Wasps

In the paper-walled cells of the hanging cone black wasps nurse their secret.

It has something to do with the sun, with amber, honey and the scent of flowers.

There is only one entrance close to the bottom – it is also the exit – and has no door. Sentinel wasps guard it with body, with life,

taking their spell on watch.

The rest come and go, foraging.

Inside there's a great commotion of wings beating – heating, cooling, keeping the temperature right for the queen they all serve.

The nest quivers with their murmuring.

Flowers thin out.

The wasps discover apples, bore into their cores, gorge themselves on all the fruits of autumn.

Frost catches them.

Many – glutting on split gourds in an enticement of sugar – perish.

A few, drunk and drowsy, return to the palace to die dopily, all sense of duty gone.

On some cold day of sun the once-pampered queen alone flies out, and wings her way towards winter.