

BEES

Age-evolved senses, sharply honed,
guide the patrician honey bee
astounding moorland miles to find
epicurean nectar stores
map-referenced
by magic waggle dances
at the hive door.

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Their lives - ephemeral puffs of smoke.
For while the queen can drop her
million eggs for a few years, the
worker's shorter span lasts only months
and stops exhaustedly.

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A more plebeian furry throng
sip unselectively from garden flowers.
Fat and fuzzy, bright and buzzing
black and amber-jerseyed bumble bees
speed urgently from sprig to sprig
as if a second's dallying
will bring disaster in its wake.
A cycle of brief buzzes between blooms,
a quick clasp by black legs,
rapid proboscal probing
and swift nectar sip
spin on and on.

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But then the fuel's spent.

One moment flitting vigorously on,

the next a laboured flight,

a shaky landing,

loss of interest in the lavender,

a slow blind weakened crawl

to curled up immobility.

A wing-beat between life and death.

Sunset sees three or four pathetic

clinging scraps that overnight

relax and by the morning

have been blown away.

Bryan Harbottle