

O. F. Diaz-Duque

WHY DON'T I?

For Mark who liked M&M's

It came one day like a thunderbolt,
charged by the sententious righteousness
of those who would have us damned
to the hell created by this new bug.

The numbness, the shock
was not so much that death at my door
might knock.
At a loss I found myself explaining
when,
where,
how,
and who might have given it to me.
Me! The one who knew the ins and outs
of that microscopic bastard
and its ghastly bite.

It's negative, she said, cheer up!
Worried well, that's all you are,
said the smiling woman patting my hand.
It's negative . . . It's negative . . .
But I sat dumbfounded, in shock,
and her words didn't register at all:
It's negative, isn't that wonderful
for you?

Come on, honey, let's go.
You look really bad, let's eat something, let's chat.
And picking me up by the hand,
my friend dragged me slowly from where I sat.

It's easy for you to say that I'm really all right.
See this spot? It's Kaposi's; it's the second time I've had it since March.

They died, you know, and I saw them.
One tried to sip a bit of water from my hand, but he couldn't,
and confessed to me that he was so tired, he couldn't even die.

And that other one, the kid from the farm?
I took him M&M's every night,
his only delight in this world of intravenous affection,
fag haters, syringes, and ignored cries.
But on this evening when I arrived,
M&M's in hand,
the nurse coldly said that he had died.

So, why am I here, tell me, why?
Just let me be, let me cry.
They were so young, those men,
when the virus got them,
and now they won't come back.

Why don't I have it,
tell me,
why?