

WHITE

Under the weight of wet snow
a dead branch broke and fell,

I remember, taking the hornets'
tattered gray lantern down with it.

What if I'd stood the branch
upright in a drift and set the nest

on fire, a moment's torch—orange
mark against the white white air,

a flutter of ash and unburnt shreds
of wasp paper afloat on the flames'

reprieve of lift and lilt. What if
I'd caught a torn bit? What word

might I have written there?

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The body whirs in secret,
a mute hornet's hive:

queen, drone, sting, and a single
blister of hot red honey.

Or *is* it honey? Dare I touch
my tongue to that drop and taste?

How else to speak the hive's fevered silence—
which is to say, how to speak?

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How to contain, to embody— or is it
to dis-embody?—the whirlwind

of unvoiced desires, powers, counter-
desires, fierce love roiling up,

rising, revving, reveling in
storm-over-the-Michigan light, flashes

nicking the polished sheen of the surface,
and still keep still at the core, wick, theoretical

axis, the scrolled calm this frenzy orbits?
The mind in the midst must stay

cool, undizzied, in order to choose
this stroke not that, while surrounded by winds

as dense as smoke and faintly
sweet in the ozone scorch.