There's something about the runny nose,
the nasal drip that never goes

The febrile tremor, that ancient chill,
fevers that die, fevers that kill

The buba that grew on many a groin,
and spread the pox from loin to loin
The rash has always been a friend, 
kissing our skin centuries on end 

Bugs went on ships, on decks so damp, 
giving sailors diarrhea cramps 

Moist and sick sat the soldiers’ tents 
mosquitoes hummed and chased their scent 

Lungs, livers, guts – such cozy nests, 
for yeast, coli, fungi, and pests 

Pains and aches, through time and space 
they love us all, no matter our race 

It crippled armies; it inspired art 
the plague’s been with us from the start 

The species barrier is but a sieve, 
was, is, will be the reason we grieve 

The wrath of God is eons old, 
before the biblical locust was sold 

The asteroid struck, we’re here by chance, 
with micro monsters we must dance 

You and me, rats and fleas, 
in the discotheque of disease.

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Ashwini Gangal is a media journalist from Mumbai, India, who now lives in California. On most days she’s a bumbling migrant desperately looking for her literary voice, her sanity and her own brand of genius. She recently quit her full-time job as managing editor of a business daily to pursue her passion—words, rhymes, stories, poetry, make believe. She’s also passionate about mental health, gender-power dynamics and all animals except humans. She’s an insatiable reader. Empathy is her super-power. “Infinity Pustule” was previously published by Penumbra May 11, 2023.