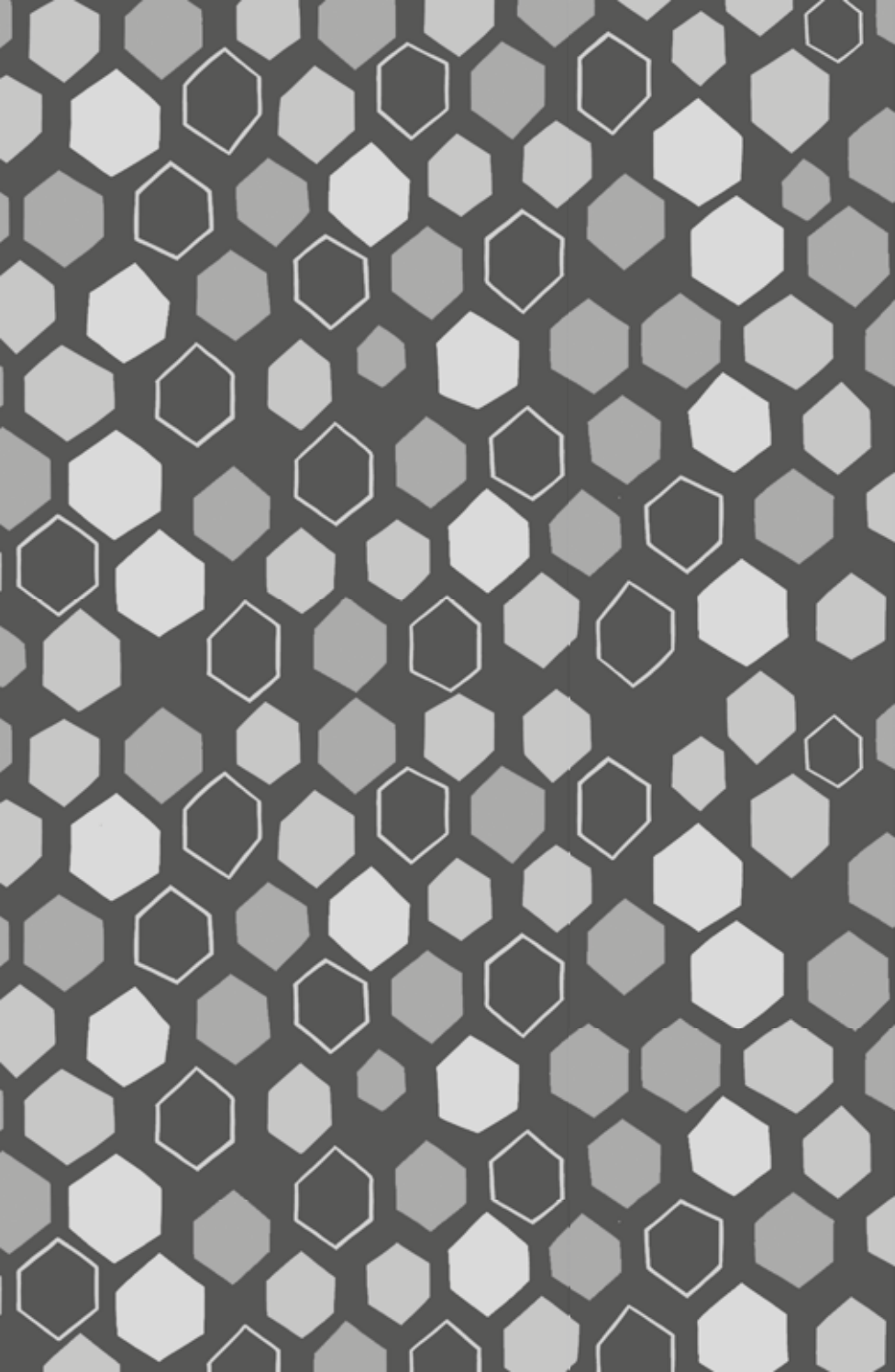


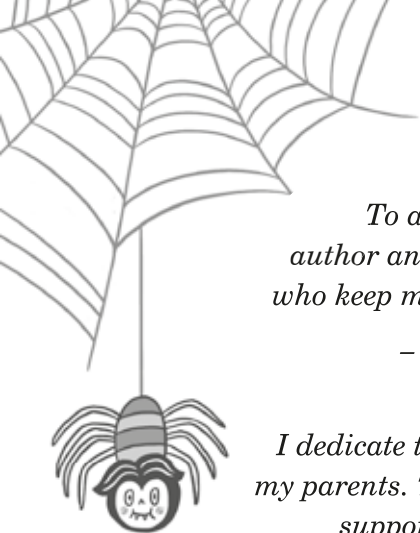
# Honey's Hive



**Mo O'Hara**

ILLUSTRATED BY  
*Aya Kakeda*





*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*



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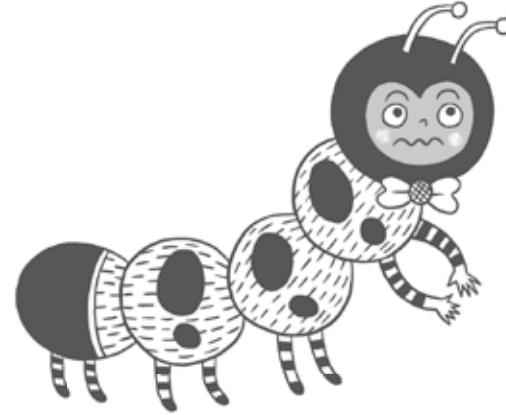
ANDERSEN PRESS



**HONEY**



**BELLA**



**BOB**



**HEX**



**BEANIE**



**FRED**



**NANA**



**MISS IVY**



**THE QUEEN**

A decorative header featuring a central illustration of a bee with striped wings and