

# Ode to Rickettsiae<sup>1</sup>

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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<sup>1</sup>This 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.

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