



# The Proper Use of Honey

by JORDAN NISHKIAN

In younger days, my mother taught me  
about the proper use of honey.  
From the time clumsy fingers  
could lift my eyes above the kitchen counter,  
I remember the line of golden jars  
(each wrapped in its own colored ribbon),  
sun shining through them like stained glass.

Of the five,  
I knew four well.

Every Sunday afternoon, she called me  
to the counter, with a teaspoon  
of the green jar and lifted it to my lips.  
My tongue would stick to the roof  
of my mouth until it was loosened  
by the cold glass of milk she tucked into my hand.  
When warm winds rolled  
through Santa Ana, kicking up dust  
and cracking my throat,  
she tipped the purple jar until gold rippled into  
a hot mug of chamomile—  
and after my hair transmuted  
from straight lines to unpredictable curls,  
she dipped her hand into the yellow  
and mixed it with olive oil, calming each  
coil above my neck and behind my ears.  
She used the blue when I was wounded,  
to seal cuts and silence scars—  
the night of one Fourth of July was spent  
covering my hand,  
speckled by blisters from a sparkler,  
with honey bandages—  
leaving a faint cluster I only see in certain light.

The jar wrapped in red  
evaded twenty years of questions.

On my first day of heartbreak, eyes swollen, head heavy,  
she greeted me at the counter with a rose  
she was growing outside the window,  
and twisted open the lid  
through the crunching of crystals.  
I watched her paint each point,  
sweetening the edges with her finger.  
“It’s time that you know,”  
she said as she passed me the stem,  
“the best parts of life  
are licking honey off a thorn.”