

To Ernie and Leo with lots of love.
You both know how to 'bee' a great friend.

– Mo O'Hara

To Ayame, Atsuko, and Yoko, your unwavering friendship during my most challenging moments means the world to me.

– Aya Kakeda



First published in 2024 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

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available.

ISBN 978 1 83913 329 9

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

Honey's Hive

BEE A FRIEND



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ANDERSEN PRESS





Chapter 1

Honey sat on a window ledge looking out at the garden of sunflowers below. The sun glinted off the windows of the high buildings around and warmed Honey's stripy fuzz. Her wonky antennae were twitching with excitement.

Sitting beside Honey were her friends: Hex, a tall clever honeybee who loved to design and build things; Beanie, a super-caring bee who loved looking after all the baby larvae in the hive; and Fred the flatfly (who was really a housefly, but as he lived in a block of flats, he called himself a flatfly. He liked to be precise about stuff.)

The friends were pleased to be spending some time with Honey, who seemed to be the busiest bee in the hive since she'd become the hive's scout bee. But none of them were prepared for what she was about to do next.

'Beeeee daaariiiiiiiing!' she shouted as she bounced off the windowsill onto a leaf on the tree below and then somersaulted off the leaf like it was a diving board, before landing softly but clumsily on an open sunflower beneath them. 'Ummmmffff!'



Fred looked down at Honey and then over at Hex and Beanie. ‘Does she do that a lot?’

They both nodded. ‘Yup. Come on,’ Beanie said, and they all flew to the sunflower.



‘What did you just do?’ Fred asked as he fluttered down next to her.

‘Mnnnn mmmas mmying mme mee ma smwirl,’ Honey mumbled, her face still firmly planted into the brown blossoms at the centre of the flower.

Beanie gently lifted up Honey’s head and dusted her down.

‘I was trying to be a squirrel,’ Honey repeated, clearly this time. She sat up on the flower and shook her stripy fuzz to remove the extra pollen. But her bendy antennae flicked pollen onto the others instead. ‘Ooops,’ she said. ‘Sorry.’

‘You are lacking the counterbalance of a squirrel tail,’ Hex said, tilting her head like she was doing sums inside it. ‘Bees aren’t really built to do tumbles. But we do have wings, so you could just use those.’



‘Squirrels seem to have so much fun, though,’ Honey said, standing up on the flower and brushing off her stripes. ‘We need more fun. We’re always so busy working. Busy bees.’

Let me just confirm what Honey said. Bees are indeed some of the busiest creatures in nature. In fact, a honeybee can beat her wings over 230 times per second. That’s about 200 times faster than you can flap your hands. Go on and try. I’ll wait . . . See. That’s a lot of flapping. Right, let’s get back to Honey and her friends.

‘We do have fun sometimes,’ Beanie said.

Hex giggled and nudged Beanie.

‘Oooofffff. What was that for?’ Beanie asked.

Hex winked. ‘Talking of *fun*. We need to get back to the hive soon, right?’ she whispered.

‘Oh, yes,’ Beanie said. ‘We don’t want to be late.’

‘Late for what?’ Honey asked as Hex and Beanie fidgeted and looked guiltily at each other.

‘Ummmmm,’ Hex said.

‘The *thing*,’ Fred said.

Hex nudged *him* now.

‘Oooofff. Ummmm. That thing that is really not a very important thing but . . .’

‘Miss Ivy said we had to be back for . . .’ Hex paused.

‘. . . Waggle dance practice,’ Beanie said brightly.

Honey was sure she saw Fred and Hex sigh with relief. *They’re up to something,* she thought.

‘OK, I guess we should head back then,’ Honey said. Then a cheeky smile spread across her face. ‘Or . . . we could miss practice and do some more squirrel tumbles instead?’

Hex flitted over to one side of Honey, and Beanie to the other. They gently flew her off the sunflower and into the air.

‘I love you, Honey, but I’m not getting a



detention from Miss Ivy because you're late for your own . . .' Hex started but stopped herself.

'My own *what*?'

'Waggle dance practice!!!' Beanie shouted.

'And if we're late we might miss the cake!' Fred added. 'Ooops. I wasn't supposed to mention that, was I? I just get a little overexcited when I know there is cake in the near future.'

'OK, bugs,' Honey flew back down to the flower and put all her arms on her hips. 'Spill the pollen. What's going on?'



