

BELLA AND THE BALLOON

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors College of
Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

Brianna McDonald
Melissa Black

San Marcos, Texas
December 2018

BELLA AND THE BALLOON

by

Brianna McDonald
Melissa Black

Thesis Supervisor:

Shaunna Smith, Ed.D.
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Approved:

Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D.
Dean, Honors College Abstract

Abstract

Through a collaborative project, Melissa Black and I were able to combine narrative with imagery to create a successful children's book. The story takes readers on a journey with 'Bella the bear', and how she starts her own business selling honey in order to achieve her dreams of flight. Throughout the book, young readers are introduced to basic business principles for the first time. While going through the illustration process for the first time, I had to combine my artistic style with a formatting that can be effective to a younger audience. Through the illustrative process I created colorful and relatable imagery that captures the reader's attention. By keeping a strong sense of unity throughout the piece with color, form, and style I was able to create successful mass imaging that compliments the narrative successfully. By doing research into how I can make my art impactful to a younger audience, we created a successful product that can influence a child for life.

Illustrator's Note

Art is a way of communicating feeling or a message to an audience of your choosing. An artist will tailor their work to reach a target audience, whether it be working class individuals, females, Latin Americans, etc. The same concept comes into play during the creation of a children's book. In the same way that art is only as effective to an audience as they are receptive to it, a children's book can only be as effective as how children respond to the images and story as a whole. Creating art for children involves the artist putting themselves within a younger mindset to create effective imagery for people who lack certain experiences and references that an adult audience typically takes for granted. The art that goes into creating an effective children's book is essential in child development as a whole. Through the two-part system of words aided with imagery, children are able to learn new concepts conveyed through text that become understandable and memorable through the use of creative illustrations (Salisbury 2012).

When I was approached about creating the art for a children's book my friend was writing, I was eager to take on this new experience. As a studio artist, my art is typically created one piece at a time, and is geared towards what will be effective within gallery spaces. I have never had the opportunity to create art for a commercial product, such as a book, and go through the experience of mass imaging that takes place within a children's book. In order for the story to be conveyed wholly, I had to combine character, style, color, and form that was cohesive throughout each individual image. Additionally, I was grateful for the opportunity to create art for an audience that is not usually my own. Typically, my art caters towards a young adult crowd, because that is how I feel my

messages will be best received. It was an enlightening experience to step outside of my own box in order to create for an audience that I do not directly relate to.

Through the imaginative story of a bear selling honey in order to achieve her goals of flying, the narrative introduces basic business principles through a platform that's easily understandable to children. In order to create illustrations that were as effective as possible I did some research into what exactly makes children's illustrations successful as a whole. I found that the best way to start this process is by identifying the type of children's book the story is meant to take. Essentially there are two types of children's books. Type one is a self-reader, defined by a short story, easily understandable vocabulary, and is conveying simple principles that children have likely been exposed to before on some level. Type two is the traditional oratory style, defined by lengthier plotline, bigger concepts, and increasingly difficult vocabulary (Salisbury 2012). After studying the story, I decided it was meant for traditional oratory, otherwise known as type two, because the book is introducing business concepts that children most likely have no experience with. The book is also written with the vocabulary and length that requires about one paragraph of text per page, which is too much to be placed in the self-reader category.

Additionally, I also found that a key factor in how receptive kids are to new concepts in books comes directly from the interplay of words and image. Research shows that children are more responsive to books that have specific words that go with one image on a singular page (Flack 2018). Rather than having words and images spread across multiple pages, a child is able to better understand concepts when they are focusing on one image and page at a time. Putting these concepts together we were able

to create an effective style for the book that led to decisions such as having large and colorful images with separated text. The text is too long to have spread across the image, and by separating the words it becomes easily readable for the oratory nature of the book. This then led to the decision to have washy edges bordering the illustrations, so the images are separate but still meld onto the page and feel cohesive with the words provided. Additionally, I chose a classic serif font for the words, because it matches the traditional style the book was aiming towards.

After deciding on a style, each decision compounded on itself, and many small choices combined to create the final product. Words placed with illustrations to match style and meaning, come together in order to generate a successful book. Without the cohesion of word and picture, the book would not be effective. Through this experience I have learned the time and effort it takes to go through the illustrative process, and am now confident in my ability to create a book that is beneficial for my audience. It's about much more than creating a nice picture to look at, but about expanding a message that can be impactful on a child for life.

