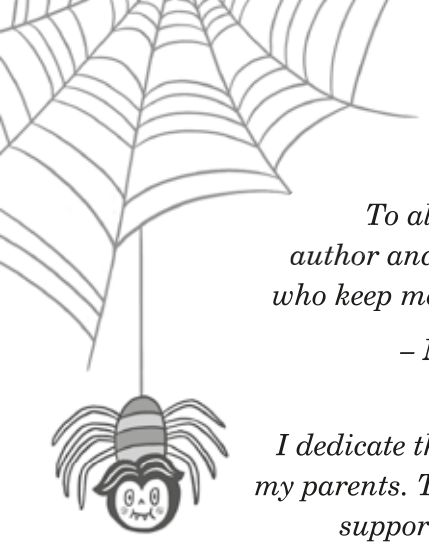


To all my brilliant
author and illustrator friends
who keep me buzzing with ideas.

– Mo O'Hara

I dedicate this book to Luca and
my parents. Thank you for being so
supportive and loving.
– Aya Kakeda



First published in 2023 by
Andersen Press Limited
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA, UK
Vijverlaan 48, 3062 HL Rotterdam, Nederland
www.andersenpress.co.uk

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

The right of Mo O'Hara and Aya Kakeda to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Text copyright © Mo O'Hara, 2023
Illustrations copyright © Aya Kakeda, 2023

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

ISBN 978 1 83913 328 2

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

Honey's Hive



Mo O'Hara
ILLUSTRATED BY
Aya Kakeda

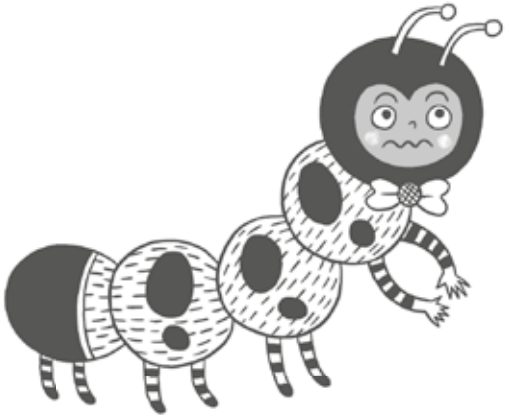
ANDERSEN PRESS



HONEY



BELLA



BOB



HEX



BEANIE



FRED



NANA



MISS IVY



THE QUEEN





Chapter 1

The sun was beginning to warm the air in the little garden by the cottage. Honey buzzed around the flowerpots next to the hive, her stripy fuzz all blown about and her wonky antennae twitching with excitement.

'Major Honey to Ground Control. It looks like a rocky entry, but don't worry, danger is my middle name,' Honey shouted into an imaginary walkie talkie. 'Over and out.'

I should explain. Honey's middle name was not actually 'Danger.' She didn't even have a middle name. Most bees don't. And she was not in any real danger either. There isn't much danger you can get into when you're flying around two feet off the ground.





But Honey liked to be a little . . . well . . . dramatic.

She was supposed to be practising her flower landings for Bee School, but Honey was putting it off. *Procrastinating*. And she knew exactly what that word meant because someone was always telling Honey that she was procrastinating. Pretty much every day.

Sometimes, when Honey was supposed to be studying hive history, really she would be imagining herself as the queen of an ancient Egyptian beehive.

