

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

Accepted for publication October 11, 2012.

* Stanford University School of Medicine and Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, California. ashafer@stanford.edu

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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.