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Fearful

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Fearful

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.