POETRY

For a classmate

The last time that I saw you, you were stoned,
Pleasantly so, leaning against the bar
Of the Red Dragon and drinking on the tab
Of the third year class with the rest of us.
You were a connoisseur of chemicals,
It's fair to say — everyone knew as much —
But no one seemed to know how you acquired
A tank of nitrous oxide, let alone
How you ever got it to your bedroom
Where your mother found you in the morning.
The coroner pronounced it accidental,
But you had just spent three years studying
The very physiology you altered
With such persistence and apparent grace —
I was not the only one with doubts.
The last thing I remember that you said
Was how you planned to match in Anesthesia,
An irony that deepened all too soon.
Now every time I dial up the blue knob
And watch the bobbin slowly rise and turn,
Your face floats through my mind like a ghost,
Clear and colourless, ethereal.

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

CMAJ 2011. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.110063

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