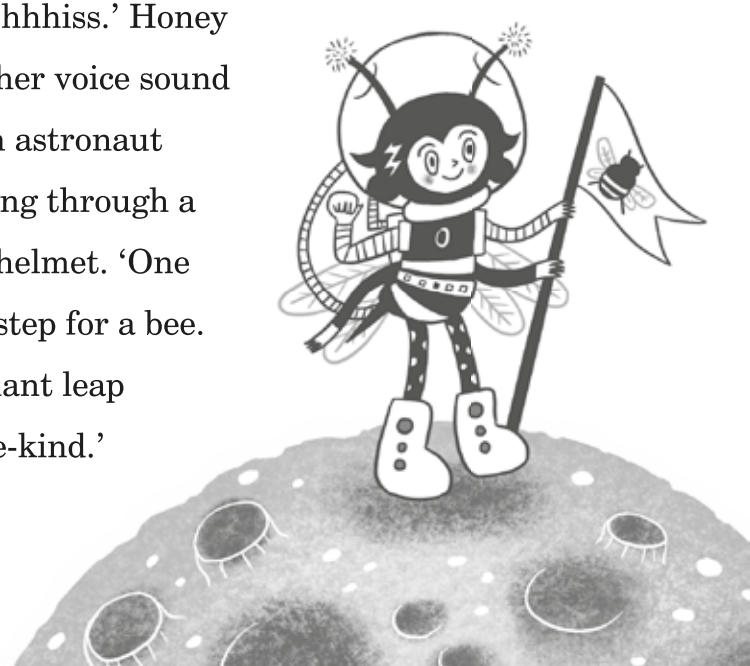




Sometimes, when she was supposed to be learning an important waggle dance, really she would be imagining that she was twirling pirouettes like a swooping swarm of swallows.

Today she was supposed to be practising how to land on a flower head to collect pollen (a fairly essential life skill for a bee) but instead she was picturing herself as the first bee to land on the moon.

'Shhhiss.' Honey made her voice sound like an astronaut speaking through a space helmet. 'One small step for a bee. One giant leap for bee-kind.'



She stepped onto a geranium. In her head she seemed to glide onto the surface of the moon. In reality, she overbalanced and the flower tipped, sending Honey tumbling antenna-first into the dirt.

'Ooooof! Hmmm . . . More like a crash landing,' she mumbled as she shook the dirt off her stripy fuzz.

A ladybird fluttered down and landed on the rim of the flowerpot.

'You're an early bird this morning,' Nana Ladybird said.



'You know what they say . . . the early bird catches the worm,' Honey replied.



A brown wrinkly worm reared his head up from a mound of dirt in the pot.

'Bird?! Where?!' he shouted. 'Where's the bird?'

'Oh, there's no bird! It's just a saying,' Honey said.

The worm slumped back on the ground. 'Phew,' he said. 'It's a very upsetting saying.'

'Sorry,' Honey replied as the worm disappeared back into the dirt.

'Hey, Nana Ladybird,' Honey said, 'what's the buzz? Anything interesting happened since yesterday?'

'The ants had about a hundred new kids,' Nana answered.



‘Congrats!’ Honey hollered over to a very tired-looking ant walking up her anthill.

‘And Bob the caterpillar has nearly finished his cocoon.’

‘Looking good,’ Honey called to Bob.

The caterpillar beamed awkwardly and waved several of his legs.



‘And no sign of that spaceman breaking into your hive,’ Nana said.

‘Nana, I’ve told you, he’s not a spaceman. He just wears that big outfit with the head cover because he thinks it protects him from getting stung,’ Honey said. Then she leaned into Nana and whispered, ‘But we could totally sting him if we wanted to.’

‘He’s a spaceman!’ Nana insisted.

‘He’s a hu-man,’ Honey said. ‘He calls himself a “beekeeper” which is totally lame. Like he keeps *us*? *We* keep *him*. We share our honey with him. We should call ourselves human keepers.’

Nana laughed. ‘Anyway, aren’t you supposed to be in Bee School, Honey?’ she asked.

‘No, it’s OK, I don’t have any lessons today. I have my worker bee meeting with the headteacher later.’

‘Worker bee meeting?’

‘Yes. Every young bee has to have a talk

with her to decide their bee job for when they grow up. Today is a taster day where I can try out the worker bee jobs and see what suits me.' Then Honey stopped and looked up at the sun. 'Oh no! I'm late! I'd better shake a wing! My best friends Hex and Beanie have already had their meetings, I can't be late for mine. Miss Ivy will make me recite the Bee Code a hundred times in detention.' She paused. 'Again.'

'What's the Bee Code?' Nana asked.

Honey clasped two of her arms in front of her and saluted with another one.



'A bee must . . .
Bee loyal, bee strong.
You must always get along.
Bee considerate, bee kind.
Work hard and you'll find
Your place in the hive.
You'll help it survive.
Together, you see,
You can be your best bee.'

'Sounds like you know it well, dear,' Nana smiled.

'When you have to recite something a hundred times it kinda sticks in your head,' Honey nodded. 'It's just so Bee-centric. You know what I mean, Nana?'

'Not really, dear, you *are* a bee.'

‘But being a bee is soooooo boooooring. Humans and other animals have a much better time. Birds get to migrate and travel to exotic places. Squirrels get to do all kinds of cool acrobatics to find food and hide nuts. And caterpillars get to transform into totally different insects altogether.’

