

(Excerpted poems drawn from each of the Four Fascicles in *Maven Reaches Mars*, including *SILO: Where I'm Coming From*, *SOLO: Inner Space Probes*, *SO: Family Orbits*, *GO: Where We've Landed*)

#### GRAMPA NEVER WASTED WORDS

the few he chose  
considered. Pithy.  
Ripe. He collected  
golden kernels in  
tall grain elevators  
where he took in  
what local farmers  
brought, weighed it  
saved it up, always  
on the look out  
for rare sparks  
that could ignite  
all those particles  
rising to the top  
of each silo's high  
big-boned frame  
to hang up there  
suspended  
in close hot air  
until he felt the time  
to share was right.

## EMILY'S FASCICLES

*Between 1858 and 1864, Emily Dickinson gathered almost nine hundred of her poems into forty hand-stitched booklets known as the fascicles, each averaging between sixteen and twenty-four pages in length.*

She first took up botany  
pressing petals and leaves  
she labeled and left behind  
on pages presaging the poems  
she would bundle in packets  
she called her fascicles  
stitched by the same hand  
that freed the root-bound  
from earthenware pots  
in her glass conservatory  
itself a narrow fascicle  
of the heart that held her  
collected light and unlikely  
exotic loves just as she held  
all others—seeds really  
sealed in packets about  
the size of her two small  
hands folded together  
in dark satin lap to hold  
germinating life ready  
to unfold break open  
waiting to become food.

"YOU'RE TURNING YOUR HOUSE INTO A GO-BAG"

says our son, serving coffee from Brazil, tea from Japan and a bite of last night's chocolate cake. All in storage bags, like a stash of lately legalized cannabis. Spoken or not, our topic is terror, trade-offs, unknowns. "Go-bag?"

"What people in New York keep in a closet, in case," he says, his twins asleep in their cribs, his own father defending his plan to finally clear out the basement to refill it with water jugs, canned goods, jerked beef.

Grandpa has fallen in love deeply and helplessly with these two little nightmares who deprive us all of sleep wake their parents with endless unexplained wailing gnaw at their cocoons, flannel sacks to keep them safe.

One is cautious, cries at odd clowns, bugs, big trucks. The other buoyant, carefree, falls twice for laughs. For solace, they offer toys, broken crayons, hugs. We're all Go-bags full of twin fears, comforts, hopes against hope.

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## HOW VIRULENT

the sub-microscopic virus  
potent and dangerous, yet  
so mind-stretchingly tiny  
maybe 100 nanometers  
when one nm (short for  
"never mind" or "nothing  
much" in cell conversation)  
is merely one billionth  
of a meter long  
and it can of course go  
viral, as they say, coming  
as it does, from the Latin  
for "toxin" or "poison"  
and having no cells itself  
no living walls to contain it  
so that it must invade  
yours, feed upon your cells  
dine on your DNA  
to make even more virulent  
invaders, the smallest and  
simplest of all life forms  
if they are life forms, or just  
bits of information, armed to  
embrace your cells, break in  
with invisible waves of hungry  
homeless, uninsured, unpaid  
unmasked spit, snot, and tears.

*(Featured poem 7-11-20 in Pandemic Poetry and Prose: Writing in the Time of Corona)*