

Bee's Bee

By C. Jade Wyton

The colony's Queen takes the time to visit her daughter, Bee Bee, on the girl's 15th birthday.... But, with the her relationship to her daughter being a secret, the visit is as painful as it is wonderful.

Contains depictions of grief.

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It had been three months since she'd last seen her daughter.

Three long, agonising months of waiting as her newest son grew strong enough to leave his comb and latch to her side.

Queen had been worried, at first, that she would arrive in town and Bee wouldn't be working her shift at the cafe.

*It was the girl's birthday, after all. It was likely she'd be spending it away from work....*

It had been especially discomfoting when that beautiful-but-ditsy man, Kith, had been the one to seat her.... But then little Bee had come from the backroom, tying an apron over a beautiful red dress and calling out about being able to help out for an hour or two before her friends came to take her to the city.

She had grown so much. And she was such a responsible young lady.... Queen almost couldn't hide her pride as the girl had cleared the neighbouring tables.

*Almost.*

She knew she *had* to hide her pride; she couldn't let the secret slip. Bee couldn't know who she was.

So Queen had kept quiet and ordered her usual drink; a coffee that contained so much milk and honey with so little grounds that it had been nicknamed the "One Bean Coffee" and jokingly put on the orders board.

It was, apparently, rather popular.

She'd finished it quickly so that she'd have an excuse to motion for another— Though Bee's coworker had caught sight of her, first, and refilled her cup instead.

Queen had drunk this one slower, not actually having wanted a second coffee, before managing to get Bee's attention and requesting a third drink.

And, now that she had her daughter's attention, she could finally speak to her and hear her beautiful voice.

'So, my dear, I heard you mention that it's your birthday today,' Queen lied; *she'd known exactly what day it was from the moment she'd opened her eyes.* 'I can't believe it's that time of year already! How old are you this time? Sixteen? Seventeen?'

*Fifteen*, she corrected in her head. *She could never forget something so important.*

'I'm fifteen!' Bee giggled, gently placing another drink by Queen's empty cup. 'Do I really look like I could be seventeen?'

'Of course, you're so hard working, after all!' Queen complimented. 'So

mature, for only being fifteen. Where *do* you get it from?’

‘Uncle Kith says I’m just like my mother,’ Bee said, proudly. ‘Smart and stubborn!’

Queen felt her heart wrench; though she tried to keep her warm smile as she forced out a chuckle.

*Her mother.*

Her *other* mother. Suki.

The kind-hearted dragon who’d found Bee after she’d been lost during the colony’s move....

Queen could never hate the woman. Not after she’d saved Bee’s life— But oh, heaven’s honey, she was *jealous*.

The woman had gotten to raise Bee for over ten years before Queen had managed to track her baby down....

It broke her heart.

It really, truly, broke her heart....

‘Oh! *Hello there!*’ Bee chirped, sticking her tongue out at the bundle strapped tightly to Queen’s side; Wasp. Bee’s youngest brother.... *Not that she would ever know....* ‘You’re waking up! Aw, look at you! Aren’t you the most perfect little boy? Oh! I might have—’

Bee began tapping her pockets, searching for something, before she grinned and pulled out a plush toy moth.

‘Here! You wanna play with the fuzzy little moth?’ she began to playfully move the toy in front of Wasp... until the hatchling gave a happy cry and reached out for it; immediately stuffing the plush’s leg in his mouth.

‘Oh, I’m so sorry!’ Queen gave a sigh and went to remove the toy from her baby’s mouth.

‘No, it’s fine! He can have it if he likes it,’ Bee chuckled. ‘I got it for my cousin but she was scared of it, so I’ve been wondering what to do with it! Hah. I don’t know what her problem with bugs is. I think they’re neat!’

‘You like insects?’ Queen asked, a hint of hopefulness in her tone. *Maybe her daughter hadn’t lost all of her natural instincts.*

‘Yeah!’ Bee laughed. ‘I mean, I’m named after one, right? It’d be kind of silly if I was scared of them.’

‘What’s your favourite?’ Queen asked, carefully.

‘I’ve always been a fan of, like, hornets and bees! Hives and stuff, you know?’

Queen picked up her drink; sipping it to hide the fact she was swallowing down the lump in her throat.

*Hives.*

*Of course she was drawn to hives.*

It’d be more surprising if she *wasn’t* drawn to hives.

‘It’s kinda funny that I’m named after a bug, don’t you think?’ Bee said, sitting in the chair opposite Queen and reaching for the sugar packets that sat next to the table number. ‘And twice! *Bee Bee*. Why do you think that is? Mum said she doesn’t know. That it was just what was on my name-tag when she found me!’

*It’s because you’re named after me,* Queen thought, quietly. *You’re Bee’s Bee....* ‘I’m not sure,’ she lied. ‘But it’s a beautiful name, don’t you think?’

Bee nodded, licking at the pack of sugar she’d opened. ‘I love it! It’s really

different from everyone else's names, but it *sounds* like a normal name if you're not writing it down— So it's like a funny little secret I get to have for myself!

