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Everyone Wanted Carnations That Year

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Thomas: Everyone Wanted Carnations That Year

EVERYONE WANTED CARNATIONS THAT YEAR

Toni Thomas

droves of them
like an ammunition against pain
so my mother sunk her teeth
into azaleas
oriental poppies—refused to be pried
from their ledge.

It was the year of the crippled summer
consummate rain
wind spewed
the shed in the yard half buckling
the tomato vines a miracle in their
resolution to hold fast to the fruit.
I bracket want behind a
barbed wire fenceline.
Make my face an emblem
of the world's calculated geometry
as if nothing terrible ever happens anymore
and my mother is not bleeding to death invisibly
inside the four walls, the part-time sales job
the children's lunch meats
the eggshelled bed.

Agitated summer.
The butterfly bush stampeded with rain.
My mother's soaked sojourns to stake
the lilies back up with her bamboo poles.
As if she was bred for rescuing
all small things.
Her mary immaculate cursed body towing.
Even in the rain.