

## False Advertising

Dewdrop dusted a few flecks of pollen from the shoulder of the mannequin in the window. “I don’t get it.” She fluttered to the door and pulled it open, just to make sure it wasn’t locked. Outside, the forest looked like it always did this time of year. Autumn’s fairies had finished painting the leaves, and already Frost had her crew hard at work decorating the water at the edges of the pond. And still no customers. It just didn’t make sense. “The Queen’s ball is this Saturday, right?”

“Mmm Hmm,” Buttercup hummed from behind the dress she was finishing. She pulled the last straight pin from her mouth, pinched a bit of lace to the cuff of the lowest right arm, and worked it into the fabric. “Same time every year.” But then her golden wings sagged. “It does seem slow, though, huh?”

“Slow? It’s dead.” Dewdrop’s wings flicked. “We should have sold half our inventory by now.” But she hadn’t sold anything in days. Stepping back inside, she pushed the door closed and pressed her palm against the wood with a sigh. It was her idea to expand. And it wasn’t without risk.

Marigold, the Director of Seasonal Affairs, had been trying to shut down her shop. Even when she first went to the Queen to get permission, Marigold was there. “I need all my fairies,” She argued. “Dewdrop’s just trying to get out of work...the lazy bones.”

Dewdrop groaned. Her hand slid down the door. It was partially true. She hated the mundane work of planting seeds, painting blossoms, filling in on Autumn’s crew... and then

what she hated most. Snowflake duty. Just thinking about cutting each snowflake by hand sent a shiver down her back. But that was a fairy's duty. To keep nature running.

And it would have been her life too. If she hadn't bumped into Ms. Bumble a few springs back, resting her wings and complaining about how unnecessary all this buzzing around was, and how just a few simple things could lessen the work and increase honey production ten times over.

And it was that idea Dewdrop took before the Queen.

"You have my blessing," The Queen answered. "So long as your shop remains an asset and not a drain."

Dewdrop smiled as she turned away from the door, her eyes drinking in the shelves of pollen scoops, bags, and honey jars...all Ms. Bumble's designs. And the honey harvest had increased, beyond Ms. Bumble's predictions. And the bees kept coming. So many, Dewdrop couldn't keep up with demand. She needed more hands.

She needed help.

Asking Marigold wasn't fun. She did not want to give up another fairy. But, in the end even she had to admit the extra honey they received was worth the loss, and grudgingly sent Buttercup to help her run the shop.

But a clothing line? That was another matter.

Marigold went mad when she found out. "Party clothes? For Bees?" She shouted, her butterfly wings almost buzzed she was so mad. "You're supposed to be helping them make more

honey. This is nonsense.” She stomped and snarled, “If you have time to make clothes, you don’t need any of my workers.”

It took forever to calm Marigold down. “Trees sleep all winter, the flowers, bears,” Dewdrop argued. “And the bees have been working super hard too. They deserve a thank you for all that extra honey. Besides, it’s only once a year.”

At last Marigold’s wings slowed to a steady, contemplative pulse. “I... see,” she whispered, tapping a finger against her chin. But it’s what she said next that Dewdrop still couldn’t believe. “Do you need me to help?”

“What? I mean, yes,” Dewdrop stammered, glancing down at the bucket and brush in her hands. “I still need to put up a sign, and finish the last-”

“I’ll paint the sign,” Marigold snatched the brush from Dewdrop’s hand without warning. “What should I write?”

Stunned, Dewdrop blinked. It needed to be simple. Bees didn’t have much patience for reading. Best keep it to two words. “Bee Wear,” she mumbled. “One letter on each tree.”

“Beware.” Marigold smirked. “Leave it to me.”

“Bee wear...” Dewdrop’s wings flicked as the memory faded. She seemed so happy to do it. Which was weird, Marigold never offered to help before. All she did was complain about being understaffed.

She was up to something.

“Be right back, Buttercup.” Dewdrop called as she marched to the door. “I need to check the sign.”