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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Maya the Bee gets into trouble (7/17)

After meeting Puck the fly, Maya was not very happy. She simply could not believe that he was right about everything he had said about humans or that everything he had experienced with humans was true. She had a much nicer and more beautiful image of humans in her head. She did not want that image to be changed by believing in all these ridiculous ideas about humanity. However, she was still a little afraid to enter a house. How was she supposed to know if the owner would like her visit or not? But she would make sure that nobody was bothered by her. She thought back to the things Cassandra had told her.

"People are good and wise," Cassandra had said. "They are strong and powerful, but they never abuse their power. On the contrary, wherever they go, they bring order and prosperity. We bees, knowing that they are friendly to us, we put ourselves under their protection and share our honey with them. They leave enough for us for the winter. They offer us shelter from the cold and protect us from other hostile animals. There are few creatures in the world who have entered into such a friendship with humans and willingly work for humans. Among insects, much evil is often spoken of humans. Do not listen to them. If a bee city ever foolishly tries to

return to the wild and try to do without humans, the city quickly perishes. There are too many animals that crave our honey, and often an entire bee city, all its buildings, and all its inhabitants, are ruthlessly destroyed. A pointless act, just because an animal wants to satisfy its hunger for honey."

That's what Cassandra had told Maya about humans, and until Maya convinced herself otherwise, she wanted to maintain this belief in humans. It was now afternoon. The sun was setting behind the fruit trees in the large vegetable garden where Maya was flying through. The trees had long ceased to bloom, but the little bee still remembered the radiant splendor of countless blossoms. The delicious scent, the shine, and the glittering - oh, she would never forget how beautiful that was. As she flew, she thought about how all that beauty would return in the spring, and her heart beat with delight and joy that she was allowed to fly in such a beautiful world. At the end of the garden, the jasmine was in full bloom with large plumes. The flowers had yellow faces with a crown of pure white. They smelled deliciously sweet as Maya floated by on a soft breeze.

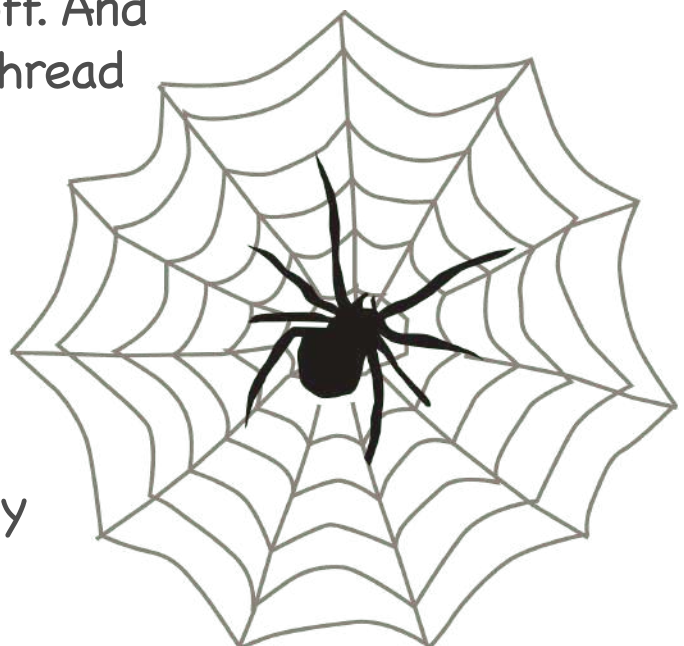
She flew between the stems of the blackberry bushes that produced green berries and blossoms at the same time. But when she took off again



to fly further, something strange suddenly fell on her forehead and shoulders, and it also quickly covered her wings. It was the strangest sensation ever, as if her wings were crippled and she was suddenly being held back in her flight and she helplessly fell down.

