

UC San Diego

Winter 2009 - UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing: Organ Transplantation

Title

The Kindness of Strangers

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7nq71898>

Journal

UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing, 2(1)

Author

Chiappe, Sal, RN

Publication Date

2009

Peer reviewed

The Kindness of Strangers

By Sal Chiappe, RN, AS

Somewhere beneath the shimmering stars,
A heart beats,
Waiting to be given,
To a soul unknown
I wait nervously,
Praying for the donor,
Who will give me new life,
It is an awkward feeling,
Carrying this pager,
Knowing that someone
will leave this world,
So I can walk the breath of spring,
And dance beneath the moon
My wounded heart,
Courses through walls of tired muscle,
I sleep restless, and unsure of tomorrow,
Dreaming of the kindness of strangers...

The pager goes off,
My nurse coordinator,
Tells me they have a heart...
As I dress, my eyes well up
With tears of ambivalence,
And pains of joy
We are two passing hearts,
Who know nothing of each other,
One heart made for the lives of two,
One life remains,
To live, and give thanks,
One moves on to eternity,
And leaves life behind...

At the hospital after surgery,
I find out that my donor is a Marine,
Wounded in the mountains
of Afghanistan,
Fighting for freedom, and
for his country,
He died quietly at Walter Reed
Leaving me a gift that I can never repay,
At 21 years of age,
He is a hero,
Brave beyond his years,
I will carry his heart,
With its walls of resilience,
Coursing, pumping, carrying new life...

Within my chest,
Beats the heart of a warrior,
Wounded in a strange land,
Sharing his pulse with a stranger,
He will never know
I close my eyes,
And in the shadow of his strength,
I see him running,
Falling, with outstretched hand
Handing me his heart,
And in that moment,
I am reborn
Girded by his courage and his hope,
I walk beneath the blazing moon,
And am thankful,
For the kindness of strangers,
Who come bearing gifts,
Yet seek nothing in return...

Stay tuned for
the next journal
which will feature
Women and
Infants Services



Sal Chiappe is a Case Manager at Moores UCSD Cancer Center, working with Dr. Sarah Blair and Dr. Michael Bouvet in Surgical Oncology. He has been a nurse for the past 23 years, but has a number of other interests, which include writing poetry, history, politics, and music. He also compiles an electronic newsletter for the Cancer Center, called Capstone, four times a week.