

Bobby  
Bumble's  
Afraid to Fly



Ethan  
Crownberry

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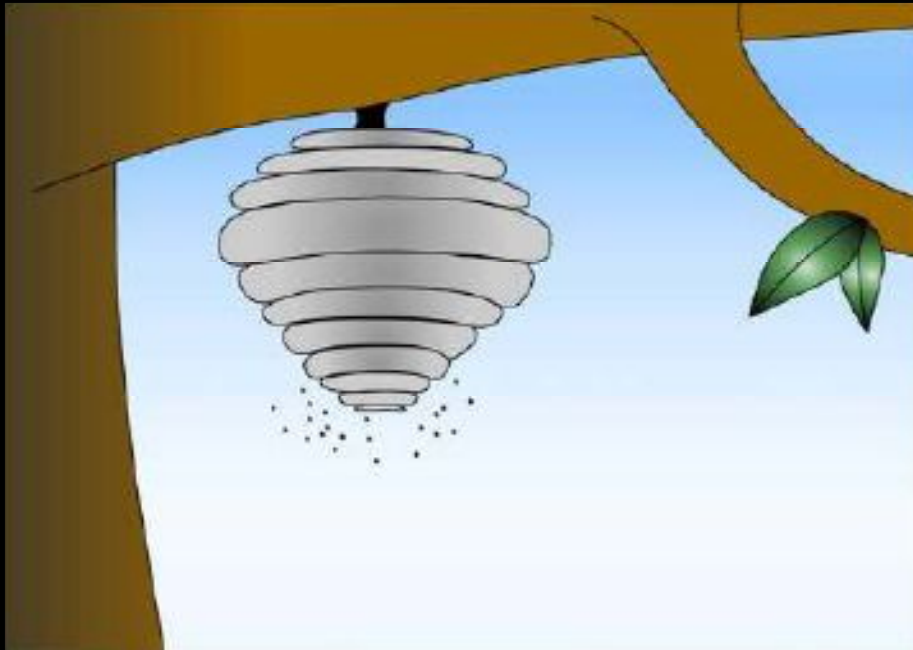
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To my wife and mother-in-law, both of whom I have  
used as a human shield against a wayward bee or two.

Little Bobby Bumble was a little Bumble tot,  
and Bumble bees can fly,  
but Bobby Bumble just could not.

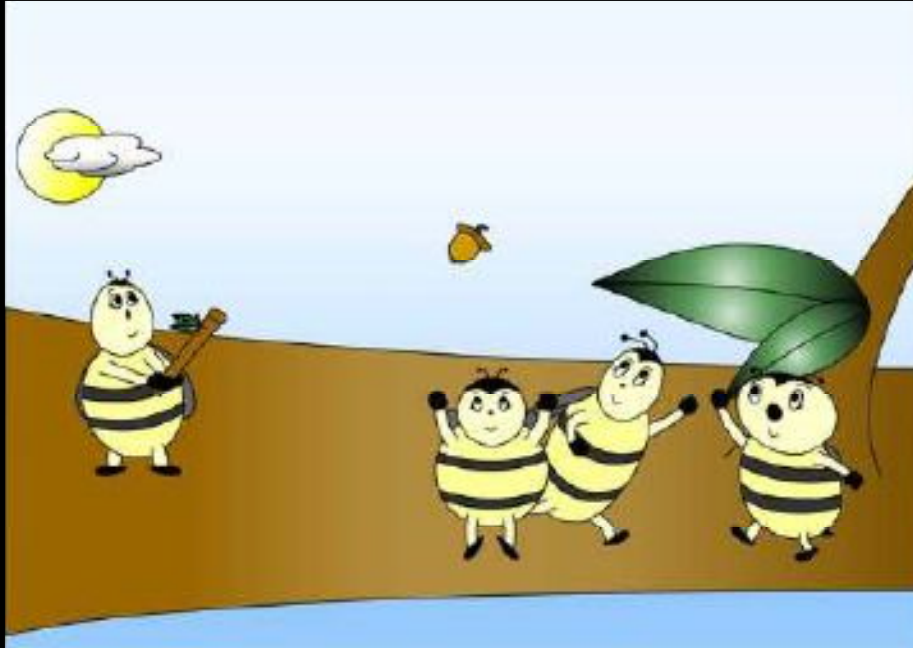




He lived quite high above the ground, as far as one could see,  
in a hive that hung from the highest branch of an olden sycamore tree,  
in a hive so very high and safe, as high as a hive could be,  
with his brothers, and his sisters, and his mother, Queen Marie.

