

FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE, ONE TREE AT A TIME!

KEISHA JONES

IS A FORCE OF NATURE



ILLUSTRATED BY

CHANTE
TIMOTHY

**KEISHA
JONES**

IS A FORCE OF NATURE





for my little loves: Cienna, Luna, Cole, Finley and Jessie who light up our world.

for my big loves, my brothers and sisters by birth and by choice.

for my husband, Jon, the love of my life and one of the first members of the Bee Squad.

for amazing activists that relentlessly fight for what is right.

- N. D.

For all those reading, make a difference where you can, where there's a will there's a way. Your voice is important!

- C. T.

LITTLE TIGER

An imprint of Little Tiger Press Limited
1 Coda Studios, 189 Munster Road,
London SW6 6AW

Imported into the EEA by Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

www.littletiger.co.uk

A paperback original

First published in Great Britain 2024

Text copyright © Natalie Denny, 2024

Illustrations copyright © Chanté Timothy, 2024

ISBN: 978-1-78895-663-5

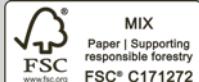
The right of Natalie Denny and Chanté Timothy to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work respectively has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

All rights reserved.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed upon the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the UK.



The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) is a global, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of responsible forest management worldwide. FSC defines standards based on agreed principles for responsible forest stewardship that are supported by environmental, social, and economic stakeholders. To learn more, visit www.fsc.org

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

KEISHA JONES IS A FORCE OF NATURE

NATALIE
DENNY

LITTLE TIGER
LONDON

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHANTÉ
TIMOTHY

WELCOME TO MY WORLD!

Hi! Hi! Hi! It's me, Keisha Jones, and I'm here to take on the world!

I am eight years old and I live with my mum, my dad, two stinky brothers Jayden and Otis, and my little dog Minnie. **Minnie** has caramel-coloured fur, the cutest little nose and is my best friend ever! Well, my best dog friend.



My best human friends are **KD** and **Paisley**, who go to my school.

I like laughing until my tummy hurts AND dressing up Minnie AND making new friends! Sleepovers and movie nights are my favourite.

I really like questions. Why? Where? What? When? Who? And why again? I want to know everything, even when I'm not supposed to!

Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you about the Bee Squad, named after my great-aunt Bee. She was a lawyer and an activist and helped people all her life, and I want to be just like her. I set up the **Bee Squad** with KD and Paisley to fight injustices **EVERYWHERE**. We even have our own handshake!

BZZZZZZZZ!

Our first cause fought for rabbit equality, and our next cause will be... Well, you wait and see!





Chapter 1 =ECO-WARRIOR=

"You can do it, Dad!" I called.

Dad panted his way up the last steep bit of hill. Minnie scampered around in circles, offering "**Rrrfffff**"s of encouragement as I joined Jayden at the top.

"Whoa!" I said, admiring the view.

We were at our favourite nature park, the one with the big hill in the middle. Fluffy marshmallow clouds, blue sky and the green of the forest stretched out below. The trees were so tightly packed together they looked like one MASSIVE broccoli! I shivered and scrunched up my face.
I hate broccoli!



“So cool!” said Jayden, looking around and shielding his eyes from the sun.

“Worth parting with your video games for?” gasped Dad, finally reaching the top.

“I wouldn’t go that far!” said Jayden, rolling his eyes.

Dad plonked himself on the ground for a rest and Minnie licked the big, fat drops of sweat running down his face.

“Ewwww, Minnie!” I grimaced.

“**Rrrfffff!**” said Minnie, which in dog language means, **DELICIOUS!**

Dad loves what he calls the “Great Outdoors” and has been taking us on nature outings since before I could walk. I guess that’s why he’s the best gardener ever! Mum says he’s got green fingers, which is weird because his fingers are brown!

“It looks like it goes on forever!” I said, peering through my binoculars at the forest

around us.

Jayden jumped in front of me and instead of the trees I saw right up his horrible nose.

“Jayden!” I squealed, pushing him away as he collapsed into giggles.

“For that, you’re on picnic duty,” said Dad, wagging his finger at Jayden who huffed as he began unpacking the food.

