

# MIND TO MIND

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

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

## Lines Written on Viewing “Ether Day, 1846” in the Bullfinch Amphitheater

Douglas L. Hester, M.D.

Ungloved hands appear to restrain  
the painted patient, his head turned  
away, inviting the metal blades to invade,  
dissect his neck, carve the cervical growth.

Men in expensive dark hues lean toward  
the operation. They clench fists, grab  
lapels, watch each cut. They inhale quietly  
whiffs of this magic. Clear ether wafts

through the colored oils, the fragrance  
diffusing from their faces, the sweet  
carbon binding this man in red-stripped  
white. Organic vapors roil in his blood

and deflect the pain as the eldest  
slices. His thin-rimmed glasses are flecked  
with arterial spray. To keep cuffs clean,  
his sleeves are rolled up. His legs straddle

the patient. The unpaintable moves these  
still men: the gas of surgery without screams  
even as blood dribbles down the neck,  
the white cloth, the bare fingers

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of history. The tumor leaves in silence,  
and the gentlemen physicians—still  
anesthetized—exhale, savor the first  
scent of the future and understand

that's no humbug.



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