

O Magnolia

Tender stranger, I want to outlast myself.
And with you, my seams are pulled taut

as unripe seedpods. Nothing begun.
Nothing lost. *Never* peels back

from seed caverns, stains hands red.
I say it aloud but this does not protect me.

Could I empty myself onto your rug,
undo such scrupulous stitches?

Is it sharp teeth of emptiness—
or even less—that punctures skin, halts at bone?

Does it have anything to do with you?
These are transactions we must not further,

bones that shall not touch. Magnolia
seedpods are poisonous if ingested.

And I will have to hate you already.
Spring insists on splitting seeds open—

shallow ponds we skipped across.
My mouth crowds with heavy stones,

clanging consonants, your name,
I cannot say without rinsing it from my mouth.

Onto soiled and bitter earth,
I discard unblossomed magnolias we forced open,

leave you there
with your bitter name.