

MIND TO MIND

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

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

An ER Doctor Finds His Daughter in Critical Condition

Jennifer Nicely

The operating room sounds oddly like jazz.
The beep of her heart monitor
The trickle of her blood transfusion
The snap of hospital gloves as the team prepares to cut into her tiny body.

The stretcher had rolled in through the aluminum double doors
at the end of the trauma wing.

I knew it was her when I saw the strawberry sandals.
One had fallen off.

I imagined its partner
Ripped into rubber scraps, pinned beneath the wheel
that collided with my daughter's bike.

The clank of the stretcher's metal,
The thwap of a blanket thrown onto her,
The bump of the door as it found its casing and closed.

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I had been too busy listening to see which room they'd assigned her.
I stared at the silver frame still wavering
as her frail, mangled body was carried down the narrow hall.
Operating Room #3.

Beep. Trickle. Snap.
I glance around the Operating Room;
I don't remember how I got here.
I'm drunk with the pain of my daughter's broken body.

4 feet. 58 pounds.
I watch as they try to turn my little girl into a number.

She's not a number.
But the words are caught in my throat,
playing tag with the brigade of tears that form as I watch
my daughter's threads unravel before my eyes.

I hear the nurse to my right chanting
that I don't need to see this
that it's not my fault.

I glance towards her. She sees my words.
I wasn't supposed to watch them operate.
I wasn't supposed to be in the room.

I wasn't supposed to let her get hurt.

As a stranger's blood becomes one with hers, I wonder how
the porcelain doll I'd given life to had been cracked.

And where the hell was I when she needed me most?