

## Universal Precautions

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As if his body were molten  
glass I never touch  
without gown, mask, gloves  
(always gloves)  
double on days  
we walk through  
the valley of the shadow  
and the fear of it  
fills the room.

As if I am a gaffer snaking  
strands of thread-  
wound spirals  
to a fragile vessel,  
I tape down  
IV catheters coiled in vein  
loops of experimental toxin—  
hope for a cure without  
slow annealing,  
too quickly lose my fire.

As if his life were a shattered waste,  
mere cullet,  
I try to shield myself  
from the brokenness,  
but tiny shards  
lodge in my heart.