

# Queen Bee, Part 1

By Daniel Arthur copyright 2008

The silence of the cave slowly fills with an undulating hum. In the darkness, the sonic scans of the bats and ants soon agree it's a lone drone, the first to arrive for the annual festival of their Queen, the Spelling Bee. The alarm is sounded. Spring is outside and about to come in. Time to ready the rooms for tourist season.

There is nothing more annoying to the ant employees than having a hotel buzzing with worker bees, each of whom knows secret words, which the others have never heard and will be unable to spell. Especially since the bees speak a different language than the ants, one that is pronounced differently and filled with silent letters.

Aya is one of five Sun Ants in charge of the help, hired from dozens of colonies in the area. This has gone smoothly for many years with the Konsun Ants, but less educated ants have been coming from Iknor, looking for work. They wander around bored, creating long lines, traffic jams, conflict and noise. They are not unlike the Guests in that regard, so Enga, one of the Bat Managers who oversees the hotel complex from the roof of the cave, has decided to solve the problem by creating new jobs for them.

The Konsun Ants were initially disgruntled over the fact that someone

could be hired for acting as stupidly as the Guests. But when it was pointed out that this would create more work for Konsun Ants, who would be hired to undo what the others had done, they considered the situation quite beneficial. The strategy is now viewed as an ingenious economic plan of perpetual motion and balance, passing the cost on to the wealthy wayfarers.

Enga's new Tourist Training Plan calls for the Ants of Iknor to be hired to simulate Guests preparing for the Spellings. This will help them to better understand bee behavior and language, while also introducing them to the wisdom and ways of the Sun Ants and Konsun Ants. Aya is looking forward to sharing her years of linguistic expertise in this new educational initiative. She walks through the crowd, dressed in her mock Queen attire, smiling and shaking hands, stopping to help an ant here and there to zip up or straighten out their new black and yellow uniforms. The cave begins buzzing in anticipation of the bigger buzz.

"Bzzz, bzzz, bzzz," a young Iknor Ant says to Aya on her way by.

"Spell Zappamuzikritium," Aya replies, causing several Iknors within earshot to drop their jaws, bug out their eyes and stare at each other in bewilderment. "Try Frankopunosity," she says to another. Then, turning to the Konsuns, she asks, "Konyadigit?"

Wes, one of the three Wizards of mixed heritage, part Kon, part

Sun, displays a cheesy grin and replies “Sheik Yerbouti.”

The Suns raise their brows, the Kons bite their lips, the Wizkons break out in spontaneous laughter, and the Iknors, a dull glaze forming over their eyes, mouths wide open, dressed in black and yellow Bee costumes, wonder what strange ordeal awaits them.