

The Beehive

Alex Lin

"Alex, get that newspaper and prepare the smoker will ya?" asked my Grandfather as he grabbed the small crowbar from the trunk of his vintage Toyota Sienna which I remember since the very earliest days.

"Sure!" I responded eagerly.

"Don't burn yourself. After you set it up bring it over to the hives. I'll be needing it."

"Ok!"

My Grandfather closes the trunk to the van. He picks up his head net and puts it on. I pick up the newspaper from the grass and run to the shed. It smells greasy and rusty. I scan the shelves for the silver smoker. A strong breeze blows.

"Ahh, there it is," I mutter to myself. I grab it from the bottom shelf. I open the lid and crumble up the newspaper. I take the lighter from my pocket and carefully ignite the bottom of the newspaper. The fire spreads fast but I manage to shove it into the smoker before it burns me. I close the lid. I run to my Grandfather.

"Here Grandpa! It's ready." I said confidently, handing him the smoker. I love helping him.

"Good job, ok put this on." He hands me a head net.

I quickly put it on.

My Grandfather takes the smoker and sets it on the grass. He slides the crowbar into an opening under the lid to the beehive and with one strong push, he pries it open, revealing the top. Countless bees crawl over each other. They seem unfazed by the sudden opening of their home as the bright sunlight hits their black and yellow fur. The buzzing grew louder and the smell of honey fills the air. My Grandfather picks up the smoker, and with one strong pump, he blows on the open hive. The bees scatter, stumbling over each other trying to get away from the smoke.

"How much honey is there grandpa?" I ask.

"We need to check every frame to see, but I think there's plenty."

Using the crowbar, my Grandfather loosens the first frame. He sets the crowbar aside and with both bare hands, he pulls it out. I stare at it. The honeycomb bright yellow with hundreds of bees crawling and nurturing it. I feel mesmerized by the unique hexagon pattern of the honeycomb.

"Ahhhh, this is amazing!" said my Grandfather. "There's a whole lot. Holy cow. I wasn't expecting this much."

Smiling, he rotates the honeycomb frame around to check the other side.

At the front of the hive, I can see bees leaving and returning, those returning with massive yellow balls of pollen stuck to their hind legs. Their entire operation ran like clockwork.

My Grandfather carefully puts the frame back. He picks up the crowbar, and once again pries loose the next frame.

"You wanna take this frame out?" he asked.

"Me?"

"Heh, who else am I talking to? Cmon just try."

I eyeball the hive with great uncertainty and a huge amount of trepidation.

"Don't over think it Alex, just grab hold of the edges and pull it out." He places his fingers on the edges demonstrating.

I took a deep breath. I slowly place my hands on the frame edges. I feel it vibrate from the bees buzzing and crawling on it. The only protection we have is our head nets.

"Ok now just pull it out!" reassured my Grandfather.

His words bolster my confidence. He made me feel brave and fearless.

I clench my fingers on the frame, and begin to lift it. The weight of it almost makes it slip out of my hands. I stare at its beautiful complexity. I can still see some of the bees spitting out the honey into the remaining empty hexagon containers.

"We are certainly in luck today!" said my Grandfather.

I look at him. I haven't ever seen him this delighted before. I feel so comforted. I enjoy watching him so much, examining the honeycomb. This is a wonderful experience to share with him.

"This is perfect, alright now just slide it back. We are definitely taking these home!"

I thoroughly lower the frame into the case, I let go and it fits perfectly into its position.

We briefly checked the next eight frames, each one seems to have more honey than the previous one. My Grandfather gingerly shake off the bees from each frame and loads them into the van. We fill the hive with a set of new empty frames. Grandfather covers the hive.

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That evening, my Grandfather, my Grandmother and I sit at the dinner table. The honey dissolving in our cups of tea. The sweetness that nature produces is extraordinary. I grin and take a sip.