



*Newton Park's
Twisted Tales -*

*Barry The
Berry Bee*



Barry The Berry Bee

Hello there, my name is Ben. To be honest, I'm finding our new change of direction and way of life a little difficult to get to grips with. I know we've started something extremely exciting, but I miss the old ways. Things were much simpler back then, when we had one job and one purpose. Now our hive is split into two and it's confusing. We're not in competition or fighting a war if that's what you think. In fact, it's quite the opposite. We've never been so together or so productive, we're producing more honey than we've ever done. There's plenty for the humans and the man leaves us with more than enough for ourselves, it's the perfect balance. I think it all boils down to the fact I'm just not that great with change. I'm nothing at all like my best friend, Barry. In truth, this whole new way of life began with Barry and his need to find a new alternative to honey.

I'm sorry, I know I'm going on a bit. I know you never actually asked about me and how I feel about life, you wanted to know how we became such a successful colony. It was all to do with Barry and his adventure to save himself from death. Everyone knew he hated honey, it was the weirdest thing. No one could believe it, a bee who hated honey? Totally absurd.

The story started a year or so ago. It was the start of spring and all the flowers were beginning to bloom. The enchanting colours and sweet aromas are just heavenly for busy bumble bees like us. The sun was shining, the birds chirping happily from the branches above us. The plants would dance slowly in the cool breeze, it was an absolute pleasure to be out buzzing around on days like this. Not for Barry though, he would just sit in the hive sulking about how much the golden nectar disgusted him.

So every morning, the rest of us would all venture out into the bright, colourful gardens following the sweet scent of our precious pollen and nectar. Every single plant produces these tiny treasures and our mission is to collect as much as we can, fly it back to the hive and turn that nectar into honey.

Every day we'd work so incredibly hard to create as much honey as we could, it is really hard graft, but incredibly rewarding. There's no better way to end a hard day of gathering goods, than to sit with friends sipping down sweet, sugary honey, pure bliss!

We're a great team, but we could be better. Any team is only as good as the sum of its parts and we couldn't really afford to carry a single bee. Unfortunately, everyday that's exactly what we were doing. Barry refused to go out gathering with the rest of us and there was tremendous resentment towards him from the entire colony. He was my best friend and I felt incredibly sorry for him. As it turned out, something in the honey made him dreadfully sick. I personally think he was allergic to it, the merest touch would make him swell up and he'd struggle to breathe.

The rest of the bees weren't as sympathetic as me and after another tough day out in the garden foraging for nectar, the colony were enraged. Their patience had run out with Barry and they stormed en masse into his living sector with armfuls of the sweet, golden nectar. They didn't believe he was sick, they actually thought he was lazy and they'd finally had enough of his excuses. They barged in to find Barry sobbing in the corner. He desperately wanted to fit in, but he just couldn't be like the rest of us and it made him sad. The bees didn't care, they held him down and forced honey down his throat. To be more accurate, they poured it all over the poor, defenceless bee. Barry tried to fight it, but he never ate anything, so he was really quite a weak, feeble little bee. The colony laughed mockingly as they left poor Barry in a pool of sticky honey, fighting for his life.

Barry couldn't move, he was stuck to the floor and frozen with fear. He could feel his whole body swelling up and there was nothing he could do. His windpipe closed up as the allergy took hold and he could barely breathe. It was at that point I took pity on him, I quickly flew into the room, lifted Barry up and took him outside. I hoped and prayed the fresh air might clear his airways.

I stood by him and watched, I had done all I could. Eventually the swelling went down and his breathing returned to normal. I felt terrible, I knew poor little Barry couldn't do anything to change his plight and I wanted to help him.

Barry solemnly looked up at me, he had so little energy left in his little body. He said slowly, "Thank you, Ben. I'm sorry for everything, I really want to be a normal bee and buzz about with my friends. Honey just makes me so ill, I feel so close to dying whenever I'm near it." He looked so glum again, then continued, "Maybe you'd all be better off if I was dead. A bee that can't touch or eat honey is going to die soon enough. I'm so hungry, chances are I'll starve to death before too long anyway."

Then I said something that I both regret and remember with great affection. "Maybe you should leave. Go and find a different way, something you can eat. Look out into the garden or the next garden, among all that life and nature there must be something that you can eat."

For once I saw Barry smile, but that soon changed when the queen bee appeared. "Barry," she squealed. "I've had enough of your laziness and your hatred of honey. You're a disgrace to the hive, a bee who can't be around honey is absolutely useless to me. I officially banish you from this place, until such a time as you learn to be a team player. Now go, get out of my sight, you disgust me."

