



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

A Narrow Escape

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The time came when Buz and Hum, two young bees, were allowed to try their wings. "Follow me," said a friendly older bee, "I can spare time to fly a little way, and when I stop, you stop, too." "All right," cried Buz, trembling with excitement. Hum said nothing, but her wings began to move, almost in spite of herself.

Away went the bee, as straight as a line from the mouth of the hive, and away flew Buz and Hum after her. But at first start, they both found it a little difficult to keep quite straight, and Buz bumped against a tree and nearly stopped herself, as she had not learned how to rise.

The older bee did not go far and sat down on the branch of a peach tree which was growing against a wall nearby. Buz came after her in a great hurry but missed the branch and gave herself a bang against the wall. Hum saw this and managed to stop herself in time, but she did not judge her distance very well either and got on the peach tree in a scrambling sort of way.

"Very good," said their friend, as they all stood together, "you will soon be able to take care of yourselves; but just let me bring you back to the hive." So off they flew again.

"Now," said the bee, "I will leave you; but before I go let me advise you, as a friend, not to quit the garden today; there are plenty of flowers, and plenty of opportunities for you to meet with 'Experience', without flying over any of the four walls."

"Who is Experience?" asked Buz and Hum together.

"Oh! Somebody to whom you are going to be introduced, who will teach you more in a day than you could learn from me in a week. Goodbye." And she disappeared into the hive.

"Isn't it delightful?" exclaimed Buz to Hum. "Flying! It's even more fun than I thought!"

"It is," said Hum, "but I would like to get some honey."

"Of course," replied Buz, "only I would like to fly a long way to get it."

"I want to fill a cell quickly," said Hum.

"Oh yes! What a delightful thing it will be to put one's proboscis down into every flower and see what's there! Do you know," added Buz, putting out her proboscis, "I feel as if I could suck honey tremendously; don't you?"

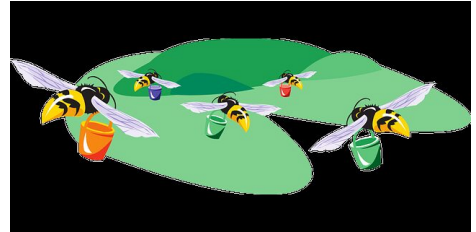
"Yes, yes," cried Hum, "I long to be at it; let's go."

So away they went and flew to a bed of flowers. Hum spent the day between the hive and that bed and was quite, quite happy. But Buz, though she, too, liked collecting the honey, wanted to have more excitement in getting it.

Every now and then, as she passed to and from the hive, a lovely field of clover, not far off, sent such a delicious smell, as the breeze swept over it, that she was strongly tempted to disregard the advice she had been given and to hurry off to it.

At last, she could stand it no longer; and, rising high into the air, she sailed over the wall and went out into the world beyond.

And so she reached the field of clover, and flying quite low over the flowers, was astonished to see how many bees were busy among them - bumblebees without end, and plenty of honeybees, too; in fact, the air was filled with the pleasant murmur that they made.



"I'm sure," said Buz to herself, "this is the place for me! Poor, dear old Hum! I hope she is enjoying herself as much as I am. I don't mean to be lazy, so here goes for some honey."

Buz was very diligent indeed and soon collected as much honey as she could carry. But by the time she had done this, she found herself close to the farther end of the clover field, and while resting for a moment before starting to carry her load to the hive, she noticed a little pond in the corner. Feeling thirsty after her hard work, she flew off to take a few sips; but just as she reached the pond and was in the act of descending, a light gust of wind caught her and turned her half over, and before she could recover herself, she was plunged far out into the water!

Poor Buz! She was a brave little bee, but this was a terrible accident; and after a few wild struggles, she almost gave up. The water was so cold, and she felt so helpless in it; and the accident had happened so suddenly, and taken her so utterly by surprise, that it is no wonder she lost courage. Only for a moment though; just as she was giving up the hard and seemingly useless work of paddling and struggling with all her poor little legs at once, she saw that a bit of stick was floating near her, and with renewed energy, she attempted to get to it.

It was very hard though; there was the stick, not more than a foot away from her; if she could only reach it! She battled away harder than ever, though her strength began to fail and she was becoming numbed with the cold. Just as she made this last effort, another gust of wind swept over the pond, and Buz saw that the stick began to move through the water, and came nearer and nearer to her. The fact was that a small twig sticking up from it acted as a sail, though Buz did not know this. And now the stick was quite close, almost within reach; in another moment, she would be on it. But a moment seems a long time when one is at the last gasp, as poor Buz was.

Just as she was sinking, she touched the stick with one little claw, and held on as only drowning people can; and then she got another claw safely lodged, and was able to rest for a moment.

But it was very hard to get up on the stick, very hard. However, Buz managed it at last and dragged herself out of the cold water. By this time, the breeze was blowing steadily over the pond, and the stick would soon reach the bank, but Buz felt very miserable and cold, and her wings clung tightly to her, and she looked dreadful. The pond, too, was overshadowed by trees, so there were no sunbeams to warm her. "Ah!" thought she, "if I can manage to drag myself up into the sunshine and rest and be well warmed, I will soon be better."

Well, the bank was safely reached at last, but Buz, all throughout her life, never forgot how hard it was climbing up the side. The long grasses yielded to her weight and bent almost straight down, as if on purpose to make it as uphill work for her as possible. And even when she reached the top, it took her a long time to get across the patch of dark shadow and out into the sunlight. But she managed to arrive there at last, and crawling on the top of a stone which had been well warmed by the sun's rays, she rested for a long time.

At last, she recovered sufficiently to go back to the hive. "If I ever get home," she said to herself, "I will tell Hum all about it, and how right she was to take advice."

Now whether it was the exercise that did her good or that the sun's rays became hotter that afternoon, I don't know, but this is certain: Buz felt better after every flight. When she reached the end of the clover field, she sipped a little honey, cleaned herself with her feet, stretched her wings, and with the sun glistening brightly on her, looked fine again. Her last flight brought her to the top of the kitchen-garden wall. After resting here, she opened her wings and flew to the hive, which she entered just as if nothing had happened.

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