References

- Flack, Zoe M., and Jessica S. Horst. "Two Sides to Every Story: Children Learn Better from One Storybook Page at a Time." *Infant and Child Development*, vol. 27, no. 1, Jan. 2018.
- Salisbury, Martin, and Morag Styles. *Children's Picturebooks: The Art of Visual Storytelling*. Laurence King Publishing, 2012.

Process

There is no clear cut formula or mapped out instructions on how to illustrate a book. Every illustrator takes on their own process depending on what is best and most comfortable for reaching their desired end goal. When starting my own process, I researched many different illustrative methods and combined different elements to achieve my end product. It was extremely important along the way to keep the development fluid and adaptable to problems I faced. By keeping the process flexible, the book transformed into a fully developed work that is entirely different than what I had originally planned.

I started my process by reading through the text, and then blocking out the story into segments that would go on each individual page. Keeping in mind how the pages will work and flow together. Once I had the text for each individual page, I went to different bookstores and looked for artistic inspiration and styles that I could use. I was particularly drawn to the more simplistic books that were softer and stood out from the highly saturated, digitized work of most children's books today.

I then started creating drafts and thumbnails for characters. I wanted each character to be easily identifiable and have one article of clothing that was unique specifically to them. After creating the characters, I then created rough drafts and thumbnails of what I would like to be on each page of the book.

Thumbnail examples:



Next I started experimenting with different mediums that I can use to color and finalize the images. At first I started working with pastels, but I soon realized that the pastels were not going to give me the smooth and finished look I wanted for the final product. I finally decided on using watercolors as a way to achieve the soft and minimal effect that initially inspired me. With the watercolor thumbnails I experimented with inking and without inking. For the final illustrations I decided to do backgrounds without

ink, but add ink to main characters and important objects of the page, allowing them to truly stand out.

Watercolor Thumbnail Examples:



After completing each illustration large-scale, I then had to scan each image. I edited the final scans in Photoshop, changing coloring and borders until achieving the completed book.

