**The Bees' Point of View**

I do not think in words, but I know things. I know the light that changes with the seasons. I know the temperature of the hive, exact to a fraction of a degree, maintained by the collective vibration of ten thousand bodies. I know the smell of almond blosso, that particular sweetness in February that has pulled my ancestors and me out of winter dormancy for longer than anyone in this valley has been alive.

Something is wrong. I have known it for several seasons now.

The flowers smell different. Not all of them, and not always, but there is something in the nectar that was not there before, a chemical trace that disrupts my navigation, that makes some of my sisters forget the way home. They leave the hive in the morning and never return. Not dead in the field, as far as I know, just lost. Their dance, which told us where the best pollen was, silenced.

The winters have changed too. They are warmer, and this sounds like it should be good, but it is not. The mites that live on our bodies—they have always been there, but we managed them—now thrive year-round. A cold winter used to give us respite. Now there is no respite.

We are fewer every spring. The hive feels hollow. Tasks that were shared among thousands fall on hundreds. We exhaust ourselves.

The old man—the one who opens our hive carefully, who smells of smoke and speaks softly—I can sense his grief. He handles us with a tenderness that is different from the others. The others see the hive as a box that produces honey. He sees us as... I do not have a word for it, but he sees us as we are. He notices when we are sick. He talks to us, and even though we do not understand words, we understand the tone. He is afraid.

Now there are new things in the air. I have seen them—small, buzzing, with rigid wings. They are not alive. They visit the almond flowers with mechanical precision, moving from tree to tree in patterns too regular to be natural. They do not read the wind. They do not adjust to the particular shape of each blossom. They do not carry the pollen to wild thyme or to the small blue flowers at the edge of the field—the ones no one plants but we have always visited, because the field is not just almonds to us; it is a world.

The machines pollinate almonds. That is all they do. They do not pollinate the wild cherry. They do not feed the birds that eat the insects that the wildflowers attract. They do not make honey. They do not build wax. They do not communicate through dance. They do not regulate the temperature of a living community. They do not die in winter and grieve in their way for the sisters who are lost.

I am not against machines. I have no concept of "against." But I know that what they do is not what we do. We are not a function. We are a relationship—with the almond

trees, with the wildflowers, with the soil, with the old man, with this valley. Remove us and you do not just lose pollination. You lose the thread that connects things.

The humans are arguing about us. Some want to save us, some want to replace us, some are not sure. What I would say, if I could say anything, is this: we are not dying because of fate. We are dying because of choices—choices about what to spray on the vines, what to plant, how to organise the land. These are not our choices. But they are killing us.

If you replace us with machines, you will pollinate your almonds. For a while. But the wild cherry will not fruit. The hedgerows will thin. The small birds will disappear. The soil will change. And one day you will look at your valley and wonder why it feels empty—why the February morning, even with the white blossoms, has lost its hum.

We are the hum. That is what we are.