

Perennial

Don't be too eager to break the crust of thawing ground. Can't you hear the tip-tap of our fast footsteps telling of an unexpected late frost? But it's the same each spring, an impatient stem elbows up to taste air—and too soon leaves curl and blacken, and butter yellow petals land on the icy mulch. Small martyrs of the amateur's dilemma: the first pancake is always lumpy, undercooked, the first kiss overwet, tongue intrusive. There is no dirge for the early ones, only bulbs still below, curled in their fist of green, uneasily listening to the drama of botched first attempts. Some past spring is littered with all of my missteps and over confidence. That's no kind of moral, really, and maybe those first sprigs are the ones to cheer on, the ones that won't wait no matter how many times they guess wrong, blooming over and over in a thin layer of snow.

—Allison P. Brown