“Hey, Dad!” I said, pointing at a splash of pink in the sea of broccoli. “What’s that?”

I handed Dad the binoculars, and as he squinted through them his face broke into a grin.

“That is what’s called a flower waterfall.”

“A flower waterfall?” I repeated.

“It’s a place in nature where flowers hang from the trees and make a beautiful cascade. Those are wisteria plants but you can create a flower waterfall out of all kinds of flowers.”

“So cool!” I cried. “Can we go and see it?”

“We can but not today,” said Dad, handing the binoculars back. “We need to eat and then

get back to help Grandpa Joe, remember?"

Every Sunday afternoon we visit Grandpa Joe to give him a hand with stuff. Today we were going to help out in the garden.

"Lunch with a view," said Jayden, pointing at the sandwiches, cake and fruit he'd laid out.

As we munched our food, I asked Dad LOTS of questions about the park and he gave me LOTS of answers.

"How did the trees grow so tall?" I said.

"Those trees are hundreds of years old," said Dad. "They've had the time."

"Grandpa Joe told me that this park's special," said Jayden, propping himself up on his elbow.

"Grandpa Joe's right," replied Dad. "A nature park like this is protected because it's an area of natural beauty. Trees and green spaces are good for our well-being."

"What's well-being?" I asked as Minnie snuggled in my lap.

"It's how good you feel in your body and your mind," said Dad with a big stretch. "How does being here make you feel?"

"Happy and FULL of energy!" I giggled.

"Great, isn't it?" said Dad. "Some of my best memories are in green spaces, like this park."

"Ooooh, mine too!" I said. "Picnics and hide-and-seek!"

Dad smiled. "That's why people fight to protect big green spaces like this nature park, as well as smaller areas in towns and cities ... people like your great-aunt Bee."

"Great-Aunt Bee?" I said, jiggling with excitement as Minnie sprang from my lap with an annoyed "**Rrrrrfffff**". "What did she do?"

"Why don't you ask Grandpa Joe?" replied Dad. "I'm sure he'd love to tell you all about it."

Dad and Jayden wolfed down the last of the sandwiches and cake, but I couldn't eat another thing. My mind was too busy thinking about Great-Aunt Bee. What had she done this time?





“Grandpa Joe!” I said, running into the garden with Minnie at my heels. Dad and Jayden followed behind, carrying gardening tools.

“My favourite activist!” Grandpa Joe smiled, putting down his watering can and scooping me up in the best bear hug. “And my favourite cool dude!” he said to Jayden, giving him a fist bump.

“We went all the way to the top of the hill, and Dad told us about flower waterfalls and Great-Aunt Bee fighting for green spaces!” I said, grabbing his hand and steering him to his favourite deck chair. “What did she do? Tell me everything!”

“Rrrfffff!” said Minnie, which in dog language means, **HERE WE GO AGAIN!**

Grandpa Joe chuckled as he reached down and gave Minnie a stroke.



“Oh, Bee loved nature!” he said. “Just like your dad, Jayden and you.”

“Did she like trees?” I asked, wiping the mud smudge from Grandpa Joe’s wrinkly face. “I LOVE trees.”

“She loved it all. Trees, green spaces, animals, nature ... but more importantly she thought it should be enjoyed by all,” said Grandpa Joe, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. “In fact, you know Chamber Park...”

“The park with the swings and slides and roundabouts?” I asked.

“That very one,” said Grandpa Joe.

I nodded. “Me, Paisley and KD go there all the time!”

“Well, you have your great-aunt Bee to thank for that,” said Grandpa Joe.

“Wow!” I gasped. “Really?”

“Yes!” Grandpa Joe smiled. “Bee campaigned to protect the land from developers who wanted to build a warehouse on it. It was just

a big green field back then, but Bee wanted to turn it into a proper park and a safe place for the community to hold events, grow food and plant trees. She fought the developers with the help of the local people and won!”

“Awesome! How did she do it?” I asked.

“Well, it took a year of hard work, but Bee and her supporters organized protests and petitions, gave interviews on TV and in the newspapers, and got the town’s mayor on their side.” Grandpa Joe smiled proudly. “She was a bit of an eco-warrior was our Bee.”