antennae, flanked by two stylized flowers with leaves. The word "Chapter" is written in a bold, sans-serif font, and the number "1" is centered below it.

# 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.

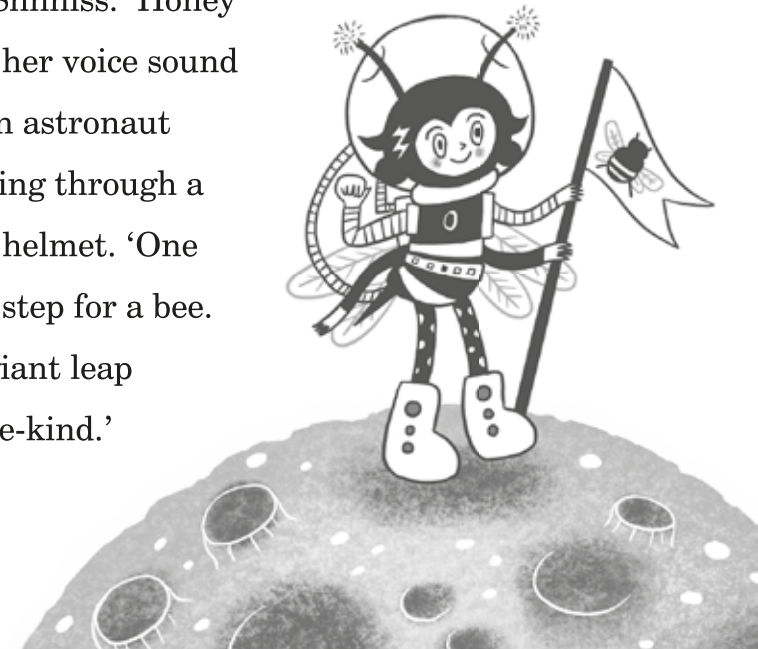
Sometimes, when Honey was supposed to be studying hive history, really she would be imagining herself as the queen of an ancient Egyptian beehive.



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.

‘Oooooof! 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?’