An invisible, malevolent force seemed to be holding her feelers, her legs, and her wings. But she didn't fall. Although she couldn't move her wings anymore, she still hung, swaying, in the air. She went up a little, then down a little, then she was thrown there, then the other way. It was as if she were a loose leaf in the wind. Maya was distressed, but not really terrified yet. Why would she be? She didn't feel any pain or discomfort of any kind. It was just very peculiar, so peculiar, that something dreadful seemed to be lurking in the background. But she had to keep flying. If she tried very hard, she could certainly do it.

But now she saw an elastic, silvery thread over her chest, finer than the finest silk. She grew cold with fear and quickly grabbed it. But it clung to her hand and she couldn't shake it off. And there was another silver thread over her shoulders. The thread lay over her wings and bound them together, her wings were powerless. And there, and there! Everywhere in the air, and above her body and under her body were



those peculiar, glistening, gluey threads! Maya screamed with horror. Now she knew! Oh, oh, now she knew! She was caught in a spider web.

Her terrified cries echoed in the quiet summer air where the sunshine turned the green of the leaves into gold, and insects flew back and forth, and birds flew merrily from tree to tree. Nearby, the jasmine sprinkled its delightful scent through the air, the jasmine she had wanted to reach... Now it was all over. A little bluish butterfly, with brown spots gleaming like copper on its wings, flew by.

"Oh, you poor soul," exclaimed the butterfly upon hearing Maya's screams and seeing her desperate condition. "May your death be an easy one, dear child. I cannot help you. One day, perhaps even tonight, I will suffer the same fate. But in the meantime, life is still delightful for me. Goodbye! Don't forget to think of the sunshine during the deep sleep of death." And the blue butterfly fluttered away, rejoicing in the sun, the flowers, and its own joy of life.

Tears streamed from Maya's eyes and she lost her composure. She tossed her captive body back and forth, buzzed as loudly as she could, and screamed for help. But the more she moved, the tighter she became entangled in the web. Now, in this great misery, Cassandra's warnings ran through her head:

"Be careful of the spider and its web. If we Bees fall into the power of the spider, we undergo the most gruesome death. The spider is heartless and cunning, and once it has someone in its web, it never lets them go."

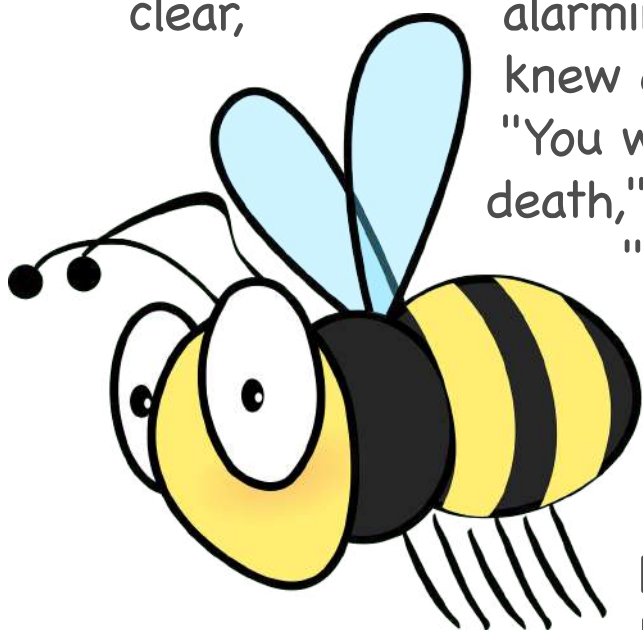
In her terror, Maya made one last desperate attempt to break free. And somewhere, one of the long, heavier threads snapped. Maya felt it break, but at the same time, she felt the terrible spider web everywhere.

That's how a spider web works, the more one struggles in it, the more effective and dangerous it becomes. So she gave up, completely exhausted. At that moment, she saw the spider itself, very close by, under a blackberry leaf. Upon seeing the large monster, still and serious, crouched as if ready to strike, Maya's horror grew even greater. The wicked, shiny eyes looked, with cool patience, at the little Bee.

