

It's a Small World

Before Queen Beelizabeth III became queen, the throne room was a sad place. Only the Queen and the most important bees in the beehive could come to the throne room, and they only talked when the Queen said they could. There were no bright colours or happy people.

But Queen Beelizabeth III changed all that. She was a happy bee, and she wanted a happy throne room. So now, the place was filled with bright yellows, oranges and blues. There were pools of honey that bees swam in, and plenty for everyone to eat. Every day, brilliant bee dancers and bee musicians came to perform for the Queen.

But one day, a human soldier walked in.

Humans never came to the beehive. How could they? They were too big. But this human was as small as a bee, and he carried a big, black gun. All the dancing, singing and swimming stopped, and everyone turned to look at him.

‘Stop him!’ said the Queen.

Two bee soldiers flew at the man. They tried to sting him, but he held up his gun and shot them. They fell to the ground.

‘No!’ shouted the Queen.

The soldier was standing in front of her now. The Queen tried to hide her fear, but she couldn't. This was a nightmare.

‘What do you want?’ she said, shaking.

‘We're here to take all your honey,’ said the soldier.

‘What?!’

She couldn't believe it. Humans already took their honey. Their beehive was free, but most bees lived on human farms, working for humans, making honey for them and only them.

‘I don’t understand,’ said the Queen. ‘How are you so small? And why can’t you just buy honey from your supermarkets?’

The soldier held the gun to her face. ‘Give us the honey. Now.’

The door to the throne room opened, and more human soldiers came in.

The Queen didn’t know what to do. There were more bees than humans, but all the humans had guns. Normally, bees couldn’t fight back against humans. They had all sorts of ways to kill and control them. Now they were the size of bees, but the bees could still do nothing.

‘Fine,’ said the Queen. ‘But you must explain what is happening. Why are you so small?’

The soldier pushed the gun in her face.

‘I don’t have to explain *anything* to you.’

The bees started putting honey in jars to give to the humans. The Queen watched as all the honey, her people’s food and money, went into the jars.

But she knew something that the humans didn’t. They had a secret room full of honey, deep in the hive. There was enough honey there to eat for several months, so that they wouldn’t die. Then they could make more honey. And while they did so, they could find out what had happened to the humans.

They could find out how to kill them.

The humans made sure that all the jars were full, and then started to leave.

‘Wait,’ said the soldier, when he reached the door. He sniffed. ‘Show us all the rooms in the beehive.’

The Queen chose a bee to show them, but the soldier said, ‘No. *You* show me, Queen.’

So the Queen took the humans around. Of course, she didn't show them the secret room. But when they came to one of the rooms, the soldier started hitting the wall.

'It sounds like there's another room behind here.'

'You're wrong,' said the Queen. 'What would a human know about beehives?'

'I don't know,' said the soldier. 'I just have a gut instinct. I've lived long enough to know when to trust my gut. Boys, let's break it.'

'No!' said the Queen.

But it was too late. The human soldiers all started hitting the wall, and soon they broke through it. And there it was, their secret room.

'I knew it,' said the soldier. 'I'm a nice guy, Queen. But next time, if you lie to me, I'll shoot you.'

So the Queen watched as all her people's food was taken. The humans left, and the Queen and all the other bees cried.

'What are we going to do?' said one of the other bees. 'We have no food.'

'We'll get our honey back,' said the Queen. 'And we will kill the humans.'

'You know, for an apocalypse, we live quite well.'

The soldier was eating seeds with honey. Normally, the food would have been very small, but he was small, too. So each seed was the size of his head. They were sitting in a small house made of dried grass.

'You know I hate that word,' said his friend.

His friend was not a soldier, but a chef. In this new world, after the 'apocalypse', chefs were suddenly very important. All their food had changed. They couldn't eat

hamburgers or sushi anymore, because cows and fish were big enough to eat *them*. So they had had to change what they ate, and how they cooked.

‘It *is* an apocalypse,’ said the soldier, drinking some water. ‘It’s not the apocalypse we thought would happen, but it’s still an apocalypse.’

‘We’re very lucky, you know,’ said the chef. He was putting salt on some seeds. They didn’t have much salt or pepper, but they didn’t need a lot now. ‘I mean, you know, because the shrink guns hit all those buildings. If they hadn’t, we would have nothing. Crazy to think, huh?’

