

Rohan Preston

THE HONEY-GATHERER

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Flapping his father's loincloth, he tramps
up the mountainside, bearing two logwood
poles and an earthen jar, inured to

ivy imprint on shins, calves, thighs,
heedless of the ridges rising on his back
and shoulders: let bruises sign this ardor

of feet and hands. Aerialist in fog, he
dangles at rope's end, a spindly spider
bouncing off sheer cliff-faces as he threads hives

to pry off sheaths of honeycomb, then swoop
them up with his pot. He floats in the ache
of drones who beat their last beats, pulse their last

for their siblings' food — their stings so little
pain for so much sweetness. In their hum
and his prayers, he collects chambers glistening

with the soft light of manna, flowing in song:
this is a passion of mouth and heart. And when
he returns home — laden and with a head-

hunter's calm countenance, laughing with
his whole blistered body — he sings
through scattered teeth an offering of slow

stickiness, of spiraling joy settling in rings.
As he waves his hands across his face to
mime the rhythms of resistance, he sounds like

a tall-taler, this mountain magician,
this half-naked hunter with his sticks and stings
and jar, this riddled seeker blowing so much smoke.

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