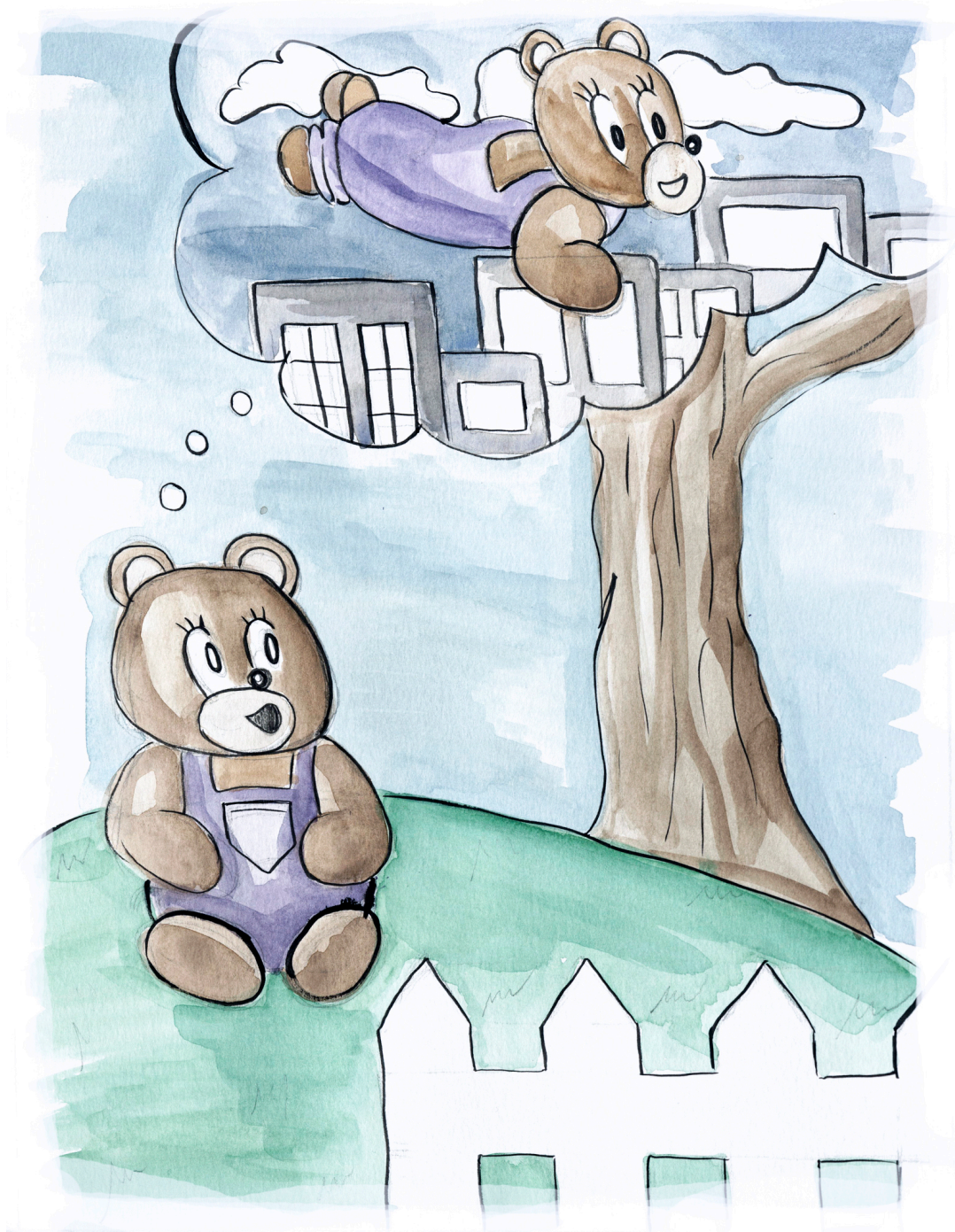
Bella and the Balloon

Author: Melissa Black

Illustrator: Brianna McDonald



It seemed like it would be a normal day in Cherrywood City. The sun was shining, the birds were chirping, and Bella was in her yard on Maple Lane. She lay with her back in the freshly cut grass, gazing up towards where all the butterflies were dancing in the air.



With brightly colored wings and their lighthearted twirling, Bella found herself wishing she were one of them. Oh, what the ability to fly must be like, the chance to float above the buildings and trees without the fear of falling. Knowing that she could go as high as she wanted to, and that the ground would always be waiting for her. She glanced down at her paws and fur, her hopes instantly grounded. Teddy bears don't fly, it was just a simple fact.



“Bella!” A voice called from inside the house. “Bella, where are you?” She turned and flipped onto her stomach just in time to see her mother coming out of the house. “There you are. Remember that I need your help making the honey jars for the neighbors later.”

Bella sighed and rolled back over. “I will help later, once the butterflies fly away.” Smiling to herself, Bella’s mom went back inside.



Eyes fixed on the delicate creatures, Bella was lost in thought for what seemed like hours. Imagining herself as one of them, and what it must be like to see the world from their eyes.

“Bella! Bella! Bella!” She heard the heavy footsteps of her best friend before she heard her name being called.



Opening one eye, Bella could see Ellie rushing out of the house next to hers, clutching a bright green flyer and wobbling slightly.

“Did you see this? Did you hear what is coming? Why didn’t you tell me about it? Have you gone to see it yet?” By the time Bella sat up, Ellie was hovering over the top of her, talking faster than Bella had ever thought possible.

“Slow down Ellie. What are you talking about?”



Plopping herself down next to Bella in the grass, Ellie began waving the flyer around in the air dramatically.

“What am I talking about? Only one of the coolest and most interesting things to ever come to Cherrywood! How have you not heard about it? I thought I was the last one to find out? Oh Bella, it is going to be so amazing.”



She threw herself back into the grass so see what Bella had been looking at, thrusting the flyer into her hands. Bella began to read the words on the flyer out loud,

“Coming soon to Cherrywood: the county’s first annual hot air balloon festival! Come enjoy the amazing colors and shapes of the balloons, and experience what it is like to fly!”



Could this be true? Could she and Ellie possibly have the opportunity to fly?

“Ellie, we have to go to this! We have to ride in one of those hot air balloons!” Ellie, who was finally starting to calm down, waved her trunk in the air.

“I know, but where are we each going to get \$25?” Confused, Bella looked down at the flyer. Looking back over the wording, she noticed that at the bottom of the page it said that admittance was \$25 per member.



