

# MIND TO MIND

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

*Carol Wiley Cassella, M.D., Editor*

## The Anesthesiologist Breathes for You

Audrey Shafer, M.D.\*

I  
I say: *fill your lungs*  
*take a deep breath*

I breathe deeply too  
perhaps less to demonstrate  
than to participate, to enter in

*Good—nice deep breath*  
the words billow—

I push medicines into your iv tubing  
and squeeze the long oval balloon  
how tenderly your chest rises  
just there below your clavicles

I tape your eyelids closed and  
listen, between your ribs  
then to the song of the bellows

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The surgeon chisels at the little window of you  
a square of burnt sienna framed by a fake blue sea –  
the oxygen of your pulse ticks, marks me in your time  
clocks the myriad motions and measures I make  
as the surgeon burrows and scrapes

At the end, I pull off the eyetape and on the tape  
curves a faint smile of eyelashes  
free for the briefest moment from worry

Now it's time for you to re-enter –  
leaning over the crown of your head, upside down above your face  
I command: *open your eyes*  
then smile behind my mask  
because, like the magic of spring trees blossoming  
your eyelids flutter, you breathe without my asking  
you push open the gate  
and you're back.