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Dissertation on a Wasp's Nest

John Kinsella

*Who that has Reason, and his Smell,
Wou'd not among Roses and Jasmin dwell?
—Cowley*

1

Striking deep into the crisp
salvers of dead jasmine flowers
the paper wasp outpaces
the eye—
the elapsed witherings
of its avionics,
high pitched and devastating.

2

The nest of a paper wasp—thin grey
parchment chambers
moving towards opacity
bloom from a common
point, anchored stiffly
against the scent
of jasmine.

3

The wasp is the part
of a nest that flies.
Its wings the harp
on which frenzied
lullabies are cut.

4

A tiger with yellow stripes
would prefer to remain still
amongst the foliage,
watch as you pass confidently
by.

As evening settles
like a fusty blanket, summer
heat pricking even the space
between carapace and skin,
the wasps move slowly
over the nest's chambers.
Even the full moon
lifting its yellow eye
over the rim of the fence
can revitalize them.
The pull of the sun
cannot be mimicked.

5

To separate a wasp's nest
from the jasmine—fierce
undertaking I should refuse,
but wishing to preserve
both it and my child's
inquisitive
and vulnerable flesh,
I seek merely
to transfer
to a place
safer for both.
Two wasps
and a nest
in a coffee jar:
an impression
in the moon's
limp light.

6

Moisture
from night waterings
lifts the lawns
and gardens
in the early morning.
Wasps' fire
in the coffee jar,
their nest precarious
on its glass floor,
holdfast swimming
the petrified current.