**The Boiling Point for Jam** *by Lynda Tavakoli*

She is making jam in the tiny kitchen,

aproned up, thumb-worn spoon in hand,

fingertips browned like nicotine

from plums she’d stoned an hour before.

Through the window she watches him work,

his naked back a tease of muscle-bulk

as axe splits wood, big hands tender on the shaft

with every shlurp of the blade’s release.

She adds sugar to the softened fruit,

stirs until its coarseness fuses the pulp.

Then she waits. Outside the sky is bruised with cloud,

the day punished for its obdurate cheerfulness.

He stiffens then, minding something beyond her reach,

and in his stillness she finds the man she knew

who measured time with shrugs and rinsed his days

with promises she could not keep.

Now there is only her raw womb,

the haemorrhage of empty-bellied days

stretching behind her like a barren sky

and the sweet spit of fruit pricking at her skin.

Yet there is peace in the ordinary:

the boiling point for jam, the quiet release of a latch,

the skirting of his arms about her waist,

the hope that love would always be enough.