
POETRY | FALL 2019

CFTR

By Teddy G. Goetz

Asleep when I knock,
She eagerly welcomes the premature sunrise of my contact isolation gown.
Slight fingers deftly sweep the dust of dreams from her eyes,
Leaving them open just a little too wide,
Two mouths parched for the world outside.

I defer the stethoscope around my neck.
And instead, ask why
Despicable Me
Is her favorite movie.
She doesn't know.

But she looks over to Mamá—
Todavía durmiendo—
And she misses the grandmother she's never met.
She was supposed to go to Guatemala last summer, but...
...The cough does not interrupt so much as finish her sentence.

The thick mucous in her lungs isn't mobile,
So neither is she.
Mamá hasn't seen her own mom in 12 years,
A lifetime.

Her lifetime.

Experiments are her favorite part of science class,
But she's never tried putting a penny in salt and vinegar.
I suggest we find out what happens tomorrow...
...Her gap-spaced grin, not phlegm, punctuates my proposal.
Even caustic catalysts can bring a beautiful surprise.

Teddy G. Goetz (he/him or they/them) is a psychiatry resident at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to earning his MD at Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons, he studied biochemistry and gender studies at Yale, conducting research on a wide spectrum of biologically- and socially-determined aspects of gender-based health disparities, including earning his MS developing the first animal model of gender-affirming hormone therapy. His current focuses include mixed-methods research on LGBTQ mental health, as well as narrative medicine and physician advocacy. More about his scholarly and artistic work can be found at teddygoetz.com.

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