
POETRY | SPRING 2021

Short Call

By Teddy Goetz

We lean knee-to-knee
While the bumps of her spine are painted the color of the sunrise outside,
Sinking into my clogs and the tile below,
In case the advancing needle and numbness tip her over the edge.

She takes my hand instead,
And begins to trace my thumb with her own shaking one,
Abierta but unseeing gaze
Only floating up to acknowledge my waves of translation echoing her anesthesia team.

I almost ask if she's picked a name, but I remember that
She should have had another 3 months to decide, and instead,
I ask if she's celebrating *la Pascua* or *el Pésaj* this weekend.
She's not.

And yet,
When we lift her son,
Muscles and a Red Sea part,
And with a snip, a holiday indeed breaks this day.

Darting to make way for the rapid hand-off of his palm-sized frame,
My lips are wet with salt water beneath that mask,
And I wonder whether this will be a day of mourning or defiant joy.
Her silence as we stitch, rings of peace with uncertainty.

She changed her mind about the *ligadura*,
Not knowing how far his
1 pound and 9 ounces
Can rise.

Teddy G. Goetz (he/him or they/them) is a psychiatry resident at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to earning his M.D. at Columbia, 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 M.S. 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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