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65 Pounds of Honeycomb

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Edwards: 65 Pounds of Honeycomb

65 POUNDS OF HONEYCOMB

by

BETH EDWARDS

The Milt Kessler Memorial
Prize for Poetry

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Edwards

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Sixty-five pounds of honeycomb
my apartment manager tells me.

That's how many buckets
they carry from my walls
before I move in.

A friend tells me it's bad luck to kill bees.
She learns this after fogging her son's room.

Then comes the story,
how they are bitten by bats
and the many trips to and from the doctor
for rabies shots.

But bees have always brought me good luck.
The yellow gold liquid that pours through my walls
is not something I want to be rid of,
but something I want to live within
as if this apartment is my passage
into the waxy cells of the hive.

Dead bees lie on my back deck for weeks.

I think of what I know of them,
how a single bee cannot survive
apart from the hive. Isolate her
and however abundant the food
or favorable the temperature,
she will die in a few days
not of hunger or cold
but of loneliness.

How can I touch them,
how can I sweep them away?

How do you remain married to one person
when you're in love with someone else?

Questions surround me
as if words are lodged in the walls
in a kind of twisting thrum.

I tiptoe around, trying not to step on the bodies.