

## The Summer Dance of the Bumblebees.

Once upon a honeyed dreamscape a hive like no other came to be. Born in a time before Man or Machine, when air was clear and pure and mountain streams ran cold and sweet, HomeHive witnessed the infant Earth's growing pains. In the time of Eros, perhaps to see the God of Love anoint his arrow tips with honey to fill a heart with sweet love. Hidden within Marble Mountain, its plateau was a carpet of sweet flowers – Primrose, Peony, Anemone, Violet, Narcissus and Hyacinth. Between the flowers and the scattered rocks young fragrant herbs flourished – Rigani, Marjoram, Anithos, Fennel, Mint, Dendrolivano, Sideritis, Sage, Chamomile, Thyme, Parsley, Bassilikos. These were more than mere names to bees - they were the individual, distinctive and signature essences of the honey they would feed upon and fill their honeycombs to bursting.

Marble Mountain, surrounded and protected by tall pinnacles of basalt rock, loomed high above the eagles which circled beneath its plateau. White clouds rolled upon and over the plateau, shrouding venerable Cypress, Poplar and Pine which were as blades of grass around its feet, the mist dissipating on contact with the sea of deepest blue surrounding the island. The tiniest hole in the side of Marble Mountain, high beneath the plateau edge, provided a refuge for two scouting bees, evading the voracious beak of a scaly bird intent on a feast. Vanguard for a Queen and her retinue, they sought a safe cool place in which to build a new home of golden honeycomb. The bees crept inside, their wings scraping the roof of the tunnel, sensing cool draughts of air up ahead. At the end of the winding passage, they discovered a chamber big enough to welcome the colony and beyond that, larger spaces in which muffled cocoons in honeycomb galleries could form. One bee remained behind to explore the galleries whilst the other returned to request the presence of the Queen. Upon their arrival the workers, fuelled by sweet vital honey, set immediately to work secreting beeswax scales to heat, knead and thin into circular shapes which upon turning opaque became hexagonal honeycomb cells. Their natural body heat was the primary tool which turned the beeswax semi-molten, flowing freely and smoothly like an elasticised liquid. Sculptors possessed of exquisite skills, they pulled and moulded the circular cells into golden brood cells and Royal Chambers at the junctions where hexagons met.

As ages passed, spring rain after spring rain fell, coursing unstoppably through rock channels, dissolving sandstone, leaving in its wake large galleries of fine, strong marble tracery; lacey, graceful and elegant. HomeHive grew and grew in size and magnificence.

Countless generations of bees came and went, as did many daughter Queens to found new hives far and wide over the ancient lands. Over thousands of years HomeHive filled with the fragrant scent of flower-herb honey and hummed with the sound of harmonious industry as every bee, serving the court of the Grand Queen, diligently carried out their individual roles. Cell cleaning, brood rearing, nectar gathering, comb building, entrance guarding, swarming, heating, cooling and honey production. Throughout the galleries echoed the hubbub of the hive, bumblebees chattering in high tone beeps and dances.

So much did the bees love to dance that to mark the tenth millennium of HomeHive, the Queen announced a celebration. More than a party - a Grand Ball – The Summer Dance of the Bumblebees. It would take place in the grandest hall of HomeHive, big enough for all, Queen, drones and workers, to attend.

In joyful anticipation, and to ensure they presented their best face in the treasured and exalted presence of the Queen, the bees gleefully groomed their yellow and black fur with an occasional excited tantrum disturbing the harmony of HomeHive. The bees already knew many dances which upon an ordinary day they employed to communicate. The Ball was a chance for extravagance, not only in the brightest yellow-black stripes, but in the agile dance steps rarely displayed. Fuelled by the very honey which they have created from the sweet nectar flowers around the golden island the bees began in modest style with a sharp and formalised angularity familiar in the structure of the honeycomb. But they are buzzing and afore-long the dynamism built until individual bees as ballerinos, danseurs and ballerinas perform their virtuoso turns. Short pointe steps, pirouettes, petite batteries and rondes de jambe are the expression of bumblebee joy unbounded. More and more bumblebees came forward to take their places upon the marble floor, beneath the glowing worms and glittering crystals which, as they cling to the grotto walls, bring phantasmagorical incandescence to the celebration. These are the moments of the Minuet and Contre-dance; dances fit for any Royal Court. The Bumblebee Minuet is flirtatious - a complex weave of delicate baroque dance steps and patterns with bees touching limbs, turning, spinning and finally linking their legs. In Contre-dance, up and down they danced, bee side by side with bee, dancing to bumbles in the parallel lines as they progress.

There is no light sense in this place – instinct and preternatural senses tell the bees when sun has risen, and work must recommence. Until then, in this primal Home of Homes, Hive of Hives, home sweet home for a million bees, none think of work – only of another ten millennia within the honey lined safety of HomeHive, seeding the world with bee colonies far and wide.

Flowers and Bumbles, flora and fauna, giant rainbows spinning in the deep blackness of space, nature in eternal harmony.