

NATURE: FROM THE CUTTING-ROOM FLOOR

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First Place, Poetry

Late morning, Western Suburbia.
We breakfast on an outdoor patio. In the air,
the minute bumbling of a bee. *Apis mellifera*
stalks the small pond of maple syrup, calculates its next move
to avoid the clumsy and dense hand of my apish father
who cuts and consumes a three-stack of pancakes.
The bee, eager, lands on top of the syrup,
for a moment is a gospel-less, wild mini-Jesus
walking across the cloying Amber Sea, except-
Jesus's feet never succumbed to surface tension.
Most bees could not survive such a disaster,
would never make it back to the hive,
would never smell again the royal jelly.
My father notices the struggling intruder.
With a butter knife and a precise maneuver,
removes the bee, places him on the table to walk around. In the rescue,
his wings have become weighted with the translucent, golden sludge.
I say kill it, put it out of its misery.
The oddest of human kindnesses.
Instead, my father takes a napkin, wipes off that insect's wing
as delicate as a soap bubble. He tries again to free it
as it sticks to the furry pea-sized back.
I tell him again, it's impossible, it's just going to die, slowly, in pain.
No, he says. My mother agrees, reasoning,
it's the least they can do after all those years in pest control.
But he says no again, that's not why. That's not
the reason for this at all. That's not what this
is about at all. He wipes once more the little buzzing saint
that God could not save alone.
The bee's wing regains movement.
My father passes him onto a bush
to complete his resurrection.