

MIND TO MIND

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

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

Q&A in the OR

Nathaniel J. Brown, M.D., Ph.D.

The sharp, green waves
and staccato beeps sing
your heart rate from my monitor—
a background sound so familiar
it seeps into me without effort.
But, while you're drifting under,
the sounds, and the waves,
change abruptly: a new rhythm.
It is your first question, and it's urgent.

I answer with a question, too:
a push from a syringe,
and a whisper of encouragement.

You say nothing at first,
instead, slowing, pausing...too long—
this conversation can't be over.

I push on your chest
firmly, but gently.
I need to help

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Nathaniel J. Brown, M.D., Ph.D.: Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, Colorado. nathaniel.j.brown@ucdenver.edu

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your failing heart.
It just wants a touch,
some external coaxing.

I wait, anxious, for your response.
I hope it doesn't show.
Is this the end? How hard will it be?

Your eventual answer, which I liked,
and the time it took to give, which I liked less,
foretell the day's many ups and downs.

It's just the beginning
of our discussion.
We'll both have more questions.