Before I could say anything Barry was gone. Although I could hear his sobbing as he flew away and I felt a great sense of shame. Looking back, I really should have done more, but I could never go against my queen. Tradition is everything to us, our queen must be obeyed and we must produce honey, they are the two simple rules we live our lives by.

Being a busy bee, there's never much time to dwell on things for too long. Life just goes on. The next morning I was out buzzing about, picking up nectar and making a tonne of honey. When the day was done, I would meet with my friends as usual. We'd enjoy the fruits of our labour and then the man would come to collect his share of the honey.

At the end of every successful day, we would all go to sleep and get some much needed rest. Then early the very next day our routine would start all over again. Days went by, then weeks and still there was no sign of Barry. In my rare quiet times, I'd often think about him and regret not doing more to help my poor, sick friend. I desperately hoped he was doing OK.

The hive was happy and productive, the queen was content, the man was making a good weekly profit, everything was perfectly fine. However, I was full of remorse and was getting more and more concerned about Barry, although I knew I was the only one.

Every passing day was identical, until one day the whole hive was awoken by an ear piercing scream. It was our queen. As all good bees should, we rushed to her and there she was, standing by the stores of honey. Her face was horrified and I could sense her rage building. Next to her stood a very familiar bee. Barry had returned, but he looked very different. Unlike the rest of us, with our yellow and black stripes, he had somehow developed dark purple and black stripes. Something incredibly bizarre had happened. The colony were all outraged, as it appeared all our honey had been ruined and all our hard work had gone to waste. Our usual golden, yellow stores of honey had turned a strange shade of purple.

"What have you done?" the queen yelled.

"Don't be afraid," Barry said with great confidence. "I've invented a new product, I call it honey-jam. When I was banished, I flew into the next garden. I was sad, so very sad and couldn't see where I was flying through the tears in my eyes. By accident I flew straight into a bush. I fell, I kept falling and eventually landed with a splat. However, it wasn't the floor, I'd landed in something soft, sweet and sticky. I licked my legs clean and the juice was divine, the most amazing thing I've ever tasted. I lived happily in that bush for months, feeding on the beautiful berries. I grew stronger and changed colour, but after a while I got lonely. I wanted to share my new discovery with my friends, so I hatched a plan. I thought, if I mixed my berries with your honey we could create a new taste sensation and I was right. Go on, just taste it."

We all looked at each other in bewilderment, then cautiously took it in turns to taste the honey-jam and most of us agreed it was good, but the queen wasn't so sure.

Her and her closest followers really didn't like to change our ancient traditions. "We are bees and we make honey, that's the way it's always been and always will be. The man expects honey and he's going to be so cross that we've got nothing to give him. He might even get rid of us forever!"

Barry laughed, "Don't panic, he'll love it, I know he will."

Later that day the man came to collect and he reacted in a way they didn't expect. At first he was confused by the purple honey-jam, so he tasted a bit that was stuck to his hand. He thought for a moment then beamed with delight, "You clever, clever little bees, this is just right! My customers were asking for a new kind of honey, now this stuff will make me a whole lot of money."

The man collected the honey-jam and skipped away with joy, while all the bees turned to stare at Barry. The queen then smiled and patted Barry on the back. She spoke softly, "We were lucky this time, though this is no place for change. However, it appears the man likes our new fruity range. I guess change can be scary, but embrace it we should, for changes will happen and change can be good."

So, that brings us up to where we are today. Barry slotted back into the hive and he is treated exactly the same as everyone else. He seems so much happier, he even leads his own team of berry bees out everyday to collect the fruity juice for our world famous honey-jam.

In fact, the whole hive is busier than ever. Half of us produce traditional honey and the other half manufacture Barry's honey-jam. It's just so much more work, but I guess I shouldn't really complain, after all I did tell Barry to go away and find something he can eat. I suppose in many ways I'm as responsible as Barry for our new way of life.

Don't get me wrong, I'm obviously delighted I've got my friend back and that he's no longer in pain. Maybe I just need to be a bit more like Barry. I suppose, change can be a bit like the wind sometimes, fighting against it can be tiring and sometimes impossible, but flying with it can get us to our destination a whole lot quicker.

Thanks for listening, I hope I've helped and you've got all that you needed. I know I feel much more positive about the future now, whatever it may bring.

The End