

I KNOW THIS DAY

a poem by Mary Ann Ronconi

I know this day.
It cannot be trusted.

Sun hot, ground clear of snow
Save for a few crusty patches that rasp out:
Listen, it is *still* winter.

It comes almost every year, this day.
Not last year when the mid-March snow was still high against the house.
But this year certainly, this year of practically no snow at all.

With a breeze as warm as June's and light that lasts late in the day,
It draws me out of the house where I have been a bear in her den.
The air is resonant with bees out for a cleansing flight.
Flower beds around the house beckon — wide open.
Daffodils, hyacinths, tulips push up green leaves and eager buds.

Inebriated by this balmy potion of thirst-quenching warmth,
I want to find a rake, a hoe, whatever tool will let me
Clear away winter: the flattened maple leaves, the brown mats of grass,
The unsightly debris that only asks to be left — undisturbed.

Therein lies the treachery, the temptation to take a big bite of The Apple.
Oh, the daffodil and tulip and hyacinth shoots are safe —
Their fat bulbs smug underground,
Their ambitious tops able to withstand meddling in their midst.

It is the summer perennial this sly day begs me to betray:
The delphiniums, the shasta daisies, the brave dianthus.
Exposed, some will succumb to the return,
the absolutely predictable return,
of murderously cold, root-freezing winter.

I confess. I have done it before —
cleared away, too soon, protective mounds of mulch.
I know better now.
For forty and more Marches I have been around these cold-clad hills
With their sweet-talking, spring-promising days.
This year only one hopeful grape hyacinth
paid the price of my impatience — before I put away the complicit rake.