

Bee Lust in Manhattan

JOHN F. BUCKLEY AND MARTIN OTT

Thousands of bees swarmed outside a Manhattan
deli, trapping dozens of patrons, the meat scent

crooning to and through hymenopteran glands,
riled publicists brushing corned-beef bits from slacks,

tarred throats of waitstaff barking at the hot swarm.
The butcher lied about his deadly allergy to stings,

and led the owner's wife into the cooler, drawing
nude pictures on the walls, his own cave of Lascaux.

There they conjured primitive magics together,
wagging stinger hunting pink blossom's nectar.

The Hasid in Booth Six combed pollen from his payot,
and spread it on bread, holy manna, a doughy tome.

The army reserves arrived with bayonets and tear gas,
and the mutated queen was drawn to the shiniest chevron.

Sergeant Brisket's muttonchops flared for her, promised
carnal delights long enough for customers to flee

out the back door, past puddles and boxes of beets.
The bees burst into flames and for months women's

bellies budded, eggplants ripened out of season
and the subways buzzed with perfume of pastrami.