

LADDERS

--David Citino

Gregor Mendel, one night, studies by candlelight
two pretty petals, young pea flowers. An idea blossoms.

The delicate flowers glow in his hand like gaudy moths.
He cross-fertilizes pollen to see which seeds go green,

which yellow. Years later, Watson and Crick, like
Jacob, dream of climbing and descending, join hands

to show how, two by two, we climb the twisting ladder
All the way to what comes next, and who. This is how

our history ascends, lifts us in a passionate alphabet,
pairing of love letters. A attracts T, and C seeks out G.

How do I love thee? Let me count all 64 codons, ways
to say it's our human destiny to spend what we inherit.

O, Sweet Pea, how gracefully you twist, flourish, climb.
This arduous twining, twinning side by side, dances

of the generations, artistic steps we take to make
the very best selves we can be, strewing star-stuff,

egg and sperm, paying our way, jewels of protein,
whispering to each other precious genome-poems,

“Let's climb together, you and I, and pass it on.”