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## Fearful

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# Fearful

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*Mary Dengler – September 2020*

Walking rapidly through Vegas February crowds  
On Fremont Street to meet a friend for lunch,  
Then slowly on the pier at Oceanside to drink  
Iced coffee with the pelicans, I worried little  
When I heard our borders might be fraught with  
More than weary immigrants and travelers might  
Bring more than luggage to the states. But seeing  
Faces masked at airports as we traveled made me  
Flinch when someone coughed behind us on the plane.  
I felt a threat: the world about to change. Arriving back  
In Iowa, I heard a colleague say, "I bet our university  
Is closed before Spring Break." I rolled my eyes, but  
Driving to a college down the road to teach six students  
From Japan, I heard Coronavirus had arrived. We gave  
Each other everything we could, but soon they'd too  
Been ordered home. "It's been an honor just to meet,  
To talk, with you," I said last class. Then driving through  
March mists, I felt internal cold. This grew as daily  
Haunts were closed, as people stayed inside, as eyes  
Moved furtively above their masks, as distancing  
Became the norm for daily social tasks. My walking  
Destination now became the city track, until that  
Too was chained. Now what? Our streets remained,  
No lockdowns issued by our mayor. Out walking  
At a distance, solitaires waved, their children straining  
To connect. Our farthest point became a school, deserted  
like Las Vegas streets. Still Nature unabashed arrived. Her  
Trees pushed out new leaves, their branches flaunting birds  
And flowers unaware of human ills. As businesses closed doors,  
Their workers filed for benefits and learned to see their kids  
As needy students and themselves as teachers doubling up  
On life. While some adjusted quietly and learned to Zoom  
Or beg, others sneered at what they called the Myth. Anxiety  
Soon turned to rage: the wake of George Floyd's killing by a cop.  
Defying distancing, protestors filled the streets while thugs  
From outside groups broke through their ranks to break, loot,  
Burn and shoot. I've heard it said, "Today we live between  
Two viruses: while one attacks our organs and our genes,  
The other ends our civil life." As we relived events of '64  
Through '68, as they relived a Civil War, we turn to God:  
"Our help in ages past, our hope for years to come." Our  
Prayers are heard, we don't know why, as most have turned  
From Faith. But sun and rain continue, crops and leaves turn  
Golden, hope returns with fall. We've learned to live  
A different kind life, is all.