

MIND TO MIND

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

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

So Many

Mary Dowd

“—as many as the leaves that fall in the woods...” *Book VI, Aeneid*

It's not just the dead that rattle like dry leaves
across stone cold ground, moving at the wind's will.
The living, too, blown by chance and choice,
scrape along the pavement. Men, mostly,
thirty, forty, fifty, most don't make sixty.

Never got the hang of it, work, wife, family.
Had a job once, had several.
Had a girl once, had several,
had a truck, a car, a flatscreen. Good money,
roofing, paving, lobstering.

Then came the accident, the back ache,
the break-up, the heart ache,
the not showing up on time, one time too many.
And everything returned to the dust from which it came,
scattered in the wind, never to reassemble.

Then beer became the boon companion,
whiskey, a shelter, hundred proof,
against empty days and sleepless nights,
against racing thoughts, sweaty palms,
against boredom, loss, loneliness.

This poem is one of the finalists of Anesthesiology's 2018 annual creative writing competition, The Letheon. mdowdmd@yahoo.com

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So it begins, the wandering,
like dry leaves blown in autumn,
from shelter to ER to detox,
from library to park to soup kitchen.
Until it ends in an alley, in a ditch,
in a room at Motel 6.

So many moving at the wind's will
across stone cold ground,
gathered like sighs on the shore,
waiting for the boatman to carry them over
the river of forgetting,

Only to begin again.