Bella, who hadn't even noticed that she had stood up, slunk back down to the grass, leaning her back against a tree. How could just the two of them possibly raise that much money? Feeling defeated, Bella stood back up and held her paw out to help Ellie stand up.

"Come on, we can talk about it as we help my mom. I promised her I would help jar the honey for the neighbors."

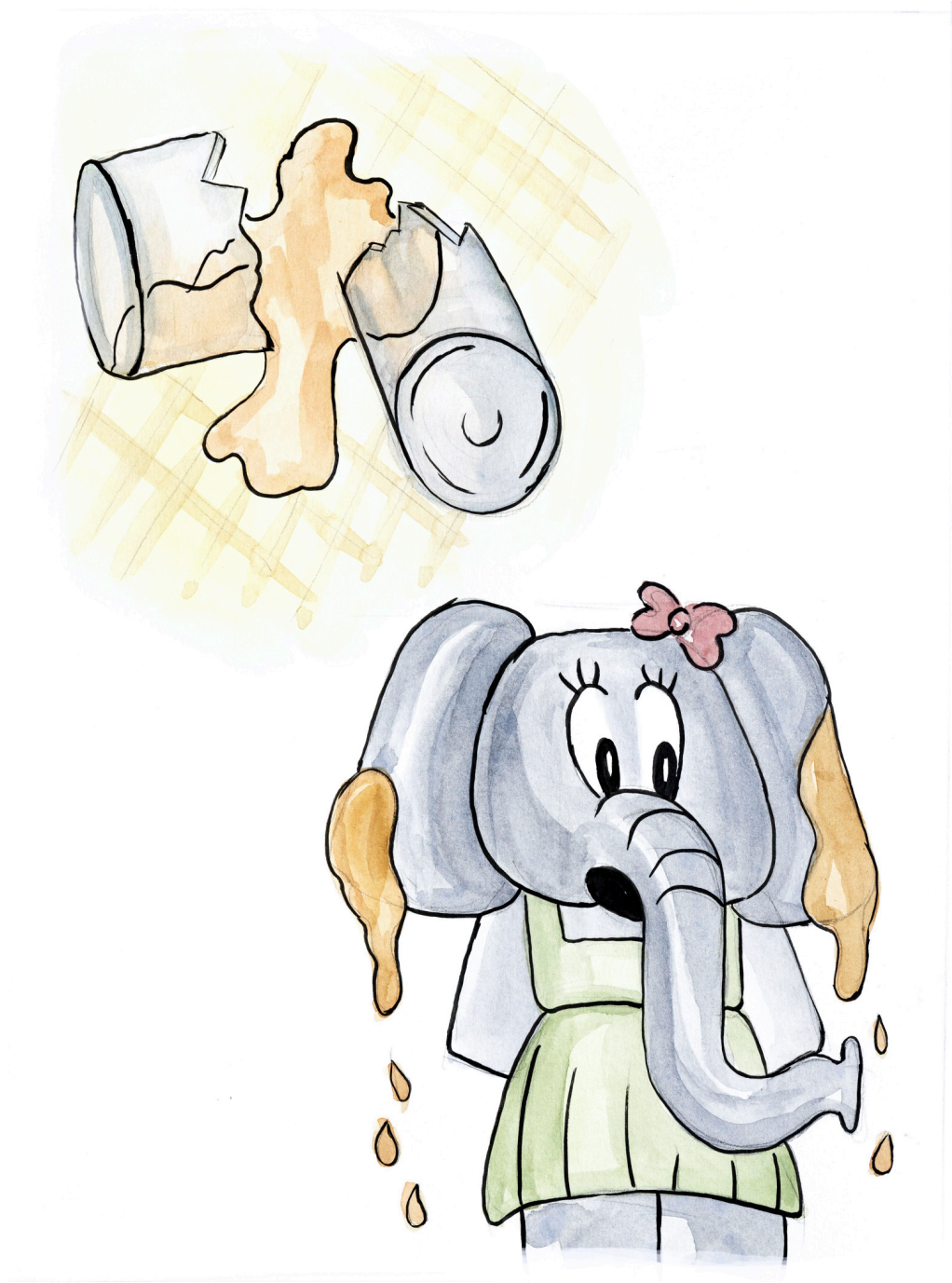


As they walked inside, Ellie smiled and rubbed her belly, “Mmmm I love your mom’s honey! The best part of summer is when she gives it out. The whole neighborhood waits all year just to get their jar.”