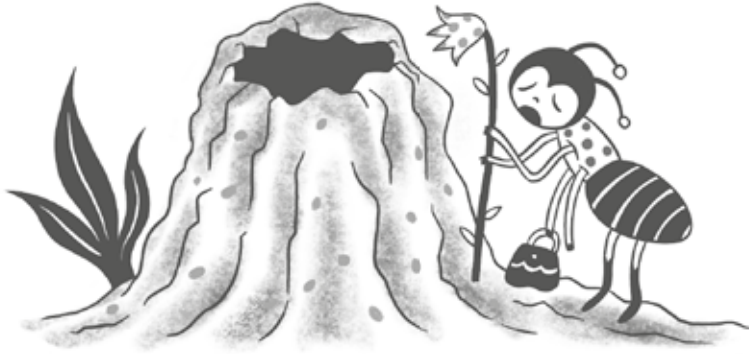
‘Oh, there’s no bird! It’s just a saying,’ Honey said.

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 booooooring. 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.

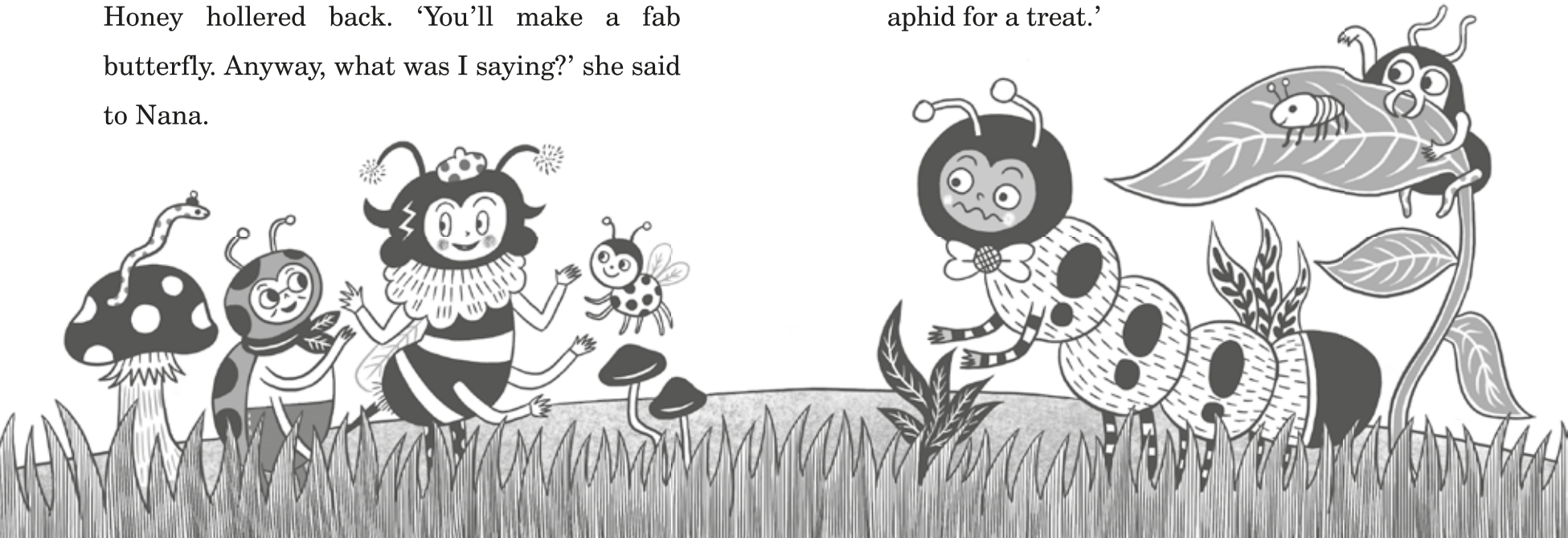
‘How boring it is to be a bee.’


‘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.’





## Chapter 2

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!'

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 . . .’

