

## Hotel Buzzing

by MaryPat Campbell

I have a bee hotel in my garden. It looks like a bird's nesting box but instead of just a small hole in the middle for birds to fly in, it has lots of bamboo pieces, twigs and a wire mesh with holes so bees can fly in and out. I had never seen a bee fly in or out, ever. The hotel hangs from the Smoke Tree in my garden. It looks empty most of the time. No one at home. I feel lonely to see it there, all silent and still. When I got it first I thought it was a great idea, a place where bees could rest, on their way to and from their hives and their busy buzzing lives. Then I thought it was a silly idea, just people wanting to sell something to make you believe bees would come and check in for B and B and rest up for a day or two carrying their heavy bags of nectar, and other goodies.

Last Sunday I wrapped myself up warm and sat in the garden, kept my eyes peeled. Half an hour went by, nothing. Another ten minutes, still nothing. I was getting cold and thinking of going back inside where it was warm, when I heard a loud buzzing sound above me. I looked up and saw a line of about twenty bees all flying towards the hotel. They all buzzed in, one by one. I couldn't believe it...

Where had they come from? What were they doing? I was so pleased they had chosen my hotel in my garden.

The last two bees in the line turned round, just as they got to the many different doors of the hotel. They wheeled round, and buzzed straight towards me. They landed on the arm of our wooden bench where I was sitting, under the dark green bush with the red berries.

"We're very pleased to see you here," the first bee said warmly. This bee was big and hairy, with black legs and a golden furry body. I was so surprised, I couldn't say anything in reply.

The second bee, a she or a he, it's hard to tell the difference with bees, continued, "Would you like to join us?"

Of course I would! But still I couldn't think how to reply. I opened my mouth not knowing what I could say, and out came some loud buzzing sounds. The sounds I made seemed to make sense, at least to the two friendly bees I had just met.

"That's great!" said the first bee, "follow us."



And so I did. They buzzed louder and lifted themselves off the wooden bench and flew towards the hotel. I don't know how I knew to do this, but I stood up, spread my wings, knocked over my cup of tea, and flew after them into the bee hotel. Inside the hotel, the decoration was all in primrose and orange yellows, deep browns and shining golds. Very luxurious. There were sofas with lots of cushions piled up, and soft woolly blankets. There were tables, with hot drinks and jars of honey on them. The lighting was subdued and soft, and made me think of warm winter evenings by the fire.

All around I could hear a low murmur, mostly buzzing purring sounds. Like the low murmur of lots of people in a posh Mayfair hotel chatting, drinking tea and eating cakes, sheltering from the cold wet weather outside. All grown-ups were once children ... but only a few of them can remember it. I think I must be one of the few.

Or maybe not, I came back into the house later on, feeling drunk with honey and surprise and happiness, to tell my grandmother what had happened. I didn't expect her to believe me. To my astonishment, she not only believed me, she told me the story of when she had been invited, like me, to join the bees one cold winter afternoon last year. Her story was very like mine, except she had been invited back to join them next Sunday.

"Maybe next time you and I will go together," she said.