Chapter 2

Just then Honey's no-nonsense big sister, Bella, swooped down and hovered above Honey and her friends.

'Don't spill any pollen. We need every speck of it back at the hive,' she ordered. Bella was a guard bee and took her job very seriously. 'I've come to check on you all. Miss Ivy was worried that you would be late for—'

'Waggle dance practice,' Beanie, Hex and Fred shouted together (not at all suspiciously).

Bella buzzed down and put an arm around Honey. 'Nice patch of sunflowers,' she commented, looking around. 'I'll send out the forager bees to them later.'

Just so you know, 'forager bees' are the bees whose job it is to go out and collect the pollen, nectar and water and bring it back into the hive. Every bee has their role in a hive and hard as it was for Honey to find hers for a while, she is now the hive's scout bee and very proud of it. Her job is to go and find the pollen, nectar and water in the first place.

'Hey, quiz time,' Bella said. 'Who remembers how to do a waggle dance for sunflowers?'

'Ooooh I LOVE quizzes,' Beanie squealed. She straightened up and did a very good daisy waggle dance.

'Nope,' Bella shook her antennae. 'That's for daisies.'

Fred, who liked to copy his bee friends, had a go at a waggle dance too.

'I think that's honeysuckle,' Hex said.



‘It’s the one that smelled the most like cake. That’s why it stuck in my head,’ Fred said.

Honey jumped into the centre of the sunflower. ‘Well, if it’s not this one then it should be,’ and she started a very interesting and interpretive waggle dance that was a bit like Beanie’s daisy dance but with everything much bigger. She ended it with a spinning squirrel move and a big ‘TA DA!’

Her friends clapped at the performance but looked confused.

‘Yup. You definitely need more waggle dance practice,’ Bella said. ‘Come on. Let’s head back.’

But as soon as the insect friends approached the rooftop garden, Honey could sense that something strange was happening. And I don’t mean sense as in the special way that bees can sense things with smell. This was more a general feeling like you might get if you were

heading home with friends and then suddenly someone popped their head out of your front door and you heard them say, 'They're nearly here. Quick! Get ready.'

Because that is exactly what Honey saw and heard as she flew up to the entrance of the hive.

'What's going on?' Honey asked again.



Miss Ivy, Head of the Bee School, came to the door and motioned for her to go inside.

When she got into the hive, Honey couldn't believe her composite eyes! The whole hive was decorated with flower petals, and the room was packed with bees, all taking a break from their jobs to be there. Even the Queen bee was there and she buzzed forward when Honey flew in.

‘Honey, please step up here,’ she said.

‘Hello, Your Majesty.’ Honey attempted a curtsey to the Queen.

Then she whispered to Miss Ivy, ‘Can you please tell me what’s happening? Am I in trouble?’

Miss Ivy spoke loudly. ‘Honey, as scout bee for this new hive, you have been—’

‘I know,’ Honey interrupted. ‘I’ve been squirrel-jumping on the sunflowers, but I don’t think it wasted any pollen, well, not much anyway, and it was a bit like training, and it was fun and how did you hear about it so fast? Am I in big trouble? Am I going to lose my worker bee job?’ She said this in one breath.

She sucked in some air and was about to continue when Bella put her hand on Honey’s shoulder. ‘For once, you’re not being told off. Just listen.’

Miss Ivy continued, ‘As I was saying, as scout bee for this new hive you have been exemplary in your mission.’

Honey looked over at Hex as she had no idea what *exemplary* meant. Hex mouthed, ‘*That’s really good*.’ And gave her an antenna-up sign (which is like a bee equivalent of a human thumbs up. Obviously, bees have no thumbs.)

Honey smiled. ‘Phew,’ she said.





The Queen bee then spoke. ‘So, it is our honour to present you with this petal pin as a reward for all your hard work for the hive.’ And she waved Honey forward.

Honey was speechless. And it took A LOT for Honey to be speechless. Getting a petal pin was a massive honour for any bee. And it was happening to her. Bella nudged Honey to step forward.

‘You need to actually receive the pin now,’ Bella whispered.

‘Oh yeah,’ Honey mumbled. She stepped up and did another little curtsey. The Queen stuck the petal pin onto Honey’s stripes, and everyone clapped.

‘Three cheers for Honey!’ Bella shouted.



