

### Bees, Giants and Machines

I'm tired of flying. I wish one of these pregnant machines would carry me the rest of the way home. I've been in the south field collecting pollen all day. My wings hurt and the hot sun makes it worse. The flowers here smell like honey and I must remember—my legs are full. I can't stop for more. My wings are strained and I need to find a place to rest. I zoom above the machines and the wind pushes me around. I battle for every inch. Sue-bell and kids are waiting. I must get home before the sun sets.

My wings are too tired to fly home alone. I need to find a machine to ride in soon. I fly past lots of them, but all have their eyes shut. Sometimes, when I'm lucky, they'll open one eye just a little and I'll zoom past the trap and into its body. The insides are different every time. Sometimes there's one giant inside and sometimes there's more, but we've never seen an empty one moving alone.

The giants inside like to make a lot of noise and buzz at each other in a language we don't know. They all hold a circle they spin to move down the line. Today, none of the moving machines have their eyes open and I know it's because of the sun. On hot days, most machines keep their eye's closed and blow wind on the giants. It's usually way colder and nicer to ride. Though, some are hotter and not fun inside.

Finally, a big machine roars up to my right. It's one of the long ones, with lots of spinners that bounce along the ground. I notice the giant inside has a fire stick. "Yes." That means they have to open an eye to let the dirty wind out.

This is my chance. I summon all my strength and push myself to grab on. "I'm coming, Sue-bell." The wind tries to blow me away, but I trained with the best pollinators. They taught me

to scrunch my body and keep flapping my wings, no matter what. The eye opens and I hurry to scale the eyelid before it's closed.

The giant puts his fire stick out of the eye and hot red coals rain down around me. I scoot to the left and climb inside the head of the big machine. I have to be careful not to scrape my legs and lose what I collected from the south field. The kids will be hungry and need every bit. If I lost any, Sue-bell would be angry and make me sleep outside the hive, again. The boys all rag on me for pissing off the Queen and I don't want to deal with their barbs tonight. My wings are too tired and I have to get home.

The air feels colder inside the head— just like I knew it would. The noise is too loud and the rhythm sends vibrations down my wings. It reminds me of the beat we use when we march out of the hive to go on patrol. The giant with the fire stick has long greasy hair and a crooked stinger. I wonder why their stingers are in the front when ours are on our butts. It's strange how different we are.

I zoom around until I find a place to sit and stretch my wings. It's nice to be out of the sun for a little while. The soft bouncing lulls me to sleep, and before I know it, the machine dives to one side and I'm pinned down by a thick, leaf-like object with old food stuck to it. The smell is awful and I need to escape. It's hot, but at least it's safe out there. The taste of nectar fills my mouth and wish I was back home at the hive, watching the kids play with the ants across the way.

I wiggle my wings to make sure they're fine and they scrape against the rough seat. They're okay, but the leaf is too heavy and I'm scared. The food's stench makes me nauseous and I try not to panic. I wiggle and wiggle, but nothing happens. I flutter my wings and push up with all my might, but it doesn't move. I buzz in frustration. I need to get home. Suddenly, the machine dives again and the leaf almost slides off! Here's my chance! *I scrunch my body and bat my wings, no*

*matter what.* My antennas hum from the effort. A moment later, I'm free and flying away from the deadly leaf. A peek out the window reveals my exit. I zoom out of the machine's eye and fight against the whooping wind. The scent of lavender surrounds me as I fly across our field and home to my Sue-Bell.