Maya let out a loud cry of fear. This was the worst of all. Death itself could not look worse than that gray, hairy monster with her wicked fangs and raised legs under her thick body. The spider would come running at her and then everything would be over. Suddenly Maya became terribly angry, worse than ever. She forgot her great fear of death and focused on only one thing, to sell her life as dearly as possible. She let out a loud, clear, alarming battle cry that all creatures knew and feared.

"You will pay for your cunning with death," she shouted at the spider.

"Come and try to kill me, go on, you will soon discover what a Bee can do."



The spider did not flinch. She had scared bigger creatures than little Maya. Strong in her anger,

Maya now made another violent, desperate attempt to break free and...one of the long hanging threads above her broke. The web was probably meant for flies and mosquitoes, not for such large insects like Bees. But Maya only became more entangled in the web. In one sliding movement, the spider came very close to Maya. She swung her agile legs on a single thread and hung with her body straight down.

"What gives you the right to break my web?" she rasped at Maya. "What are you doing here? Isn't the world big enough for you? Why are you bothering a peaceful recluse like me?"

That was certainly not what Maya had expected to hear.

"It wasn't my intention," she cried, but with a glimmer of hope. However ugly the spider was, she did not seem to be planning any harm. "I didn't see your web and got caught in it. I'm so sorry. Please excuse me."

The spider came closer.

"You have a funny little body," she said, letting go of the thread with one leg, then the other. The thin thread shook. How extraordinary that such a thin thread can support such a large creature!

"Oh, please help me out of here," Maya begged. "I would be so grateful."

"That's why I'm here," said the spider, smiling strangely. Despite all her smiles, she looked mean and deceitful.

"Your struggling is ruining my whole web. Just be quiet for a second, and I'll set you free."

"Oh, thank you! Thank you in advance!" Maya exclaimed.

The spider was now very close to her. She carefully examined the web to see how Maya was entangled.

"What about your stinger?" she asked.

Oh, how mean and hideous she looked! Maya shuddered at the thought of the spider touching her, but replied as kindly as she could: "Don't worry about my stinger. I'll pull it in, and then no one can hurt themselves on it."

"I hope not," said the spider. "Now, be careful! Be quiet. Otherwise, it's a waste of my web."

Maya remained quiet. Suddenly she felt herself being tossed back and forth in the same spot, until she became dizzy and nauseous and had to close her eyes. What was going on? She quickly opened her eyes. She was completely entangled in a fresh sticky thread that the spider must have had with her.

"My dear God!" little Maya cried softly, in a trembling voice. That was all she said. Now she saw how mean the spider had been. She had fallen for it and now there was absolutely no chance of escape. She couldn't move any part of her body. Her end was really near now. Her anger was gone, there was only great sadness in her heart.

"I didn't know that there was so much meanness and wickedness in the world," she thought. "The dark night of death is waiting for me. Goodbye, dear bright sun. Goodbye, my dear Bees. Why did I ever leave you? I wish you a happy life, but unfortunately, I am going to die."

The spider was on guard, a little to the side. She was still afraid of Maya's stinger.

"Well, well, what now," she jeered. "How are you feeling, little girl?"

Maya was too proud to answer the false creature. After a while, she only said, when she felt she couldn't take it anymore: "Please, just kill me now."

"Really!" said the spider and tied a few torn threads together. "Really! Do you think I'm as crazy an animal as you are? You'll die anyway, if you hang around long enough, and that's when I'll suck the blood out of you, when you can't sting me. If you could see how terribly you've damaged my web, then you'd realize that you deserve to die."

She dropped to the ground, placed the end of the newly spun thread around a stone. Then she ran back up, grabbed the thread to which little trapped Maya was hanging, and dragged her captive along.

"I'll put you in the shade, dear," she said, "so you don't dry out in the sun here. Besides, hanging here, you look like a scarecrow. You scare other mortals who aren't paying attention to where they're going. Sometimes sparrows come and raid my web. By the way, my name is Thekla, I'm related to cross spiders. You don't have to tell me your name. It doesn't make a difference. You're a nice, fat Bee, and you'll taste deliciously tender and juicy."

