

MIND TO MIND

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

Carol Wiley Cassella, M.D., Editor

Why?

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Plus ça change,
plus c'est la même chose.
More than five millennia have passed
since Sumerians cultivated opium poppies.
Soon, *papaver somniferum* cast its spell
widely, on Assyrian, Egyptian, Indian, Minoan,
Greek, Roman, and Arab Empires.

Then, on to China, Europe, and North America.
Ether frolics, laughing gas highs, and
recreational chloroform joined the party.
With Sigmund Freud extolling the virtues of “coca,”
William Halsted became ensnared in its trap.
Fast forward to the twenty-first century.
Now, we have fentanyl, propofol, hydromorphone,
sevoflurane, and other enticements
to lure physicians to premature death.

Why did you succumb, my friend, to temptation?
You must have felt pummeled, alone
in your own skin, unable
to comprehend or maneuver
your emotions, leaving ineffable wreckage
in your wake.

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A mystery incapable of being unraveled,
some amorphous force awry,
a watershed moment, etched
in denial of consequences,
the beckoning kingdom of escape prevailed.
What toxic brew of denial and bravado
camouflaged the apple's rot?

It was supposed to be so easy,
one or two fixes only.
Just enough to forget the sulking teens, arrogant surgeons,
and marital tensions.
You were too special, too clever
to fall into the abyss.
Yet, the Rubicon was crossed.
Irrevocably.
Blanketed in velvet fog,
you slithered to your next dose.

Spent, hollow, unable to care,
You must accept the extended
arms guiding you to safety.
Take time to heal the suppurating wounds.
Get past the past.
Find glory in the nacreous sky.
Cherish the quotidian,
a time when anything can be,
despite what has been.