POETRY

For Thomas

I couldn't keep your secret anymore,
Not with the evidence strewn across the lawn —
Someone or thing had found the hiding place
And scattered your stash of sugary contraband
Like confetti. I thought of a raccoon
Holding a string of licorice with both paws,
His own bit of trick-or-treating done
Behind a built-in mask, that little bastard
Bandit snickering with his lucky find.
My father soon put two and two together,
Knowing why it was hidden at our house,
And helped me clean it up without a word.
That was thirty years ago by now.
Not a Halloween goes by that I don't think
Of you, my boyhood friend, having to hide
What we regarded as a God-given right
From your own mother — as if she wouldn't notice
Your blood congealed with sugar in the morning.
I'm sure you planned to double your insulin
Before you climbed back into bed that night,
Still reeling from the foreign sugar rush
That crazed your dreams of running with the gang,
Thinking you pulled one over on your mother
Who had threatened you with your very life
If you *so much as think of going out*,
But watched you all the same through the back door
As you slipped out a second story window
And landed with a muffled shriek of laughter
Amid the playmates waiting there for you
With a makeshift costume and a grocery sack.
While we raced off as pirates in the night
To pillage our way through the neighbourhood,
She stood there breathless, braced against the door,
With her conflicted heart caught in her throat,
Unable to cry out *Thomas, please don't go*.

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Dr. Harvey's poetry has appeared in *JAMA*, *Anesthesiology*, *14by14*, and *The Road Not Taken*.

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