

The Rhubarb Speaks By Elaine Schiman

My dark leaves are already growing

Somewhere deep in the ground.

Just a few cells, dividing.

I will come up first, before all others,

With courage.

There will still be snow.

And not quite enough light.

But it will be moist and the mid-day sun will be warm.

I have a knack for arriving.

At first, I will be pretty,

With lacy delicate leaves, tinted a fresh mint-green.

My stems will be dainty, supple, lean.

With a rosy complexion that can fool you into thinking I am shy.

I won't take up much room, I will bend easily.

I will not be too annoyed by the gophers and the cats and the marauding birds and bugs.

They may nibble but not for long.

I am stronger than they are, very strong.

I have a knack for living.

When my prime of life arrives, it will be a surprise.

You were so pretty once, what happened?

Your leaves are so...

Voluminous...

so voluptuous....

Almost.... fat.

Your stems, well...

They are beefy and thickly veined, and you are definitely too tall.

But yes, very sturdy.

My fruit will be sour and bitter but healthy to eat.

Just bitter, not sweet.

Anyone who wants to work with me knows enough to bring the sugar.

My leaves will have the power to kill.

Such a combination.

It will keep me safe.

I have a knack for thriving.

My name is comical.

I am surprised it has not yet become an insult.

Like pea-brain.

Or potato-head.

Or string-bean.

I'm sure such indignities are on the way.

One cannot count on good fortune and lazy thinking for long.

But no matter, I am stalwart.

Even through the dark cold, cold dark of winter

Even when enclosed by airless grief

Even when the light and warmth that summer so lovingly gives

Seems impossible

Seems a dream

Seems too good to be true

I will be waiting, out of most sight, out of most minds,

And I will be hoping.

They have tried to dig me up and rout me out before,

But I have grown too deep and too wide for them to find all of me.

I will be back.

I have a knack for surviving.