



March 194th

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1. I drive to the local LabCorp to get a long overdue blood draw. The interviewer on KPBS is talking to an expert about super-spreader events. Last summer I would not have known what a super-spreader event was, nor that Sturgis, the event they are talking about, is the site of a major motorcycle rally every year in South Dakota. But this year, even though I live in Southern California and haven't been on a motorcycle since I briefly dated an underemployed geologist when I was twenty, I both know and care about these things.

2. The phlebotomist's name is Don. He introduces himself but I also see it on the badge clipped to his white lab coat. Don has a fringe of white peach fuzz that rings his round head, and a nice smile. Well, I can't see the smile behind his mask, but his badge smiles at me while I avert my gaze from the needle entering the crook of my right arm.

3. I am conscious of my shorts being uncomfortably tight as I get back into the car. I can no longer plausibly deny the extra bulk taking up residence around my midsection and filling out my ass. I am not retaining water. I am not having a temporary fluctuation. When I sit down, a sizable roll appears on my front, apparently out of nowhere. I want to fluff it up like the cushions on the back of the couch, redistribute it somewhere else. Back around St. Patrick's Day when our neighborhood French bakery put up signs begging for business ("We Are Open! We Need You! We Sanitize Surfaces, we use Clorox wipes,") my husband and I were happy to help. Buying boxes of croissants and apple turnovers felt like a community service. Eating ice cream while we stayed home watching TV every night felt like a survival tactic rather than an indulgence. Unfairly, my husband has lost ten pounds.

4. At Sprouts grocery I pick up yogurt, onions, limes, a bottle of B-12, and two 12-packs of bamboo-based "tree-free" toilet paper from a women-owned company. It's on sale for 60 percent off. When it was the only TP I could find back in early summer I had grudgingly paid \$13 a pack. I walk over to the deli counter and see two women in line and only one employee. "Would you like a sample?" the employee asks the first woman, then uses tongs to pass a slice of turkey breast over the counter into her plastic-gloved hands. The employee slices and packs up her turkey, then some cheese. Just as I think she is finished the woman asks, "Can I also have two slices of baloney?" and I can't even work up the energy to feel irritated. I zone out and watch a little girl of about five in a mint green dress with pink flamingoes on it trail her mother. Her mask is fluorescent

pink with a monster face on it but it's upside down.

5. I drive home and unload the groceries as my husband comes into the kitchen for a coffee break from working at home. He pokes his head into the bags, and I tell him he reminds me of the cat. He takes a mug of coffee back to his "office," a space hastily repurposed from our daughter's bedroom. She graduated college last December, and we haven't seen her since Christmas. When I'm done putting everything away, I pull a bottle of zero calorie fruit-infused water from the fridge—mango + grapefruit essence, says the label—and open it as I plop down on the couch. It's not bad, I think, taking a sip. At least it's different. I absentmindedly brush my arm where a mosquito bit me two days before, knocking off a clear, hard crystal of yellow I'd been trying not to scratch. Within minutes, another one has taken its place.

6. Earlier in the day I'd read an Anne Carson poem with a line that I copied into a notebook: "I lived my life, which felt like a switched-off TV." Maybe tomorrow, something will switch it back on again.

