

# Purple Honey

by: Amanda Crum

My mother took only what she could carry on her back when she left home, a study in Appalachian sturdiness. She thought herself brave; her father, a rusty Baptist minister who kept his belt on a hook (a silent warning), said that if she was truly brave she wouldn't take anything at all.

I sometimes imagine her leaving those lush verdant hills for the smell of stale beer and the kind of perpetual, grinding loneliness that got women like her pregnant. What it must have taken for her to chop her roots off at the ankles and escape down that dirt road. When she talks about our future, it is always with her past layered just beneath. Just out of my reach.

We drive to South Carolina in summer swelter, under hazy August skies. Things are growing out of control on the riverbanks, vines that twirl and clutch.

"See that kudzu there?" she asks. "That's the magic."

She always finds the untold sparkle in things but never explains, leaves me instead to figure it out on my own. A mystery, unraveling.

Hours later she pulls over at a roadside stand, gravel popping beneath tires.

"See?" she cries, pointing to a table laden with canning jars.

*Purple honey*, reads a sign. In sunlight, the honey is darkly beautiful. Like hearts of amethyst.

"I didn't know honey could be purple," I say.

"I think it's the kudzu," my mother says. "Bees are sensitive. Whatever they live around, it affects what they create."

*If you were truly brave, you wouldn't take anything at all.*

We buy every jar, load them carefully into a box in the trunk. I keep one out to hold, a reminder of how wanted I am.