“What’s an eco-warrior?” I asked.

“An eco-warrior is an environmental activist, someone who wants to save the natural world,” replied Grandpa Joe.

“Like all the stuff on our walk?” I asked. “The trees and plants and flowers?”

“Yes, and eco-warriors like to use a ‘hands-on’ method,” said Grandpa Joe, giving me a tickle.

“Hands on?” I said, tickling him back. “Direct action, similar to what you did when you swapped the male and female rabbits in Manny’s pet store.” He grinned. “You took action to make things fair ... without asking permission.”

“Ohhhh,” I said, remembering the Bee Squad’s last mission for rabbit equality. Manny was selling his girl rabbits for less than the boy rabbits, which was unfair. I had to do something!



“Why don’t you get the box, Keisha?” said Grandpa Joe. “I’m sure I have some newspaper clippings about your great-aunt Bee and Chamber Park.”

I didn’t have to ask which box he meant. Grandpa Joe’s special wooden box full of all his Bee memories was my favourite!

I sprinted up the stairs to Grandpa Joe’s bedroom and peered under the bed. *There!* I carefully carried the box downstairs and placed it on his knee, fidgeting with impatience.

Grandpa Joe opened the lid and rummaged inside.

“Ah, here it is,” he said, unfolding a newspaper clipping and holding it out for me to see. A young Great-Aunt Bee stood smiling in front of a red ribbon draped across a gate. A tall man wearing a thick gold chain stood next to her.

“That’s Mayor Smith,” said Grandpa Joe.

“Look at his necklace!” said Jayden, peering over my shoulder to get a closer look.

“He supported your great-aunt Bee in her fight to keep a green space for the community,” said Grandpa Joe. “Which became Chamber Park.”

“Wow!” I gasped.

“The land Chamber Park is on was somewhere our mum used to take us as children,” Grandpa Joe explained. “A big green space where we’d have parties and picnics, along with lots of other local families.”



“Sounds like fun!” I said.

“It was,” said Grandpa Joe, “until some bigwig developers bought the land from the council so they could build a warehouse on it!”

“How did the mayor help?” asked Jayden.

“He provided a space for Bee to hold campaign meetings and an opportunity to express her views in the town’s newspaper. He was also a good friend. It was tough for Bee. First she tried talking to the developers but they wouldn’t listen. Then she tried the legal route. Finally she...” Grandpa Joe chuckled and handed Jayden the newspaper cutting. “Well ... she tried a different tactic.”

“Local activist ties herself to tree in battle to save our green space,” read Jayden with a grin. He held up the newspaper so we could see Great-Aunt Bee chained to a massive tree.

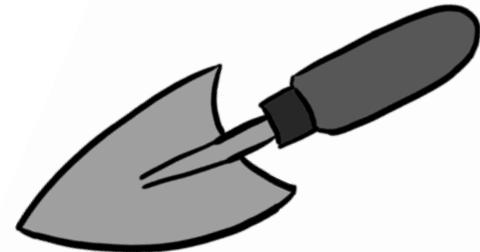
“That’s one of my favourite photos of your great-aunt Bee.” Grandpa Joe smiled. “It drew a lot of attention and generated masses of support for her cause. In the end, the developers gave up and withdrew their plans,” he explained. “And a year later, Bee and the mayor opened the new, improved Chamber Park, complete with children’s play area and beautiful flower and vegetable gardens. Bee planted over fifty new trees too.”



“That’s awesome!” I said, imagining Great-Aunt Bee chained to the tree and opening the park. I copied her pose from the picture in front of my imaginary tree, and Grandpa Joe gave me a thumbs up.

“I wish the Bee Squad could do something as amazing as that one day!” I said.

“I’m sure you will,” said Grandpa Joe. “Now let’s get stuck into this garden.”





Chapter 2

MEET THE VITS

On Monday, I couldn't wait to tell KD and Paisley about my trip to the nature park and Great-Aunt Bee's eco-warrior activities. Dad dropped me off at the school gates and I hurried into the playground. As soon as I spotted my friends, I raced over and steered them towards our favourite tree – the one with the face in it.

“Bee Squad, ASSEMBLE!” I cried.

“At your service,” said KD with a salute.

