

Cerros

By Teddy G. Goetz

When her well-worn fingers rummage in
Her well-worn bag for her 45 medication allergies,
I expect the emergence of a list,
Not the porcelain preschooler's teacup—
A less-exclusive Noah's Arc of pills,
Filled to the brim
From the tiniest tablets to large enough for livestock
Orange, white, blue,
Contained by a liberally-applied lid of grimy, once clear tape.
As she carefully places it in my hands,
Her eyes, bursting with pride for taking control of this one small piece of her life,
Blur through the prisms building up behind my lashes,
And I'm grateful for my glasses.
But not as grateful as I am for the summers I've spent speaking Spanish with
Toothless *campesinos*,
As she launches back into her rapid ramble about
Her arms becoming hot air balloons and the
Dozens of doctors who have tried to kill her this year,
With intermittent insistent interjections that I,
La Dra. Gutierrez,
Am Puerto Rican
Too.
I finally give up on taking her full medical history,
Understanding there is very little I can do for her.
Yet, too deaf for phone translation,
I wonder when she last felt heard.
And when she kisses my cheek before bounding out,
I hear an echo with each footfall down the hall,
Too.
Too.
Too.

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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