Bella smiled, “Yeah, she always makes sure to collect a lot from Mr. and Mrs. Buzz whenever she visits, that way she has enough for everyone.”

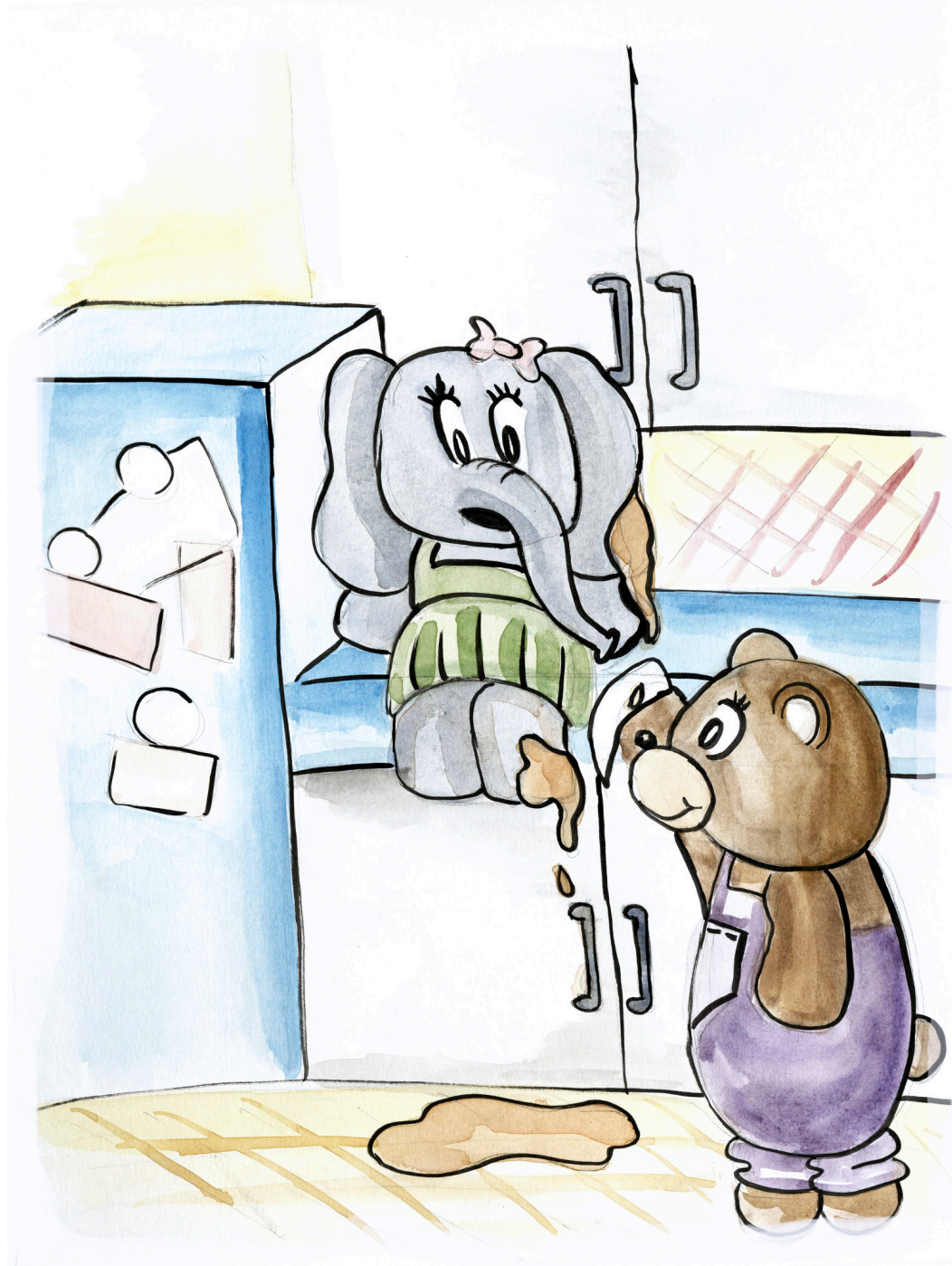


Once inside the kitchen, the two girls and Bella's mom began to work together to make the honey jars. As they worked, Bella and Ellie began to explain what they had just learned about the hot air balloon festival and how they needed a way to earn some money.