‘Yeah, I’m a bit nervous about all that transforming stuff actually,’ Bob the caterpillar shouted over.

‘You got this, Bob. I’m totally jealous,’ Honey hollered back. ‘You’ll make a fab butterfly. Anyway, what was I saying?’ she said to Nana.

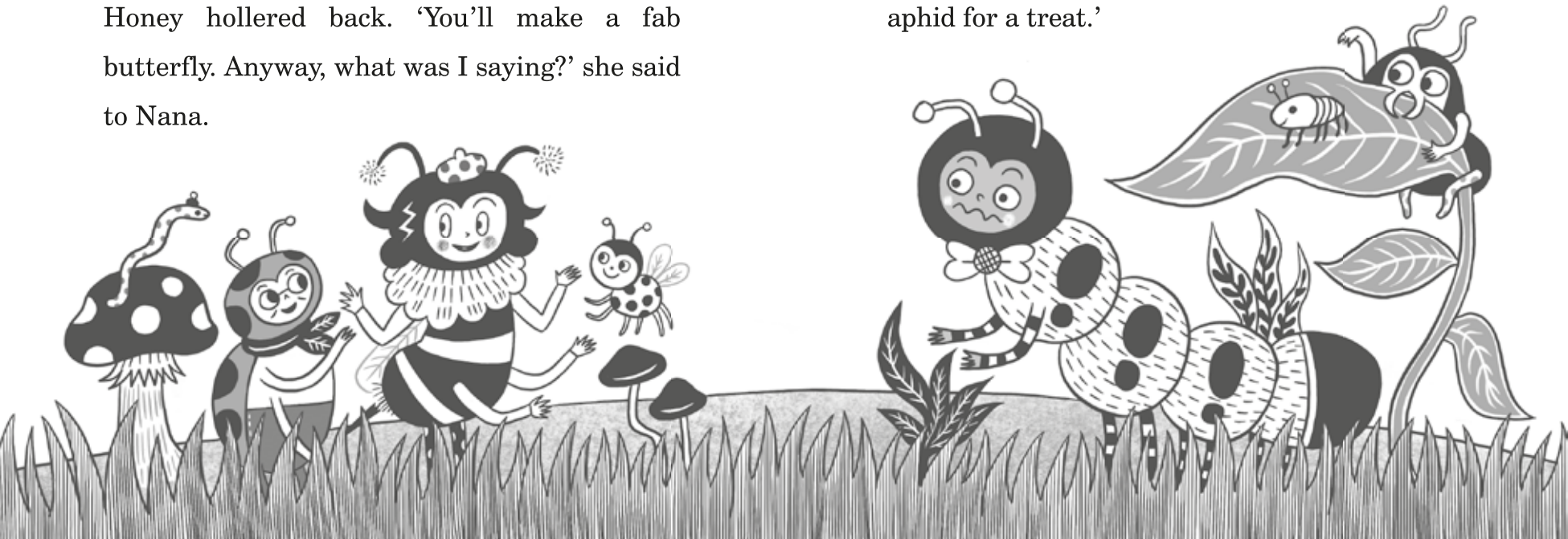
‘How boring it is to be a bee.’

‘Yeah, and humans get to have all kinds of adventures like skateboarding and rowing boats and landing on the moon – and what do we get to do? Buzz around.’

‘You get to pollinate plants and make honey,’ Nana smiled. ‘And be a part of your hive. *That’s* important.’

‘But it’s not EXCITING, Nana.’

‘You young insects and your excitement. In my day we were grateful for an occasional aphid for a treat.’



I should let you know that at this point a tiny, tiny aphid who was crawling along the leaf nearby quickly turned around and headed back the other way muttering, 'Why does everyone want to eat me? Why can't we all just get along?' in a tiny, tiny aphid voice. Unfortunately, he turned around right into the path of a very hungry beetle. Ah, the circle of life – but that's another story.

'Anyway, gotta go. Bye, Nana Ladybird!'

Honey made a beeline (see what I did there?) for the hive.

She zoomed into the entrance, rounded the corner, and slammed straight into her big sister Bella who was guarding the way.

'Aaaaah!'



Chapter 2

Honey barrelled into Bella, and they tumbled across the floor in a sprawl of flailing antennae, arms and legs. They landed in a jumbled heap against a wax wall.

