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# Stung

Madeleine Guekguezian  
*University of the Pacific*

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## Stung

Madeleine Guekguezian

Violet-crowned Sappho,  
Taking up her lyre,  
Sang of the heart entrapped in the sweet-bitter net of Eros,  
And she called it “stung with love.”  
No one who has ever been in love would say otherwise.

I recall the love I last held strongest,  
How a lightning-strong pinprick to my heart  
Shocked my sense of feeling — sense of balance —  
And head-over-heels my blood turned to honey.  
How companionship turned my sinews into lines of poetry.  
How time rose-tinted my vision,  
Perfumed my sense of smell to confusion,

Turned my taste to her lips,  
Made my desired music the sound of her voice,  
And had my skin craving hers;  
All senses gone.  
All stung with love, and why would anyone love otherwise.

I recall the love I last held and the strength of its ending,  
The buzzing swarm of Eros' bees so inundating me  
With sweet-nothing, sensory-overload stings of that kind of love  
That sends the one feeling it careening toward disaster.  
The misfortune of honey-blood and poem-sinew is that I couldn't  
help but fall.  
The misfortune of all senses taken over is how I lost myself.

The songs of Sappho carrying to my clouded ears admonition,  
Sung by Aphrodite's sparrows but slowly modulating  
Into a dissonant cacophony like an ensemble of alarm bells.  
So stung with love that there was no noticing.

I recall the ground falling under me as it ended,  
All the strength of that last-held love collapsing onto myself.  
And in the daze I could only feel heartbreak, but no recognition  
of reality.  
No recognition of where sweet became bitter,  
Where the longing and little emptiness that makes desire  
became a void.

From a distance with all senses adequately mine,  
I know why the triumphs of the heart sung by Sappho  
Came with the correspondent loss.  
No who has ever been in love would say otherwise.

Although it is easier to sing love than to sing loss or sing grief.  
So, pain and reconciliation and healing,  
Are left to lure us in with sweet ruses,  
As if bees to flowers,  
Where one may wander to be stung with love  
Yet may learn that we need to find wholeness  
In the loves we do not yet know.