“BZZZZZZZZ!” Paisley giggled.

I filled them in on yesterday, racing through to the story of how Bee had stopped the developers and turned a green field into Chamber Park.

“So, I was thinking we need a new cause,” I went on. “And I think it should be to do with green spaces and trees. I’m just not sure what exactly.”

“As long as you don’t ask me to tie myself to a tree,” muttered Paisley, looking worried.

“Oh, I would never ask you to do that,” I said, putting my arm round Paisley’s shoulder. “Not at first, anyway.”

“What?” said Paisley, eyes wide.

“Yeah, Paisley,” said KD with a wink as he put his arm round her other shoulder. “That’s a last resort.”

“I know!” I said. “Why don’t we ask Mr Logan if he has any ideas? He knows everything about everything.”

“Good idea, Keisha!” said KD. “Mr Logan is so cool and really listens to us. He’ll help!”

“Yes,” said Paisley with relief. “Let’s speak to a responsible grown-up after PE.”



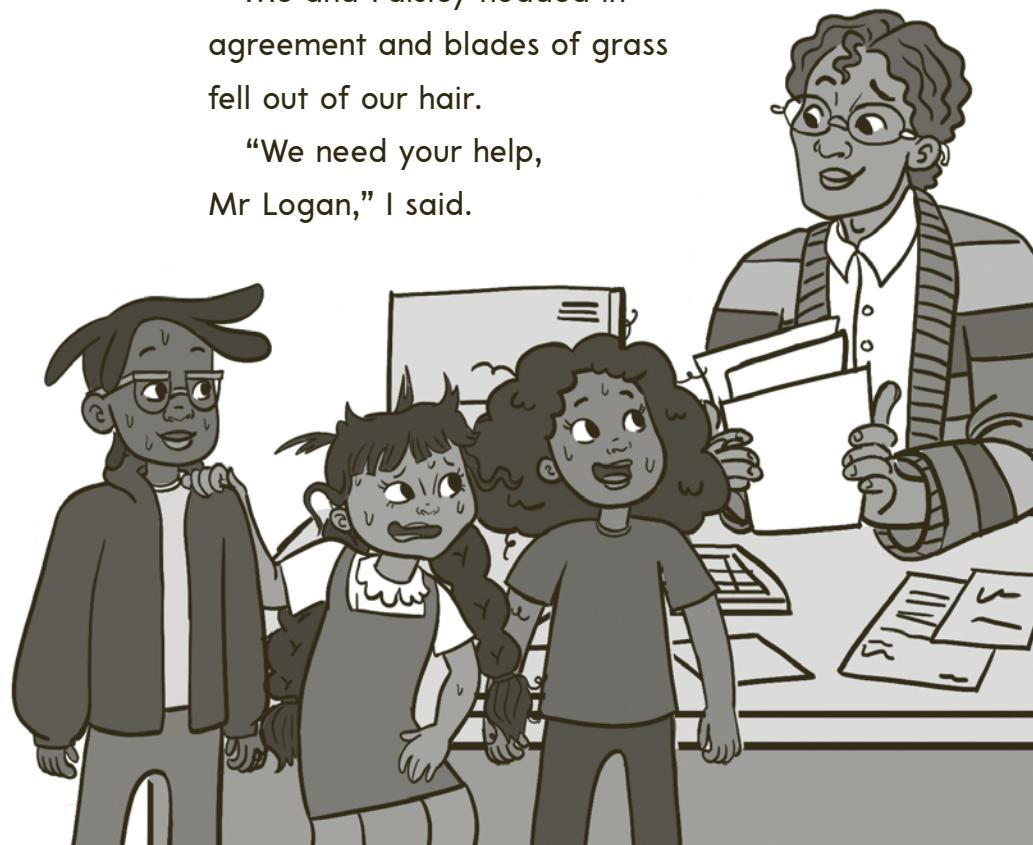
“Hi, Mr Logan!” we chimed.

“Ah, if it isn’t the famous Bee Squad!” said Mr Logan, shuffling the papers on his desk into a big pile. He paused and looked us up and down. “You look like you’ve been in the wars!”

“We had PE with Mr Lamb!” said KD.

