Where the Tiny Things Are: Feathered Essays

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Janice Romick is a saver of the bees. She plants lavender, mint, and sunflowers around the hexagonal patio of her condominium. She would plant artichokes, if they could grow well around a patio in Utah, so she could see the bees tumble upside-down in the overgrown thistle. She loves to imagine the comfort the needly purple petals provide to needled bee bodies. She’s stopped using Roundup on the dandelions that grow in the patio’s cracks. Stopped making calls on her cell phone. She has done everything she can think to stop disrupting the bee colonies but she knows she is just one and there are too many disruptions to try to think about the bees every day, anyway.

Inside her house, a yellow jacket bounces against the window shaped like a hexagon that looks from the inside out to the yard. The yellow jacket slides up the glass and down until she’s certain it can’t make its way out on its own. She picks up a paper napkin—the cheap, not even recycled kind—and approaches the yellow jacket fast and confident, pinching it with her fingers. Not too hard. Gently. She lifts the napkin, opens the door that leads to the patio, and lets the yellow jacket free into the relative safety of the mint.

She does this a lot. She’s been stung a few times. She’s not sure why the yellow jackets persist in coming into her house. Perhaps they plan to colonize her home, her house a hexagon, her house of windows, her house of doors that does good work to keep the disruptions out.
She thinks she can probably get along with them just fine as long as she doesn’t bother them or they her. But that’s the hard thing. Figuring out which of you is the poked and which the poker. What is the inside of the giant honeycomb and what is the out.