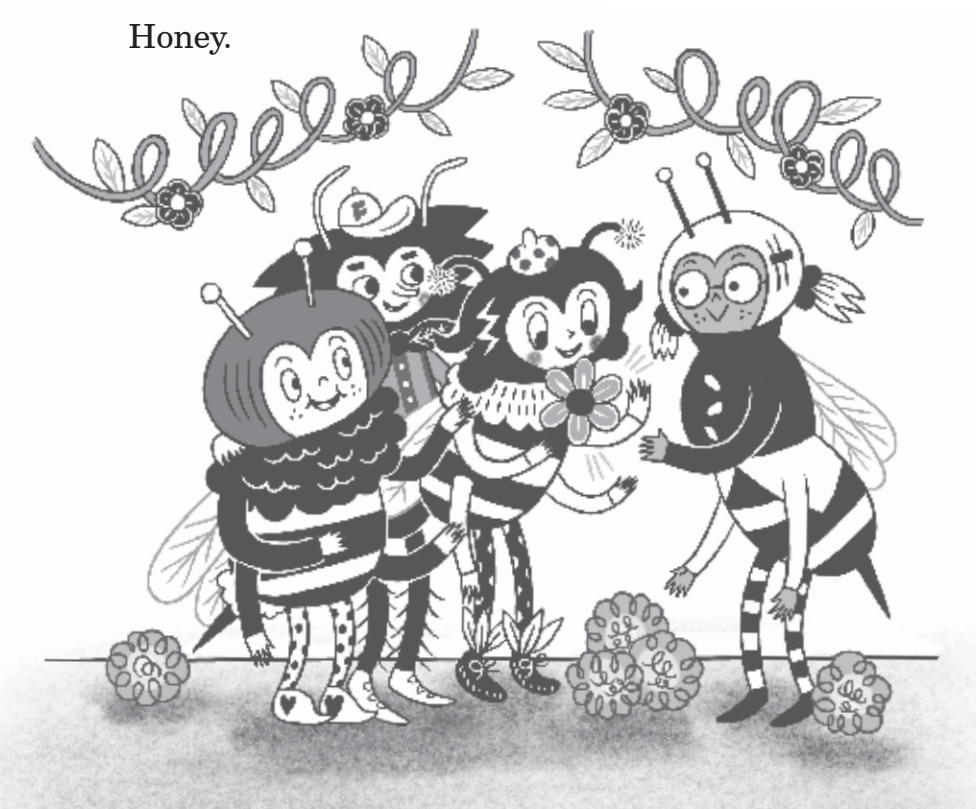

'Buzz, buzz, hooray!
Buzz, buzz, hooray!
Buzz, buzz, hooray!'

Miss Ivy grinned. ‘Thank you, everyone, you can now return to work. Busy as a bee, remember. We don’t say that for nothing.’

‘What about the cake?’ Fred asked (slightly desperately).

‘We will all have some honey cake after supper,’ Miss Ivy assured him.

The other bees all headed back to their jobs. Beanie, Hex and Fred came up to congratulate Honey.



‘I can’t believe we managed to keep the secret,’ Beanie said. ‘I’m so bad at secrets.’

‘I was the one who let slip about the cake,’ Fred added.

‘I knew something was up,’ Honey said. ‘But I never guessed it would be this. A petal pin! I’m so happy.’

‘The Queen and Miss Ivy wanted to say thank you for all the great scouting you’ve been doing. You’ve found some really good food sources lately for everyone,’ Beanie said.

‘But . . .’ Hex started to say something but stopped.

‘But what?’ Honey asked.

‘But we’ve really missed you these last few weeks. It seems like you’re always out scouting and you don’t have as much time to hang out with us,’ Hex continued. ‘I know it’s an important job, but we miss you.’

Honey's antennae tapped her friends'. 'I miss you guys too. It's just been really busy lately especially while Fred's been showing me the local area.'

'I like showing you around,' said Fred. 'I just wish there was more time for fun with friends too. And cake.'

'But I'm sure I'll have more time soon to—'

'Honey, are you going out for another scouting session this afternoon?' Miss Ivy called. 'Before cake?' she added, looking at Fred.

'I guess I gotta go,' Honey said.

'We need to get back to the larvae and the engineering block too,' Hex said.

'See you later,' Beanie called. But Honey had already flown off with Fred.