**Wasp Justice**

Jay Udall

On a branch out of the way they thrived,

bothering no one, but we found them

too much to leave alone.

Yellowjackets were common—

baking soda paste to salve the sting,

but wasps were rare, exotic

how they dangled like earrings in air,

legends of agony spiking our fear.

So, I took a stick

to the layered gray paper—

in the same way I’d probe wall sockets

with unbent paper clips

when parents weren’t looking—

to test the seething energy

that scattered out like loose fangs

homing for us as we fled,

our homes too far to save us

from their fierce purpose, piercing

justice served, venom swelling

in our skins, welcome

to the feral world.