CRASH! Bella and her mom looked over at Ellie to see where the sound came from, and what they found was the elephant covered in honey, and an empty jar on the ground.

“Oh no! I am so sorry, I didn’t mean to. It it it slipped away from me, and the jar spilt all over me as it fell.” Ellie’s ears folded inward as bright pink began to spread across her cheeks.



“I always do stuff like this, I am so clumsy, I’m sorry.”

“Darling it is ok, no harm done.” Bella’s mom began to usher Ellie towards the sink, “These things happen, let’s just get you cleaned up.”

She began to clean off Ellie’s clothes, as Ellie began to lick her fingers. “One thing is for certain; this honey is by far the best snack in all of Cherrywood.”



Ellie finished licking the stickiness off her fingers and had moved on to licking her arms. As the two tried to clean up the mess, Bella began to form an idea. A plan began to develop in her head so interesting that she had to start writing it down.



“Mom, Ellie, what if instead of giving out the honey this year for free, we sell it?”
Laughing, Ellie looked back at her friend.

“Sell the honey this year? Like go door to door and ask people to buy it?”

“Yes! It is perfect. You said it yourself Ellie, everyone loves this honey, they even wait all year for it! So, what if we charge people for it, then use the money to attend the festival?” Ellie’s eyes began to light up in understanding.



“Oh, Bella that is a wonderful idea! And then we can have enough money to each be able to fly!” Ellie and Bella both directed their attention to Bella’s mom.

“Is that alright?”

Smiling, Bella’s mom replied “What a marvelous idea girls! But you both need to understand that running a business can be a bit involved, and there are steps you need to take to do this properly. The first step being that you need to call Mr. and Mrs. Buzz, and ask permission to sell their delicious honey.”



After calling them, Bella and Ellie found that Mr. and Mrs. Buzz were happy to let them use their honey. So, they went back to the kitchen to ask Bella's mom what the next step should be.

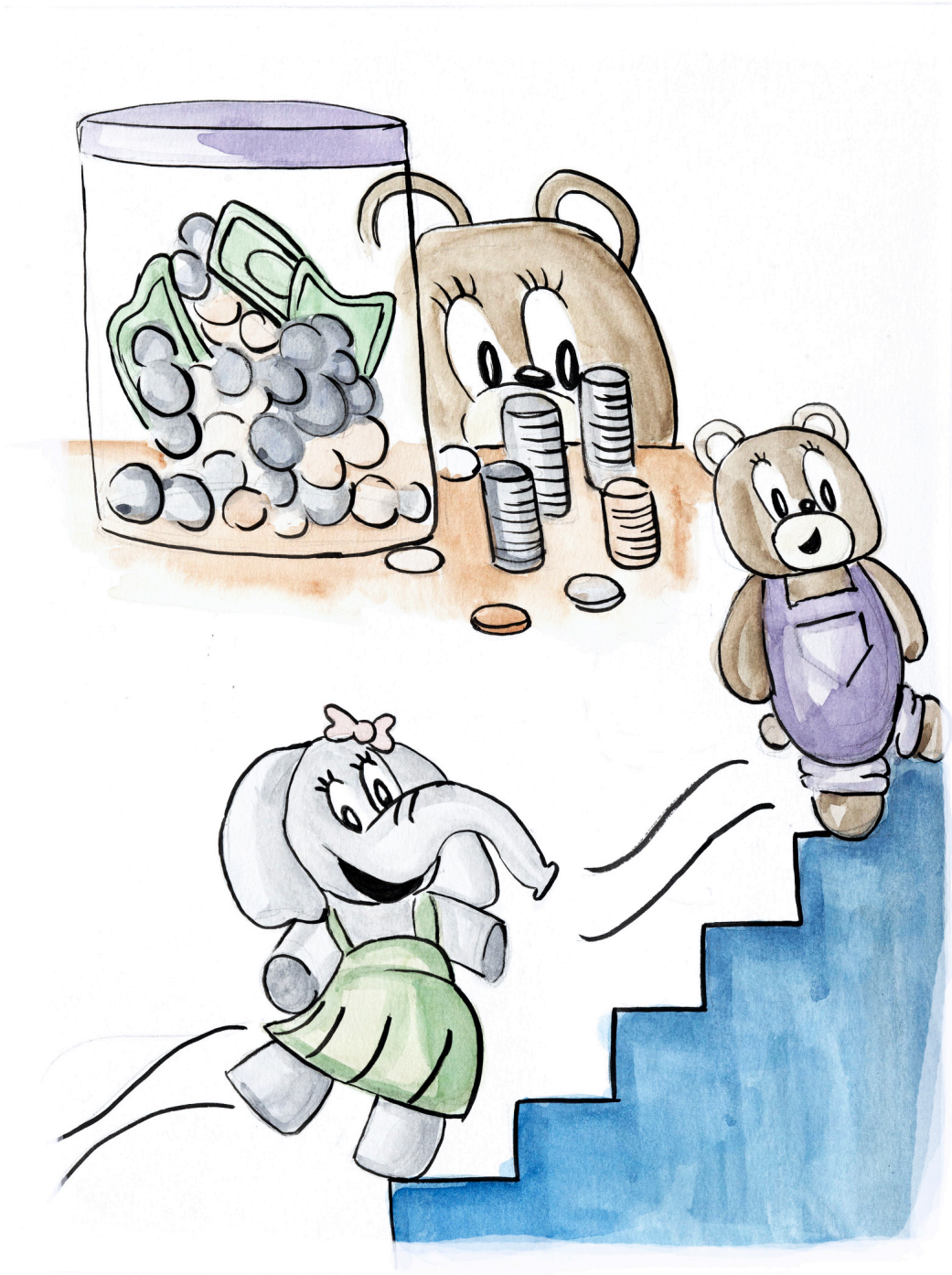
"Well, if you want others to remember where the amazing honey came from, you should label the jars somehow." After hearing this, Bella and Ellie both put their names on all the jars of honey so that everyone would know where they could buy more from.



