

MIND TO MIND

*Creative writing that explores the abstract side
of our profession and our lives*

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

Medical Student in the Operating Room

Rebekka DePew

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Pre-Op:

They teach me how to take, and then they send me to you. I take your history, your blood, your time. A couple of secrets: this morning we drew out molecular pathways on whiteboards in a different building; we laughed at ourselves because we can never pronounce anything right. Also, the five times I stood by your bedside and pulled back your hospital gown and listened and said I could hear your heart murmur, I was lying all but one of them.

OR:

I have gotten through life unscarred by using words as a platelet plug, throwing them at the wounds, at what I've done wrong, hoping that the bleeding stops. That wouldn't work here. I speak only in conditionals: I used to write poems in lower case and italics so they would look quieter. For a moment a blue sheet shifts and I see your neck, bare and bloodless.

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Post-Op:

Another secret: really, I am here only to watch. To watch and to take. It was meant to be real, but somehow I have already absorbed all the meaning of language I can't even speak yet. There are other relevant questions, other answers. The last thing you ate before it hurt too much. You wore a blue dress to your granddaughter's wedding. Sometimes we both forget which surface of life is real. I watch and I take. And out of all the things I have taken there was one that I was given: they said these are the masks we wear.