To be brave, I look to the daffodil

To be brave, I look to the daffodil.
A stupid flower, I've always thought – too eager
to enter a world not fully thawed. Shrinking
after just one cold night. I surround myself with pluck.
Always one for adventure: running naked
across campus into a stranger's car as rite of passage,
jumping into the freezing bay. Hitchhiking home but
afraid to speak in class. To order in my mother's
tongue, my mother's food. I let the dark take on its own
shapes, unchecked. No, I am not brave, but I like the people
who are. Who never overprepare or let their anxieties
stop them. For whom things always work out.
I'm chasing the high from one novelty to another,
wanting adventure but so unwilling to find it on my own.
Instead, I lose myself in people who live unafraid.
Bravery by osmosis. This might be the truest thing
I say today and it scares me. To admit that on my own,
I was never wild. All this time I thought the daffodil's dropped
petals, the green leaves that remained, marked an ending.
But underground she is rebuilding for next spring.
For when she'll dare, again, to push through the frostbitten
earth. Year after year, it goes on like this.

Susan Nguyen

Susan Nguyen's debut poetry collection *Dear Diaspora* won the 2020 Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry and was published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2021. Her poems have been nominated for Best of the Net and a Pushcart Prize and have appeared or are forthcoming in The Academy of American Poets' Poem-A-Day series, *The American Poetry Review, The Rumpus, Tin House, Diagram,* and elsewhere. The recipient of fellowships from the AZ Commission on the Arts, the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing, and the 2022 Stanley Kunitz Memorial Prize from the *American Poetry Review,* she is currently the Senior Editor of *Hayden's Ferry Review.*

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