnessed earlier that morning, it never ceases to amaze me how we can stop the heart completely and miraculously bring it back to full function.

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