Bella jumped up and shook herself off. This was clearly not the first time she had been barrelled into by her little sister. Bella was a whole head taller than Honey and broader across the shoulders. She was always neat and disciplined and aside from them having the same zigzag on their heads you would never suspect they were sisters – even though everyone in the hive was actually related. The Queen bee was everyone's mum. (It's a bee thing. We'll get to that later.)

‘Hey, not so fast, Honey,’ Bella said and she scooped up Honey and plonked her back on her feet.

‘But I’m late . . .’ Honey stammered.

‘I know,’ Bella replied. ‘For your meeting with Miss Ivy. ‘Look at you though.’ Bella ushered Honey outside and rolled her eyes. ‘You have to make a good impression, Honey. Come on . . . straighten your antennae.’ She adjusted Honey’s antennae so they weren’t pointing out in opposite directions, but they immediately flopped down again. ‘And brush off your fuzz. You look like you’ve been rolling in dirt or something.’ Bella quickly dusted off Honey’s stripes with four of her arms at once.

‘OK?’ Honey asked.

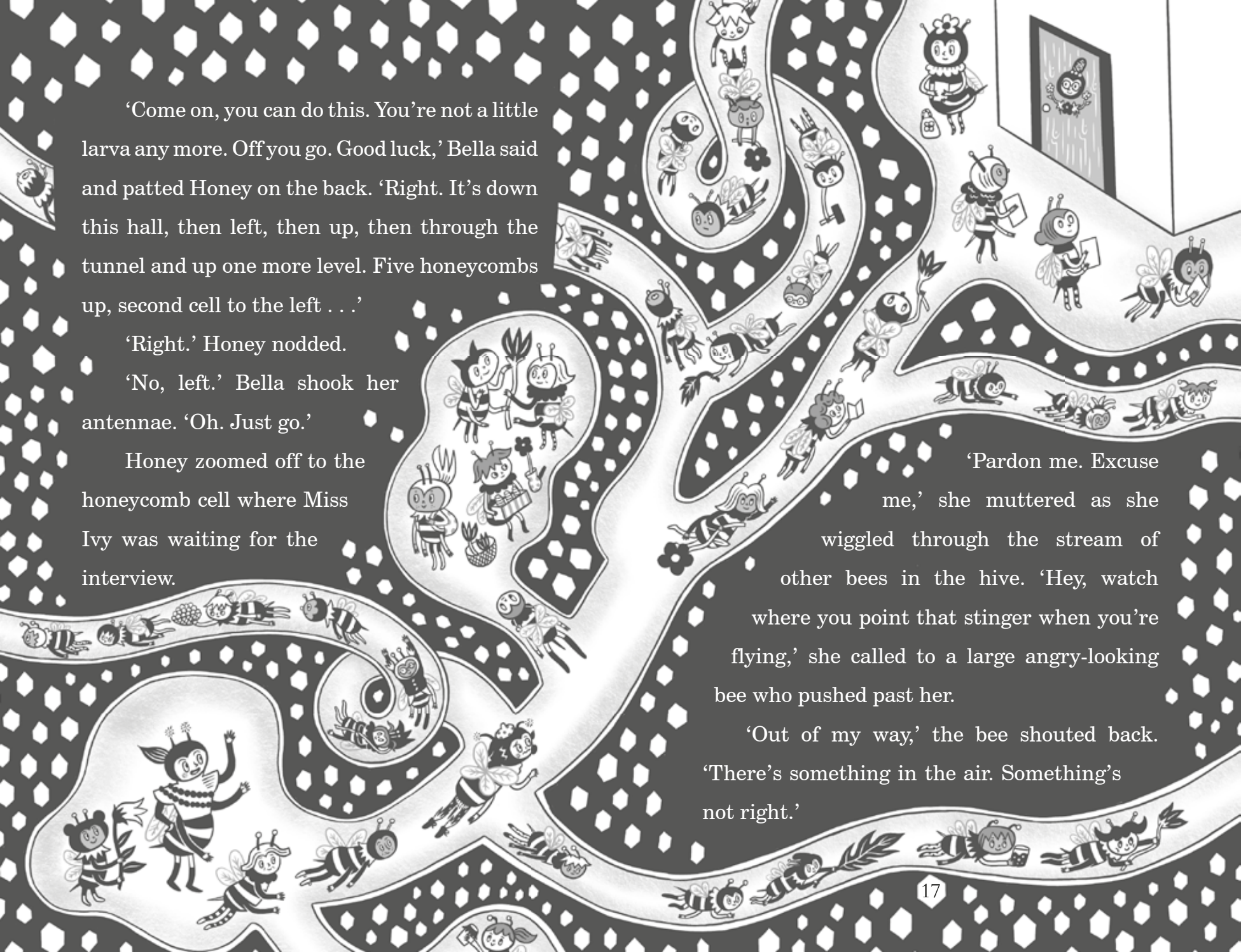
‘Yeah, you’ll be fine. Just be polite, stand up straight and look her right in her composite eyes and tell her what you want to do as a worker bee.’

