

MIND TO MIND

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

Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor

On the Death of a Tooth

James W. Gaynor

For Nazia M. Ahmed, D.D.S., F.A.G.D.

We have been together my lower left canine and I
for more than 50 years but there is no ceremony
to help the aging mourn the imminent loss of a tooth
and there should be because we shared countless meals
appearing together in hundreds of smiling photographs
but no one seems to understand the pain now
present and psychological which has migrated from my jaw
to my left ear so here I am wounded warrior
breathing in the surgeon's welcome mist
trying to remember how did I get to where I am
which according to my mother whose version of history
was at times fanciful her side left Scotland in 17-something
before the English could kill them settling in upstate New York
where most of them but not all died in an Indian attack
and my father's family left Dublin in 1863
before the English could kill them arriving in New York City
just in time for the Draft Riots so someone said
let's lose the Irish O and nobody got shot which
is how I got here counting back contemplating lack
of consoling ritual to mark the death of a tooth and
how it's all about years and years of migrating pain

This poem is one of the finalists of ANESTHESIOLOGY's 2019 annual creative writing competition, The Letheon. JamesWGaynor@hotmail.com.

Accepted for publication March 4, 2020. Published online first on April 3, 2020.

Permission to reprint granted to the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. by copyright author/owner. Anesthesiology 2020; 132:1585. DOI: 10.1097/ALN.0000000000003290