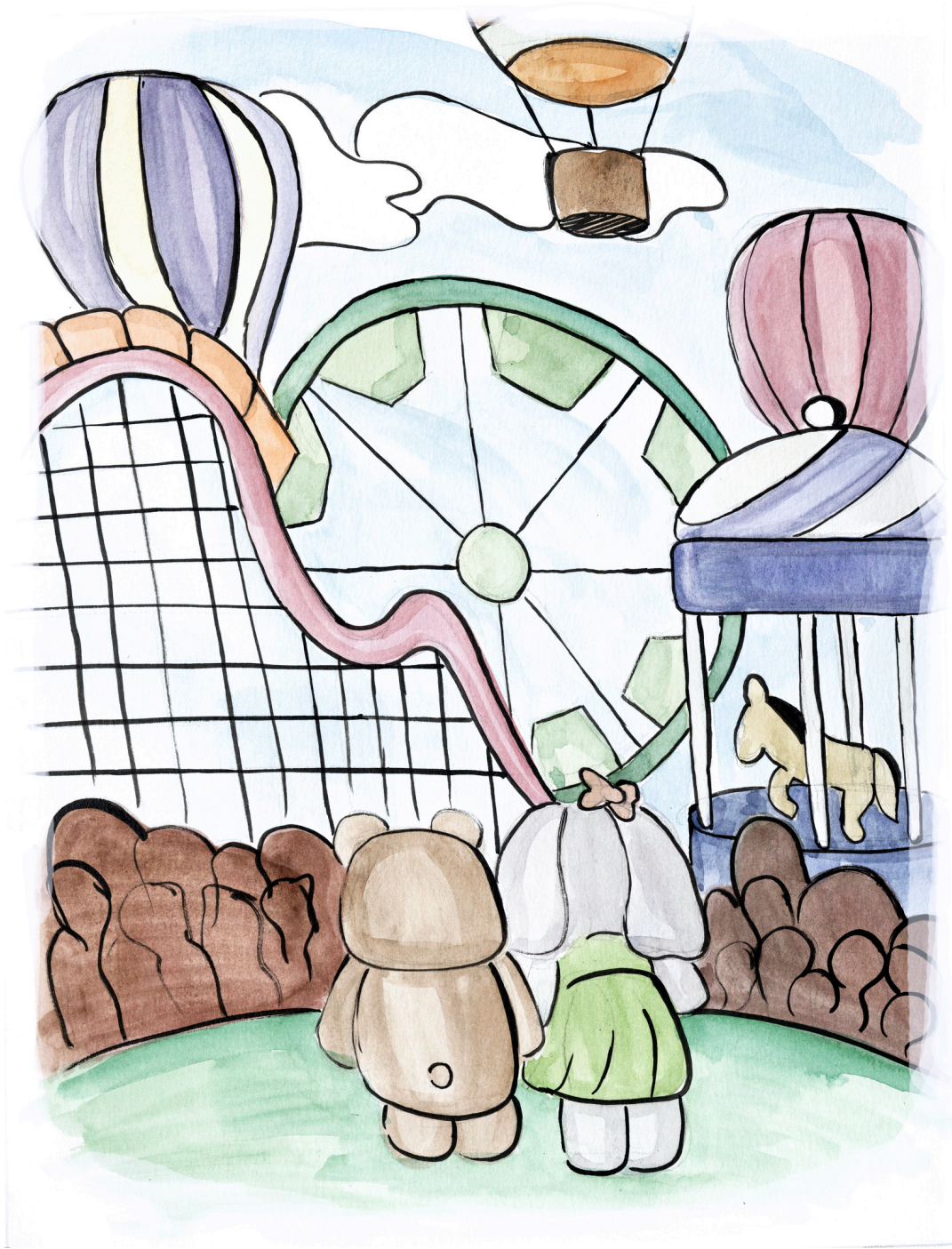
Then, they loaded all the jars into their red wagon so that they wouldn't have to keep returning to Bella's house after every sale. Bella's mom had mentioned that this would give them more time to sell jars and would be better for business. After, they picked a price that seemed fair for the buyer and covered the cost of all the materials. That way, they would make sure that the two of them would be making money rather than losing it. Lastly, all they had to do was sell the jars they made.



