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.