



# FLOWERS FALL

By Bethany Saltman

Spring: A Love Poem *For Azalea*

Yet, though it is like this, simply, flowers fall amid our longing,  
and weeds spring up amid our antipathy.

— Dogen Zenji, *Genjokoan*

1.

Sitting on our deck in June,  
you are surrounded by green  
as if it comes from you, this outrageous life  
of grass and sun and sprinklers, and the combination  
of all three, plus you, marking this territory as divine, this funky cedar  
table and these rotting benches, some burgundy pansies, spindly, drying up, in a too-small pot,  
the entire effect just off enough to make it ours, and not someone else's.  
And your body, too, is real, bruised down the shin, elbow scabbed,  
dried blood in a little chunk just above your ear, an old bug bite hidden in the depths of your hair,  
so soft, so yours, so tendriled from all this humidity.

2.

Watching you bite into a tomato sandwich  
with mayonnaise and salt, it is like I am the one who has arrived.  
That is one way I love you, and it.

3.

This morning I woke up and heard a bumble-bee  
pass my window. I thought of Emily Dickinson and how  
much I love to be alone in a room with wooden furniture,  
and how sometimes I worry about it.  
How can I care so much about two things?

Instead, I lifted my body from sleep, feeling the length of these mountains,  
the depth of my longing, the unlikely-ness of being alive at all.

Maybe some day you will rise like this, too.  
And you will remember how to look in any direction for yourself,  
the creek at the bottom of the hill, the owl calling out in the night,  
and you will gather whatever shape hope takes into your hands,  
offering every mistake, every good thing, into the curtain-calmed morning light,  
releasing something, who the heck knows what it is, and giving it up  
for good.

*Bethany Saltman spent the month of June at the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony in Woodstock as an artist in Residence (with a modified parent-friendly schedule). She wrote this poem on her first morning at Byrdcliffe.*