For the rest of the day, Bella and Ellie knocked on every door in the neighborhood, asking if those who lived there wanted to buy Bella and Ellie's Honey - the best tasting honey in the city. They had decided that if they made the honey sound as delicious as it tasted, then more honey would get sold. They were right! Every house that the girls offered their honey to, bought at least one jar from them.



As more of the honey sold, the news began to spread about how good it was. Before long, all the jars were sold, and the girls returned home to count out the money they had collected. With the help of Bella's mom, they counted how much each of the girls had collected and discovered that there was enough money to attend the hot air balloon festival that night. Overjoyed at their accomplishment, the two girls raced upstairs giggling about what flying might be like.



When they arrived, there were hundreds of visitors from all over town, laughing and playing different carnival games that were set up around the area. Clowns, cotton candy, and popcorn were everywhere, sending amazing smells and sights all around town. There were roller coasters, and entertainers acting and singing in the middle of an arena. But to Bella, none of that mattered. At the very back of the park, she could see five incredibly colored hot air balloons filling up with air.



“Ellie look over there!” Bella began frantically pointing at the balloons, and the two rushed over to get in line. As the balloons inflated, breathtaking patterns and colors began to fill the sky. Like the butterflies dancing, the balloons began to waltz towards the clouds. It was like nothing Bella had ever seen before. The hard work from the day began to fade away, as all that Bella could focus on was the amazing sight that was beginning to unfold in front of her.



“Bella, it is our turn, we are next in line.” Ellie nudged Bella towards the balloon in the middle, one that was covered in oranges and yellows, mimicking the patterns of her favorite type of butterfly. Before she knew it, Bella and Ellie were in the basket of the balloon, floating skyward.

“We did it Ellie! Look at how small everyone on the ground looks! We are flying, just like the butterflies.”



For that time, both Bella and Ellie were transported to a world of pure magic. It was everything the two had hoped for, and possibly more. When they overheard the attendant working the station say that one of the spectacular balloons was for sale. For the entire walk back, both the girls could not stop chattering about the experience, and how they would love to go do it all again.



When they returned home they saw Bella's mom hanging up the telephone. "There you two are! I just got off the phone with Mr. Jack who owns the barber shop in town. He just ate one of your jars of honey, and he thought it was the best thing he ever tasted! He was wondering if you girls would like to set up a booth in his store tomorrow, and sell to the customers that come in?"



Bella and Ellie looked at one another, both thinking about the hot air balloon at the festival that was for sale. Smiling Bella replied, "Tonight we are going to have to make a lot more jars of honey."