Hives
by Isabelle Byrnes-Bartell

Medusa's snakes kiss my neck and she whispers into my ear
that beauty is a sin like any other
meant to be committed with an audience
knowing your worth comes with just as many prejudices
as it does praise
damned if you let them look damned if you stare them down
it makes you itch, clawing at your skin don't be rash
I write down her advice and use your head as a paperweight
sticks and stones, sticks to stones it gets harder to pretend
your words don't sting little bees buzz buzz buzzing your
honey pot isn't here
dipped in your fingertips, watched it drip, then licked up from
your palm
now, I refuse to get my hands dirty when I play with my food
so I wear gloves when I wash dishes, the soap suds swarm
and stick
so I rinse twice and let the nats overlook the vinegar
then drown in the honey.