

*DEB is a local, small-scale beekeeper as a hobby. She is a retired nurse and lives alone on a sunny sweet farm in Tennessee. She likes to talk to the bees to pass the time, and besides, they keep her company. She corrals and follows the bees with her eyes throughout.*

DEB.

*(to the queen)*

Alright, old girl. Move it along.

*(she corrals the bee into its area and smokes it to sleep)*

Alright. Alrighty. There you go, off to sleep.

*The queen is asleep. DEB seals her off so the other bees will not disturb her.*

*DEB breathes in the crisp morning air.*

*(to the other bees)*

Leave her alone. I mean it. Our production is way down, folks.

I mean, I'm not exactly the number one honey supplier for every grocery store in Tennessee, but it'd be nice to have a full jar to myself. You know?

*DEB grins.*

Ahh, I'm just messing with you. I thank you, it must - I appreciate it because it must be a lot of work, you know? I certainly wouldn't want to cart all that junk around and regurgitate it and build your whole food supply with it and - all for some giant hairless alien to take half of it away!

But I guess you suckers don't mind.

*She leans back and observes the bees for a beat.*

*(very quickly, defensive)*

At least - I don't think you do, do you? That vegan girl - that new hire - whosit - Katherine! at the hospital said it's just as bad as eating a cow and I said who cares I like Taco Tuesday as much as anybody and she said eating a cow is just as bad as murder and I don't know because I can kill a cow even with those big brown eyes and it's sad but I can still do it because Daddy taught me how as long as you use all the meat and do it for food and not just because you're sadistic. And it's real different than shooting a man who's shouting at you, no, please don't. Please. At least I think. I've never had to kill anybody. And anyway even that is pretty different because you're not KILLING the bees, no way, you're just taking the food they were going to make anyway. And not even all of it, just some. Just what they won't use. It's like shearing a

sheep because you guys don't even need it all, in fact it would take up too much room if I didn't take a little bit -

*She stops abruptly.*

I guess I never asked. So I'm sorry -

Is it alright? Can I have a little? It's okay if I can't, you know. I like the company just as much as I like the honey.

*They buzz about, unaffected, but not uninterested.*

You guys sure? Speak now or forever hold your peace, type of thing.

It's premium product. Not gonna miss out if you don't ask me to. Spoonful a day is a top-scientist recommended dose of antioxidants. Did you know that?

*They seem to buzz in agreement.*

Alright. Thanks! I knew Katherine was full of it. Thank goodness I can stay with you guys all the time now - I couldn't work one more day with her, I don't think.

*DEB is pensive for a long beat.*

Hey, not that you care or anything, but the big old owner who takes care of this hive and moves your snooty little rears around when you get fragile - yeah, me? Did you know that the longer I'm around you, if you're hostile, the more susceptible I am to a bee allergy? Isn't that crazy?

*She waits for a response.*

I'm serious. Isn't it so bizarre that all my life I could just bee-bop around and a bee could sting me and yeah it would HURT but a Benadryl and a twenty minute nap later I'd be perfectly fine? And what's so funny is I'd never even see or care about a bee unless I was swatting one away at a baseball game or something. But now that we're actually pals, now that I take care of you suckers and I care about you and come out here every morning and night and all, NOW, your whole species is out to - kill me!

I've never been allergic to bees - to anything! - and I'm still not, I don't think - I guess we'll find out, huh boys? - but - I just think it's strange and a little sad that... the closer I get to you, and the more little - spats we have, the more likely I am to be forced to separate from you forever and ever.

I always thought it was supposed to be the opposite, you know? I always - Everyone always says - isn't it supposed to be the other way? If you expose yourself to something you're allergic to long enough, doesn't it go away a little bit? It's the whole face your fears principle. Or like, I read this study where these kids who were really allergic to peanuts had this long-term, super gradual exposure to peanuts and after a year or so, they could successfully hold eight peanuts or something when they couldn't even breathe peanut air before.

I don't know. I just - for once, I want to love something, and it's that way. It doesn't push me away, or punish me for loving it. It can even take a lot of work, and time - I like that! WE like that - that's the only way honey even gets made.

I'm just - it makes me sick. It makes me sick because you guys - it's all I have, and it's so good. It's enough. But just - under that peace, it's just this dark, empty fear, because I know, the longer I care for you, the further you'll push me away, and you won't even realize it until it's too late. And then you probably won't even care or know the difference when I'm gone.

So I guess I just - maybe if I have to leave, it should be because I died. I'm old, it's feasible. I'd rather just die than live but I can't take care of you anymore because of some stupid allergy.

I don't know. Whether I'm dead, or away, or even just lose interest... it would be nice to have some way to know I meant something to someone - to you. It would be nice to be mourned.