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If Bees Are Few: A Hive of Bee Poems

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It is said there are 20,000 species of bees, a genus 50 million years old, but in the fertile imagination of the world's poets, there is no beginning or end to the bee buzz. Virgil wrote of bees, as did Rumi, Shakespeare, Burns, Coleridge, Emerson, Mandelstam, Neruda, Whitman—a lyrical hum heard well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in poems by Yeats, Lawrence, Plath, Mary Oliver, Carol Ann Duffy, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Sherman Alexie, among many others.

The title of this book is from Emily Dickinson: *To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee, / One clover, and a bee, / And revery. / The revery alone will do / If bees are few.* Her conclusion resonates with a terrible poignancy today, as bees are indeed becoming few—hives collapsing, wild species disappearing. Amid this crisis, the poems collected here speak with a quiet urgency of a world lost if bees were to fall silent.

If anyone can save the bees, it is entomologist Dr. Marla Spivak and the hive of bee scientists and beekeepers at the Bee Lab at the University of Minnesota. A portion of the author proceeds from this anthology will be donated to support research at the Bee Lab.

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