

JENNIFER SAUNDERS

A Handbook for Happiness and Honey
(An Introduction to Delight)

For the sake of delight, honey.
For the sake of desire, nectar.
The silent longing of early spring:
a veil heated with a mad desire for
the honey-weighted air. At the height
of the honey season, ornamented
with silken roses, the perfume of
love knows her own mind. Thrust
forth, floating in her finest silk,
she takes her first flight at her own
sweet will, shining like drops
of sparkling gold. Nectar, flowers,
honey, delight. Love, indulge us.
Joy, receive us. Shaken, surprised
by amber sweetness and the honey-
flow of desire ripening in the heat of
a slow, steady fire. Pleasure
with no formalities. Wild love
filled with honey.

ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

“A Handbook for Happiness and Honey (An Introduction to Delight)” was created from Anna Botsford Comstock’s *How to Keep Bees* (1905). About the poem and the process of composing it, Jennifer Saunders writes:

In the introductory paragraph of *How to Keep Bees*, Anna Botsford Comstock writes, “This book has been prepared especially to meet the needs of the beginner in bee-keeping. It is not intended to be a complete treatise for the professional apiarist, but rather a handbook for those who would keep bees for happiness and honey, and incidentally for money.” My poet’s brain—which works faster than I do—instantly formed the phrase “A Handbook for Happiness and Honey,” and the rest of the erasure poem was driven by that title. I was obsessed with the idea of crafting a purely sensual poem from Comstock’s practical and restrained guide; I read the guide from start to finish, pulling out the lush language, and can only be grateful that Comstock was such a fine writer and produced a guide that is both useful and written with attention and care. The rich language was there; I just stitched it together.

Jennifer Saunders is the author of *Self-Portrait with Housewife* (Tebot Bach 2019), and her work has also appeared in *Cotton Xenomorph*, *Ninth Letter*, *Grist*, *The Georgia Review*, *Whale Road Review*, and elsewhere. She is currently co-editing, with Rachel Neve-Midbar, a multi-genre volume of writing about menstruation. She lives in German-speaking Switzerland and can be found online at jennifer-saunders.com.

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