

Kristjana Gunnars

DOGWOOD

In a Chinese market, bars filled with noodles hang
like laundry in mustard, orange, olive green rows,
cuttlefish and live crabs squirm in shallow water.

I came here by accident, I came here to find my way
out of a maze of concrete and steel, out of earshot

of my beating heart into the thick crowds of men
in parkas collecting bags of bean sprouts and women
choosing crabs from the aquarium and red peppers

and me, sauntering as if this were a park with trees
and flowers, the smell of dried fruit, cardboard,
seaweed and a sweet and sour taste that emanates
from the deli counter, and families eating in the cafe.

I wanted to join them. I wanted to buy groceries
and cook food at home like crazy, won ton soup and
rice and kimchi, egg rolls and shrimp: at home

the dogwood tree suddenly burst into bloom, stark
flowers facing in all directions at once, the small
surprises of summer that pour out of hiding, still fresh
in my mind, the sun still shining on them even

now as I get lost in the crowd. Where have they been
all winter long-and it was a long winter with rain and storm
and clouds, flooded streets and slippery walkways and

soft plains of snow that appeared at the break of day
overnight, snow that arrived silently: I knew it fell
when the night became too eerily silent-

I knew something was buried under the blanket
of winter, something had gone to sleep in the arms
of the elements and closed the quiet eyes that open
only in spring with the dogwood blooms. What

I discovered in the heat of afternoon unsuspecting
going about my staggering day, finding refuge in the
market:

what is hidden and pushed away will someday out

in a form I did not recognize: can this be me? *can this
be me, lost in my own heart, in broad daylight? alone
and in love among the city throngs, the noises, the voices?*