‘You’re such an optimist,’ said the soldier. ‘The world almost ended, and you’re saying we’re lucky.’

‘You’re the one who said we live quite well.’

‘Yeah, well, it *is* an apocalypse, though. Do we have more honey, by the way?’

The soldier tried to take more, but the chef hit him with a wooden spoon.

‘Stop! Just because you attacked that beehive yourself, doesn’t mean that you can eat *all* the honey. Think about other people, maybe?’

‘Relax,’ said the soldier. ‘The days of worrying about food are behind us. We can get fat again now.’

But the soldier didn’t eat any more honey. He sat in his chair and thought about the last few years.

That first year had been horrible. Nobody knew how to deal with being so small. It was hard to find any food. And to see other soldiers, friends, family getting eaten by dogs and cats, stood on by cows...

It was hard to remember life before World War IV. How had they gotten here?

It had all started with the Second Geneva Convention of 2089, of course. After World War III, nobody could imagine that there would *be* another war. So they all agreed to destroy their nuclear weapons and never make more.

Of course, as the years passed, peace couldn't stay. This was not a world for peace. Technology got better, and everyone knew that *if* someone made a nuclear weapon, it would be more powerful than before. It could destroy the whole world in minutes.

When World War IV started, everyone knew that nuclear weapons weren't an option. So they got creative. They made robot animals, diseases and other secret weapons. Russia, China and the USA fought each other and everyone else in secret. Nobody could prove that anyone was actually *using* weapons. It was all crazy.

It couldn't go on forever, though. The USA was the first to attack directly. They made shrink guns and started shrinking the people in other countries. It was much more dangerous than what the other countries were doing. They shrank whole countries at once and then dropped bombs, killing them all. It was like walking on ants.

But Vietnam had been different. They heard about the shrink gun, and they prepared. They wouldn't let America walk all over them again. They decided that America had broken the Second Geneva Convention, so they would, too. They made a nuclear weapon in secret, but this nuclear weapon only worked on people of a certain size.

Just like that, they killed all the big Americans, and all the countries who had been shrunk were now free. The war ended in days. Now, the only people left were those who had been shrunk.

They went into America, to find the cure for the shrink gun. They were sure that there was a cure. They looked everywhere.

But there was none. The American scientists hadn't thought about a cure, because they didn't think anyone would live after their bombs.

So now everyone left alive was shrunken, and they had no cure for it. They were as small as bees.

Most people had died. But the soldiers, and those who were brave and strong, had fought to stay alive. They found buildings of equipment that had been shrunk: guns, weapons and so on. And they used them to find new food, to build a new society.

‘I should go,’ said the soldier, getting up. ‘You have lots of work to do, and I’m busy tomorrow, as well.’

‘Going back to the beehive?’ said the chef.

‘No,’ said the soldier. ‘We’ve controlled them.’

One of the beehives had tried to attack them a few weeks ago. It was the first beehive the soldier had ever entered. He remembered the Queen there, how shocked she was by it all. But the humans killed them easily.

What a waste. They could’ve made so much honey for them.

‘I’m going to the squirrel farm,’ said the soldier. ‘One of them ate a soldier yesterday.’

The chef looked like he was going to be sick. He was a strange man. Even after all these years, he still hated seeing people die like that.

‘You’re going to kill it, then? Show the other squirrels what will happen to them if they don’t behave?’

‘I can’t,’ said the soldier. ‘If it were me, I would shoot the squirrel *like that*.’ He clicked his fingers. ‘But the boss says we need them. They bring us a lot of our seeds. So I’m there to help control them. I’ll make sure to punish it for you, though.’

‘Good,’ said the chef. ‘I hate those monsters.’

The soldier said goodbye and left the grass house. The sun was setting now.

It was strange to think that he could never go back to his true home. He dreamed about it sometimes. The big house with those glass windows, beautiful wooden tables, a kitchen where they could all sit down and eat together.

Now, it was too big. Now it was a place of danger. He could never go back, never watch the sunset through those glass windows again.

The soldier walked through the long grass to his new home. As he walked, he sang to himself. It was a song he had learned in America, when he visited as a child.

‘It’s a small world, after all...’