of Ba Nguyen

Here’s that young girl
in a grandmother’s village tending to what came to bear

Longan Jackfruit  Mango Papayas

sugar the lesson from
a field mouse protecting
newborns shadowed by a dangerous snake

Hear a song she sings in Saigon City to honor a
the strength of Two Sisters

Back there & right here
there are bridges
that begin
as trees
that begin
as roots
that begin
as seeds

arching across as connectors
far beyond their forests

Some of us
grow older to be more than simply grown
Some of us
are our elders that simply continue to grow

Hear a song she sings in South Philadelphia to honor
the life of her sister

There she is now
in her daughter’s new neighborhood tending to what she shares

Health care  Cooking lessons  Paperwork  Phone cards

for gardeners with a taste for this unfamiliar fruit
still in search of new seeds

Ba Nguyen is a Vietnamese refugee and a respected elder in South Philadelphia’s Southeast Asian community. As a volunteer, she teaches traditional Vietnamese cooking classes to young people and promotes health screenings for aging immigrants.