

Sickness

We never married, thought it too quaint, too ball and chain. Fixed, pinned.
We rejected being yoked like oxen, caged together in that hallowed zoo. And yet,
we dreamt of a honeymoon, every place we'd explore, were money no object: north
and south of the equator, shore to shore, dozens of state parks. For now, you go
as far as your job at the hospital, despite my qualms, for the hazard pay. Home
at night, you wear a mask. I wear gloves. This is our latex without sex. This is love
in a time when every blush conjures fever, when we quiz each other
after each cough. I examine your hands, count as you soap them before we touch.

For better or worse, we cozy together to wait for the latest dispatch. I exhaust myself
with updates, jerk awake hours later. You've covered me with a quilt

from your glory box. I find you gazing out a dark window, watching your ghost
in glass vanish at civil dawn. I join you, squint to catch that phantom us

wearing a gown, a tux. No father gave you away, no mother arranged my veil,
no frenzied crowd jockeyed for the bouquet. The rice, unthrown, we keep

in the cupboard. We keep our extravaganza a private joy. We keep each quiet
vow in the mouth: to have and hold, for richer and poorer. Now, and in health.

