Ode to Rickettsiae

Veranja Liyanapathirana

Oh! dear Rickettsiae.

Why did you become such a difficult bug?
You and your cousin (once removed) Orientia,
So tiny: yet so powerful
I cannot grow you, because you need special care.
My poor home can not offer a cocoon for you to grow
My poor home has no safety nets to contain you.
You are an illusion to me.
I see you in the darkened room, indirectly as a bright green star,
Illuminated on the glassy shrines.
I try to look for you, for your DNA
You still manage to evade me.

Some day my dear, some day,
I will build a house, with walls so strong,
So I can grow you and nurture you within.
Some day my dear, some day soon,
I will find a little DNA, amplify and see.
Till then, let us meet, in the darkened room, you dressed in your finest green,
Brightly illuminated like the Milky Way.

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1This short poem describes my frustrations at trying to establish laboratory diagnosis of rickettsial infections in a place where there is no cell culture facility and no class 3 containment facility.