

MIND TO MIND

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

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

12th Trip

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H His name was flashing from white to yellow on the OR board (yet again)
Ready for transport from the ICU then back to it (hopefully, if all goes very well)
And a trudge down the too-long corridor (who thought that was a good idea?)
I walk into his room, expecting to him to be alone. But now, there is a woman.
Eleven times he has gone to the operating room, with over-the-phone explanations,
With disembodied voices, hurried, confused, giving medico-legal consents.
This time, as I unceremoniously stroll into this darkened piece of his world
She is there, in the corner. She is washing her hands, as if she'd just touched
Something poisonous—vigorous, intentional, thorough. I introduce myself, waiting
For her to tell me who she is. Rather, she approaches me, and leans (very close)
She nearly whispers “I don’t think he would want to be like this,” and holding
Her hands to her face, ashamedly admits what she sees as a defeat, a letting go
Of her responsibilities and a realization that she has no more room for hope.
Even as I nod, and try so hard to look sympathetic, to stay in this moment
With her, I feel my eyes darting to the clock on the wall, thinking of the time.

This poem is one of the finalists of Anesthesiology’s 2018 annual creative writing competition, The Letheon. ebbaker@salud.unm.edu

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