

Captured Love in a Mason Jar

By Marie Stier Cavanah

My heart returns to my childhood home
a humble blue-granite canning pot bubbles on the stove.

Like a cauldron it overflows with tomatoes,
their bright flesh surrendering into a thick red, tangy sweetness,
a remembering of Kentucky summers so long ago.

The steam carries secrets —
Childhood days spent mashing homegrown tomatoes through a sieve
until all that remains are skins as dry as sunbaked soil
and silk-red juices of summer.

The simmering pot carries smells of pungent apple cider vinegar
and a slow patient bubble of muslin tied cloths
filled with nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon spices
that waft through the steamy kitchen air.

Memories of an apron, hard-working mom with sweat on her brow.
Toiling the soft dirt to plant the tender seeds that ripen and now thicken
until they become our favored simmer of love.

As we run out the back screened door,
the ghost of wooden spoons and mason jars
reminds us to “Tap the door,” first
as the honeybees swarm the screen
for the promise of one taste of this crimson red nectar in a pot.

As her sweet memory calls to me—

Comfort.

Home.

Oh, what I would trade to have one more taste
of her sweet, old-fashioned tomato catsup in a mason jar.