Me and Paisley nodded in agreement and blades of grass fell out of our hair.

“We need your help, Mr Logan,” I said.



“Fire away, Keisha!”

Then I told him about my trip to the nature park and how Great-Aunt Bee had tied herself to a tree to save it from being chopped down.

“So, we were thinking that the next Bee Squad cause should be something to do with trees and green spaces,” I said. “But we can’t think what.”

“Interesting,” said Mr Logan, cleaning his glasses, deep in thought.

“Grandpa Joe said that Great-Aunt Bee was an eco-warrior and fought to save community spaces like Chamber Park and all things green. Not broccoli though,” I said pulling a face. “Because it’s disgusting!”

“Oh, nobody would fight to save that,” chuckled Mr Logan. “Why do you think she fought for Chamber Park?”

I thought for a moment, remembering what Grandpa Joe had told me. “So families would

have somewhere to enjoy the outdoors and be amongst trees and nature,” I said.

“Exactly!” cried Mr Logan.

“Why do we need so many trees?” I asked Mr Logan. “I’d like another one of me, maybe three at the most so we would outnumber my stinky brothers at home, but I don’t think we need more than that!”

“Imagine a world with three Keishas!” he said, smiling. “Hmm... How can I explain it? Ah, right,” he said, popping his glasses back on. “Take a deep breath in.”

We did.

“Now do a big breath out,” said Mr Logan.

“Ahhhhh,” we said, letting the air whoosh out.

“Trees give us oxygen to breathe,” said Mr Logan. “Without oxygen, we wouldn’t get very far.”

“Ohhhhhh!” I said. “So more trees and green spaces are a good thing!”

“A very good thing,” said Mr Logan.

“How old is the tree with the face on?” asked Paisley.

“I’m not sure,” said Mr Logan. He checked his watch. “But we could go to the library to find out. We have time before your next lesson starts.”

“OK,” I said, looking at the floor.

“What’s the matter, Keisha?” asked Mr Logan, noticing my worried face.

The library in our school is the only place that doesn’t smell of cabbage. It’s also the only place I have to be very, **VERY** quiet. I’m not good at that.

“Actually,” said Mr Logan, breaking into a grin, “I have a better idea. Follow me.”

A few minutes later we were standing in front of the gallery in the art department. KD spotted a big picture of our favourite tree hanging on the wall.

“This will tell you everything you need

to know!” said Mr Logan, pointing to the plaque beside the picture. “The tree with the face was planted in 1908 for future pupils at our school to enjoy. It stands over twenty metres tall.”

“Tree-mendous!” I giggled, twirling my hair and turning it into a moustache.

“It really is! Trees are special. They purify the air, make the soil healthy for things to grow and they give us oxygen,” said Mr Logan. “Most importantly, as your great-aunt Bee knew, trees and green spaces are good for people!”

“For our well-being!” I said, remembering what Dad said.

“Exactly that!” said Mr Logan with a smile.

“Wow!” said KD. “So trees are super-important, like VIPs?”

“They are very important trees,” said Mr Logan.

“VITs,” whispered Paisley.

"VITs!" I giggled, clapping my hands at the joke. "Maybe VITs should be the Bee Squad's next cause!"

"Sounds good!" said Paisley.

"So, what can we do?" I asked.

"Well, helping to protect our current green

spaces and VITs might be a good place to start," said Mr Logan. "And planting new trees to replace any that are cut down."

KD pointed to a poster on the wall. "World Environment Day... What's that?"



Mr Logan read out the details on the poster. "World Environment Day, on the fifth of June, is a day on which we can encourage worldwide awareness and action to protect the natural world." He grinned. "It sounds like the perfect day to celebrate your VITs!"

"It really does!" I said.

My head was spinning with all this new information and I couldn't wait to get started.

First we got equality for rabbits and now we're going to save the VITs!



SAVE THE VITS TO DO LIST

- 🐝 Make a list of our favourite trees and parks in the town.
- 🐝 Learn everything we can about VITs.
- 🐝 Visit Chamber Park to meet Great-Aunt Bee's trees.
- 🐝 Tell Grandpa Joe all about it!
- 🐝 Find a VIT that needs saving!