

PEONIES

Peonies

This morning the green fists of the peonies
are getting ready
to break my heart
as the sun rises,
as the sun strokes them with his old, buttery
fingers

and they open —
pools of lace,
white and pink —
and all day the black ants climb over them,

boring their deep and mysterious holes
into the curls,
craving the sweet sap,
taking it away

to their dark, underground cities —
and all day
under the shifty wind,
as in a dance to the great wedding,

the flowers bend their bright bodies,
and tip their fragrance to the air,
and rise,
their red stems holding

all that dampness and recklessness
gladly and lightly,
and there it is again —
beauty the brave, the exemplary,

blazing open.
Do you love this world?
Do you cherish your humble and silky
life?
Do you adore the green grass, with its
terror beneath?

Do you also hurry, half-dressed and
barefoot, into the garden,
and softly,
and exclaiming of their dearness,
fill your arms with the white and pink
flowers,

with their honeyed heaviness, their lush
trembling,
their eagerness
to be wild and perfect for a moment,
before they are
nothing, forever?

~Mary Oliver



Peony flowers after a heavy rain (May 2016)

Sadness at twilight . . .
Villain! I have
let my hand
cut that peony.

~Buson