‘There’s only one problem with that,’ Honey said. ‘I have NO IDEA what I want to do!’

‘Then SHE’LL tell YOU what you’re going to do,’ Bella said.

‘But what if . . .’ Honey started.





‘Come on, you can do this. You’re not a little larva any more. Off you go. Good luck,’ Bella said and patted Honey on the back. ‘Right. It’s down this hall, then left, then up, then through the tunnel and up one more level. Five honeycombs up, second cell to the left . . .’

‘Right.’ Honey nodded.

‘No, left.’ Bella shook her antennae. ‘Oh. Just go.’

Honey zoomed off to the honeycomb cell where Miss Ivy was waiting for the interview.

‘Pardon me. Excuse me,’ she muttered as she wiggled through the stream of other bees in the hive. ‘Hey, watch where you point that stinger when you’re flying,’ she called to a large angry-looking bee who pushed past her.

‘Out of my way,’ the bee shouted back. ‘There’s something in the air. Something’s not right.’

Just to let you know – this is one of those moments in books where there is a hint that something is going to happen. It's not a subtle thing that we storytellers do but it's useful and, on this occasion, it is totally correct so I might as well not hint but just come right out and tell you that something is *definitely* going to happen. (And to be honest you were expecting that anyway because nobody actually picks up a book where they hope nothing happens.) Anyway, we'll leave the fortune-telling gloomy bee for the moment and get back to Honey, who is still blissfully unaware of the events that are about to unfold.

'Wow, who stubbed her stinger this morning?' Honey mumbled to herself as she rounded the corner to Miss Ivy's cell.

When she got there, she tentatively tapped on the door. 'May I come in?'

Miss Ivy called from inside. 'Due to being late, please recite the Bee Code. Ten times before entering.'



'Not again,' Honey mumbled. Then in a louder voice she began, 'A bee must . . .'

I think we can skip this bit as you have already heard the Bee Code (important as it is). But there are a few other facts you should know about life in a beehive before we go on.

So, for those of you who haven't been in a hive before I'll buzz though the basics.

1. There are a lot of bees. Really a lot of bees. More bees than you can imagine could fit into a wooden box like this. I mean think of a number of bees and then double that and then double that and

then times it by a hundred. Between twenty and eighty THOUSAND bees can live in a single hive. Honey's hive has about twenty thousand bees. (If they were people, they would fill a stadium.)

2. Everybody is always busy. You know that phrase 'busy as a bee'. Totally 100 percent accurate.
3. The bees build a honeycomb to live in, raise larvae, make wax, gather pollen, nectar and water, and make honey. They also look after the queen.
4. There is one queen in a hive. She is the mother of all the bees in that hive. Then about ten per cent of the other bees are drones. They are the male bees who make baby bees with the Queen. Then the other ninety per cent of the population are female worker bees. The worker bees do ALL the jobs in the hive so that the queen and drones can make more bees. Got it? Sometimes another queen emerges but we'll get to that in due course.
5. The hive works as well as it does because everyone just gets on and does their job.

Sometimes, very rarely, a bee comes along who is a bit out of step with the whole 'you get a job and you do it' vibe of the hive. So, say if, for instance, a bee wants to go out and have adventures instead of taking on a regular worker job then this might be a bit of a problem for a headteacher bee to deal with.

And that brings us nicely back to Honey and where we left off.

Chapter 3

Honey droned on, '. . . *You can be your best bee.*' She paused and then called through the door. 'Is that ten times?'

'Close enough. I lost count,' Miss Ivy said. 'Come in.'

