

# MIND TO MIND

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

*Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor*

## Your Anesthesiologist Self

Audrey Shafer

**Y**our anesthesiologist self pockets memories:  
a mentor perched in a corner like a long-legged cricket  
another, the violin maker, hovered inches from your fingers  
your tribe of fellow residents: exhausted, elated, covalently bound  
the long list of surgeons, nurses, techs, clerks

its sinews learn the elastic give of needles puncturing fibers  
the yogic poses—one hand on bag, the other on stethoscope bell

but mostly, patients sculpt your anesthesiologist self

each eager systole  
each rise of bellows in a pas de deux with lungs  
each push of medication into bloodstream currents  
each check of eyelid, elbow, exhalation

each patient you render unable to blink  
then return back, back to those he loves—  
is connected to you

even—especially—the patient who died

the practice of anesthesia molds your anesthesiologist self

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but its kernel germinated long ago  
when tenderness cocooned you in your baby blanket  
fostered curiosity about otters, street food, hockey, guitars

the great world opened, and you, wising up  
understood the luck of your circumstances

your anesthesiologist self blooms

over decades, until you and your anesthesiologist self entwine  
you wonder how long can you be quick and savvy  
who will you be without your anesthesiologist self?

but today, this is what matters:  
in the preop holding area  
your patient's shoulders relax, ever so slightly  
meeting a human being he now trusts

you.