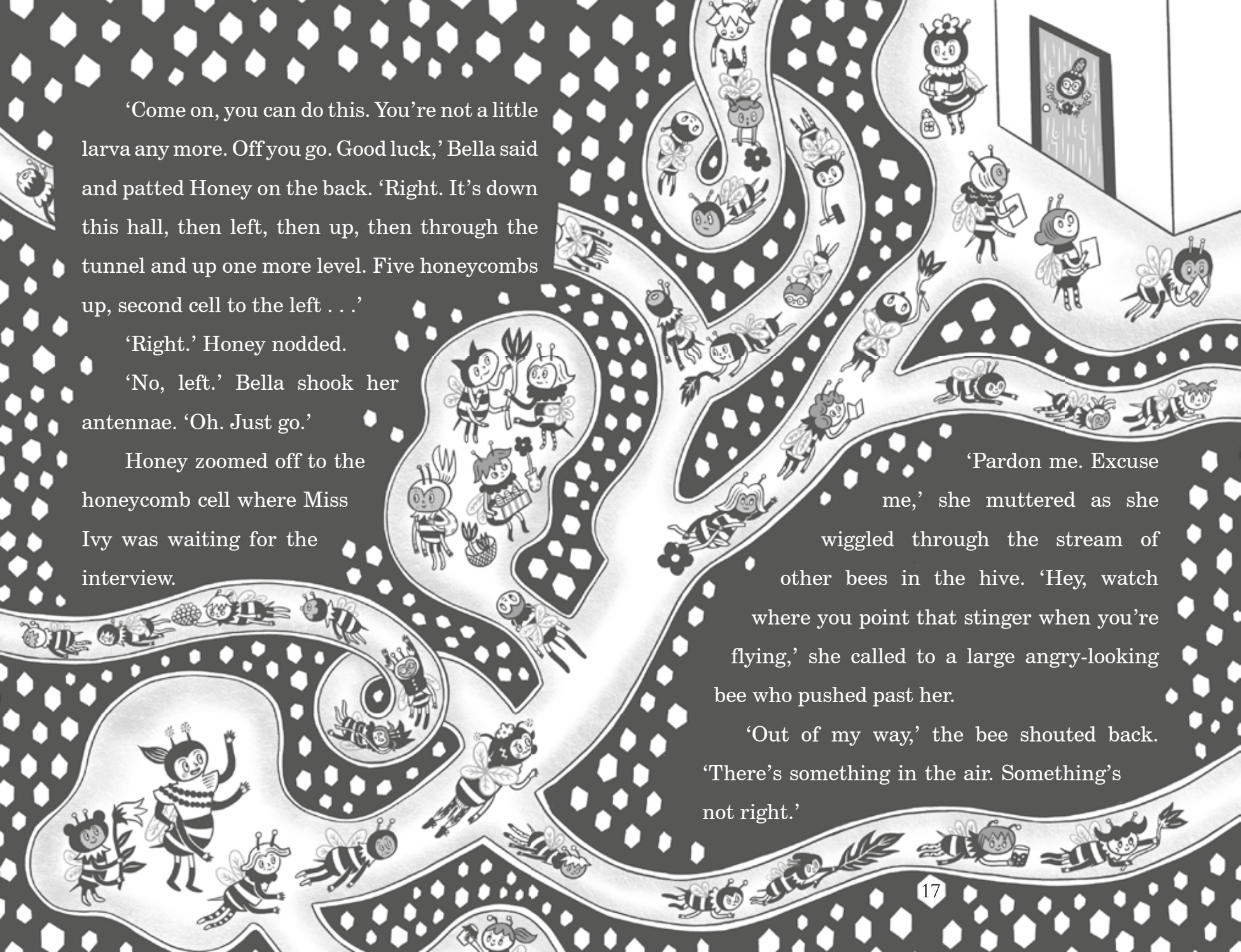
‘Right.’ Honey nodded.

‘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 through 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.