Honey fluttered through the entrance. Miss Ivy's office had glossy wax walls with images of important past bees etched onto them. Builder bees, guard bees, forager bees, and of course the Queen bee herself. Honey was literally surrounded by important bees with important bee jobs. I'm not going to lie, she found it a little intimidating.

'So, Honey, we are at the stage in our bee life where we think about the future role we will undertake to contribute to the welfare of the hive.'

Miss Ivy sometimes did that thing where she referred to a student as 'we'. Probably because the whole culture of being a bee is about working as a team, being 'we' rather than 'you' or 'me'. Or maybe it's just that Miss Ivy liked to confuse the students sitting opposite her. If that was the case, then she was certainly succeeding now.



‘WE are at the stage in OUR bee life?’ Honey said. ‘Sorry did I miss something? Oh, are you looking for a new job too, Miss Ivy?’

‘We are perfectly happy with our career,’ Miss Ivy said.

‘And we are perfectly happy being a bee student for now so maybe we can put this whole thing off for another season or two and come back to it when I know what I want to do.’ Honey started to stand up.

‘Sit,’ Miss Ivy ordered.



Honey sat.

‘What worker bee job are we . . .’ she paused, ‘are *you* thinking of, Honey?’

‘I suppose the main role of queen is already taken for a while, huh?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then what about a bee adventurer? Or bee reporter? Oh . . . or a bee astronaut would be fantastic,’ Honey said.

Miss Ivy sighed and pointed to a list of jobs etched onto one of the walls:

‘We could be a larvae nurse and look after all the little larvae when they are hatched.





‘We could be a cleaner bee and tidy up the hive and clean the cells.

‘We could be a helper for the Queen, and groom her and get her food.





‘We could be a builder bee and construct the cells in the honeycomb.

‘We could be a bee that tends the honey store.





‘We could go out and forage for pollen in flowers, nectar and water.

‘Or we could be a guard bee for the hive.’



‘None of those jobs seem to have any adventure in them,’ Honey said and she slumped down in her wax seat.

Miss Ivy ignored Honey’s comment. Well, she acted like she did anyway. She got up and looked down at Honey. ‘Then we will give you a job in the hive that we feel best suits your skills.’

‘But what if . . .’ Honey started to say.

‘You’re a young bee, so let’s try you out in the nursery looking after the larvae. We’ll see how you do.’

‘Are you sure you don’t need an astronaut bee? I really think it’s time we bees got into the space race, don’t you agree . . .’

‘You are dismissed.’

‘To infinity and beyond . . .’ Honey dramatically pointed to the sky.

Miss Ivy stared at her blankly. Then she

smiled, pointed to the door, and said, ‘To the nursery and no farther!’

Honey shrugged and headed out towards the nursery. Maybe she could make taking care of the nursery larvae an adventure.

I mean, how hard could it be? she thought.

Her friend Beanie was already in the nursery. Beanie was short but sturdy, with fluffy fuzz and bright stripes on her thorax. She would make a great larvae nurse. She was like Mary Poppins but with a stinger. Honey had always known Beanie would end up here.



‘Hey, Beanie!’ Honey waved to her friend. ‘What’s the buzz? How’s life with the larvae?’

‘Hey, Honey!’ Beanie fluttered over and the two bees tapped antennae. ‘So glad you got assigned here too!’ Beanie bounced excitedly. ‘We can be bee worker buddies! Come on, I’ll show you what to do. It’s brilliant here. I’m definitely going to choose this as my job.’



Beanie showed Honey how to measure out the next feed for the larvae and tidy up the rows and rows of larvae cells. Honey didn't think it was as brilliant as Beanie had said and she started to sing to make it more fun. 'Whistle while you work,' she sang as she cleaned up. But when she tried to actually whistle, she just kind of buzzed and blew at the same time which covered the nursery and the larvae with bee spit.

(You see bees don't have lips. And you can't whistle with just your tongue. Try it. I'll wait . . . See?)

After they had cleaned the bee spit off the poor babies, Beanie left Honey with a row of sleeping larvae and went to deal with another row that had started to wake up.





'You OK with this group?' Beanie asked.

'Of course, I got this,' Honey answered, leaning back against a larvae crib. 'How hard can it be?'

A few hours later Honey stood caked in dried larvae sick, her eyes wide with shock and larvae goo dripping from her entire body (even her antennae). '*Hard*. Really, really hard,' she mumbled to herself.