

Utanikki, August 1978 · Sandra McPherson

for A. K.

The summer heat dries the partitions of the fallen
honeycomb — so thin, one emptiness hears another.

Beneath the roof,
Drops of spring rain
Trail slowly
Down the honeycomb.

— *Bashō*

Warmed honey,
Soaking through the wall,
Drops in
On my pillow.

The old hive falls indoors and outdoors. It is
sorted into crusts of combs and spillways of honey.
Who chose to settle in the seams of this house, to
frighten the landlord?

You and your husband are sitting naked with my
husband on a stair. Our daughter? —

Her door is closed,
She's sleeping sound,
Painting the night
To show me later.

The men bellow and swear. They are not angry, or at
least that is not the reason they bellow and swear.
They are full of feeling. Since they have adopted a
language like animals', it can't be understood any
more exactly than animal cries.

Is it the cats?
Or a rabbit torn by an owl?
Or another choice —
The cry of the poisoned bees.

This morning I took snapshots of our only child in her slip in front of the mirror. She leaned and turned, bent forward and touched the mirror. Tonight, with the film that remains, I surprise the two men and you. I say that the camera's eye is only my eye, its blink my blink.

In the morning, when all are dressed and you continue your journey, I find that someone has exposed the film to the light.

The wall must be full of eternally sleeping bees. I tasted the honey before I knew it was poisoned.

Wasn't I lucky?
It didn't hurt a bit.
Not like this,
Not like this. . . .