Queen gave a chuckle and continued to sip at her drink. *What a beautiful way to think about it.*

'What's *your* name?' Bee asked, resting her chin on a claw. 'You come in so often, but I don't think you've ever told me what your name is before!'

'Oh, well...' Queen hesitated, unsure what to say— Could she be honest about her name? Neither Queen *nor* Bee felt like it could be said without raising too many questions.... But also, the thought of lying to her daughter about something so important made her heart hurt. 'Mrs Q,' she finally decided. 'Call me Mrs Q.'

'Mrs Q?' Bee echoed. 'Okay! You know, my teacher in school makes us call her Ms Z.'

'Does she?'

'Yeah,' Bee smiled. 'Lots of letters being thrown around town. Z. Q. Bee. And Tee, right over there! *Heeey* Tee!'

'Hey, Bee Bee,' responded Bee's coworker. 'You going to do any work today, or just sit around talking?'

'Sit around talking!' Bee answered playfully.

Queen chuckled, at that, and sipped her drink. 'Has anyone ever told you how funny you are?'

'I tell her she's a joke all the time!' joked Tee, earning a laugh from Bee.

'Shut up!' she giggled, motioning with a wing at Tea. '*You're* the joke!'

Tee gave his own laugh before picking up several abandoned cups and heading for the backroom.

Bee continued giggling— Until she let out a cough and reached for the napkins.

'Oh— My dear, are you alright?' Queen asked.

'Yeah, I'm good, I'm—' Bee spat into the napkin, and then pulled a disgusted face. 'Eugh, sorry. I've been so *phlegmy* lately! I don't know what's up with it!'

*It's not phlegm*, Queen thought to herself, eyeing the napkin as Bee folded it over and wrapped it in two more before slipping it into her pocket. *That's underdeveloped wax.... To build our hive with.*

It broke Queen's heart.

Was she really already so old that she was developing her wax glands?

Perhaps she should teach her— After all, the ability wasn't going to go away. And she might be more comfortable if she knew what it was and how to properly use it....

But then....

To explain her abilities, Queen would have to explain the colony.

And if Bee knew about the colony, she would have to come home so that she couldn't accidentally reveal the secret. And it was clear that Bee was happiest here, and that pulling her away from her family would make her miserable.

But....

She *could* come home.

If Queen were to let the secret *slip*, she would have an excuse to bring her daughter home—

*What was she thinking?!*

‘Ah, well, I think it’s about time I headed off!’ said Queen, trying to rise from her seat in a way that didn’t seem too stilted or quick. She had to leave *now*, before the selfish temptation took her over and she ruined her daughter’s life. ‘That’s just two silver I owe, isn’t it?’

‘Oh! Yes, two,’ Bee gave a surprised twitch of her facial crests, before smiling warmly. ‘It was really nice talking to you again! You’ll come back soon, right? I love talking to you! You’re really fun.’

Queen felt like her heart was sinking to her feet as she reached into her purse and pulled out five silver for the girl. ‘Of course I will! You know how work always has me coming back and forth!’

*A lie; her life was lived for the colony, not stuck in some needless outsider career. She came here of her own accord.*

‘I do!’ Bee giggled, counting the silver and then holding out the extras. ‘And here’s your change—’

‘Keep it, my dear,’ Queen took Bee’s claws, closing them together over the coins. *Her scales were so soft!* ‘And get yourself something nice for your birthday. From me.’

‘For real?’ Bee asked, her face lighting up with joy. ‘Oh, thank you so much! I really appreciate it! Are you sure, though? The tip is more than the drinks were.’

‘I’m sure,’ Queen reassured. ‘You have a lovely day, alright?’

‘I will! Thank you,’ Bee grinned, rising from her own seat and collecting the dirty dishes and empty sugar packs from the table. ‘Will you be coming in next month? The town’s hosting a potluck on the fifteenth, if you’re interested! Everyone’s bringing food to exchange with each other.’

‘I wouldn’t miss it for the world,’ Queen promised. *It was the perfect excuse to gift Bee some of the colony’s honey.*

Even if it meant she had to share the delicacy the with the rest of the town, it was worth it to know her daughter could eat a food so important to her heritage.

Queen smiled, watching as Bee retreated to the back of the cafe.... And she returned the wave she received from the man who met her eye as she watched her daughter.

*Bee’s uncle, she recalled, watching as he ruffled the girl’s facial crests affectionately. And owner of the cafe.*

Oh, how she wished she could tell them all who she was....

Slowly, Queen backed out of the cafe and made for the woods just out of town.

She held herself high, and dignified, and *together* until she was sure she was completely alone....

And then she let herself fall to her knees and sob, her wings quivering with grief as she pulled her tail close and unclasped her heavy earrings from her crests.

*Her daughter was so beautiful!*

So wonderful.

So kind.

And she wished, with all of her heart, that she could bring her home.

—END—

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