So there hung little Maya in the shadow of the blackberry bush, close to the ground, completely at the mercy of the cruel spider, who wanted to let her die by a slow death of hunger. With her head down – an anxious position to be in – she soon felt that it wouldn't take many more minutes. She whimpered softly, and her

cry for help grew weaker and weaker. Who could hear her now? Her Bee colony knew nothing of this disaster, so they couldn't come to her aid. Suddenly she heard someone growling down in the grass: "Move over! I'm coming."

Maya's heart began to beat fast. She recognized the voice of Bobbie, the dung beetle.

"Bobbie," she cried as loudly as she could, "Bobbie, dear Bobbie!"

"Move over! I'm coming."

"But I'm not in your way, Bobbie," Maya shouted. "No, I'm hanging above your head. The spider has caught me."

"Who are you?" asked Bobbie. "So many people know me. You know that, don't you?"

"I'm Maya - Maya, the Bee. Oh please, help me, please!"

"Maya? Maya? - Ah, now I remember. You met me a few weeks ago. You're in bad shape, if I may say so. You certainly need my help. Since I happen to have a little time, I won't refuse."

"Oh, Bobbie, can you tear these threads?"

"Tear? Those threads? Don't insult me." Bobbie flexed his arm muscles. "Look at muscles hard as steel. I can do much more than smash a few spider webs. You'll see."

Bobbie crawled onto the leaf, grabbed the thread on which Maya was hanging, clung onto it, and then let go of the leaf. The thread broke and they both fell to the ground.

"This is just the beginning," said Bobbie. "But Maya, you're trembling. My dear child, what are you so afraid of death for? You must look death calmly in the eye, just like I do. So I'll get you out now."

Maya couldn't speak. Tears of happiness rolled down her cheeks. She would be free again, fly in the sun, fly wherever she wanted. She would live again! Bobbie freed Maya from the spider web. But then she saw the spider come down along the blackberry bush.

"Bobbie," she screamed, "the spider is coming!"

Bobbie continued calmly and just laughed to himself. He was truly an exceptionally strong insect.

"She'll think twice before coming closer," he said.

But then the mean voice sounded above them:

"Robbers! Help! I'm being robbed. You fat bump, you fatso, what are you doing with my prey?"

"Don't worry, madam," said Bobbie. "If you say another word that I don't like, I'll tear your whole web to shreds. Now, tell me, why are you suddenly so quiet?"

"I am defeated," said the spider.

"You better leave here now," remarked Bobbie.

The spider threw Bobbie a look full of hate and venom but reconsidered when she looked at her web, and slowly turned away, angry, cursing and grumbling. Fangs and stings were of no use. They wouldn't even leave a trace on the thick shell that beetles carried. With violent muttering about the injustice in the world, the spider hid in a withered leaf, from where she could spy and watch over her web. Meanwhile, Bobbie had freed Maya. He tore the threads around her legs and wings. The rest she could do herself. How happy she was! But

she had to move slowly, as she was still weak from the shock.

"You just have to forget what you've been through," said Bobbie. "Then you'll stop trembling. Now see if you can fly. Try it."

Maya rose up with a soft buzz. Her wings were still working perfectly, and to her great joy, she felt that no part of her body had been injured. She flew slowly to the jasmine flowers, drank eagerly from the deliciously fragrant honey sap and returned to Bobbie, who had left the blackberry bushes and was sitting in the grass. "I thank you with all my heart and soul," said Maya, deeply moved and very happy with her regained freedom.

"A word of thanks is in order," said Bobbie. "But that's just me: I always do something for other people. Now fly away quickly. I advise you to go to bed early tonight. Do you have a long way to go?"

"No," said Maya. "I don't have to go far. I live on the edge of the beech forest. Goodbye, Bobbie, I will never forget you, never, never, as long as I live. Goodbye!"