Cari is an administrator. She is very organized, very thin, and very beautiful. She is also very quiet and reserved. Or so I thought, but when I met with her in her office to ask how to best go about changing our MA to an MFA she said, easy. Name change. And then she sat me down to ask how I had been since last we worked on that committee together. I said, fine how are you, and she said, good, she loved her job as administrator and she loved her husband who was a lawyer. Their kids were just a bit older than my kids, maybe that’s why we sat down, to talk about kids, but I brought up how my grandma had just died and then she brought up how her best friend had just died. Her friend had developed a virulent breast cancer but the friend could not say aloud that she was dying. She too, like us, had kids and a husband and she too loved her job and she did not want to die so when the doctors in America said there’s nothing we can do for you, the doctors practicing a differently organized, alternative medicine in Mexico said, no no, we will save you. They laid her down and put a glass upon her breast. Under the glass swarmed a dozen bees. The bees stung and stung, trying to sting the cancer out of her. The body, stung by the bees, retreated into submission. But the cancer, more organized than the bees, did not. The cancer killed her like the cancer does. She died in Mexico without her husband or her children, with her breast, swollen, expanded and stoic, an erect testament to the attempt to keep things together.
Cari went down to collect her friends’ body. Cari, thin as glass, put her head against her friend’s chest. She knew she was dead but she swore she heard inside the ribs a swarming sound. She couldn’t lift her friend’s swollen body but she could take home, in a jar, a handful of bees, their hind ends wet with blood and cancer. Stinger-less, the bees lived while Cari drove to the airport, crossed the border, shuttled up the mountain, and returned to her office where she sat the jar on her desk, and, before her next meeting, held the glass to her face until the bees made enough noise to make a sound like Cari’s friend’s name.