Bobby had so many brothers that he could not name them all,  
but his favorite three, as young as he, were Johnny, George, and Paul.  
They always played together—always four and never more;  
the rest were just too old for games and really quite a bore.





And so we start his story on a beautiful, bright spring day,  
when Bobby, Johnny, George, and Paul had gone outside to play.  
They had spent so many days inside, but now the rain was done;  
it was time to leave the hive to have a bit of Bumble fun.



And suddenly while playing, Johnny had a wicked thought—  
a thought so very wicked it was sure to get them caught.  
He said, “Hey! Do you see the branch right there as plain as day?  
I bet you we can fly there. I’ll go first and lead the way.”





“We’re not allowed to fly un-watched,” said Bobby in a huff.  
“We’ve only had one lesson and we haven’t learned enough.  
We can fly out on our own after we’ve passed our flying test,  
but for now, we’re not allowed to go too far beyond the nest.”

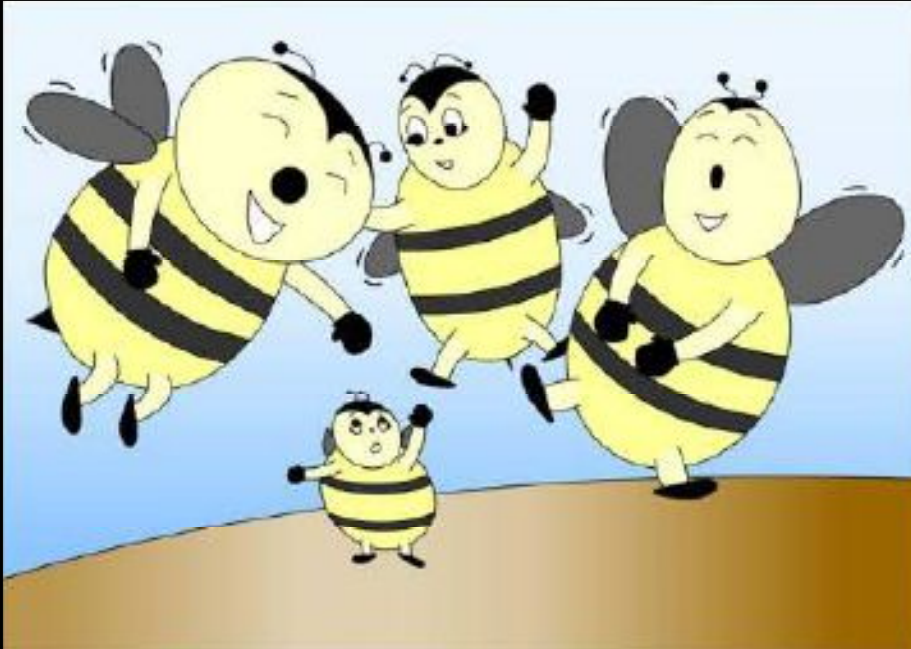
“Oh, don’t be such a baby bee,” said Johnny with a leer.

“It’s probably quite easy, flying there from over here.”

“We’re bound to get in trouble,” Bobby said. “We shouldn’t go!  
One of us could fall down to the ground so far below.”

“I’m going!” stated Johnny. “We have wings! We can not fall!  
You can wait here if you’re chicken—if you do not have the gall.”  
“And what about the two of you?” he said to George and Paul.  
“Are you brave enough to try, or are you cowards after all?”  
“We are surely not as chicken as our little Bobby bee,”  
answered Paul. “Count me in!” added George, who made it three.





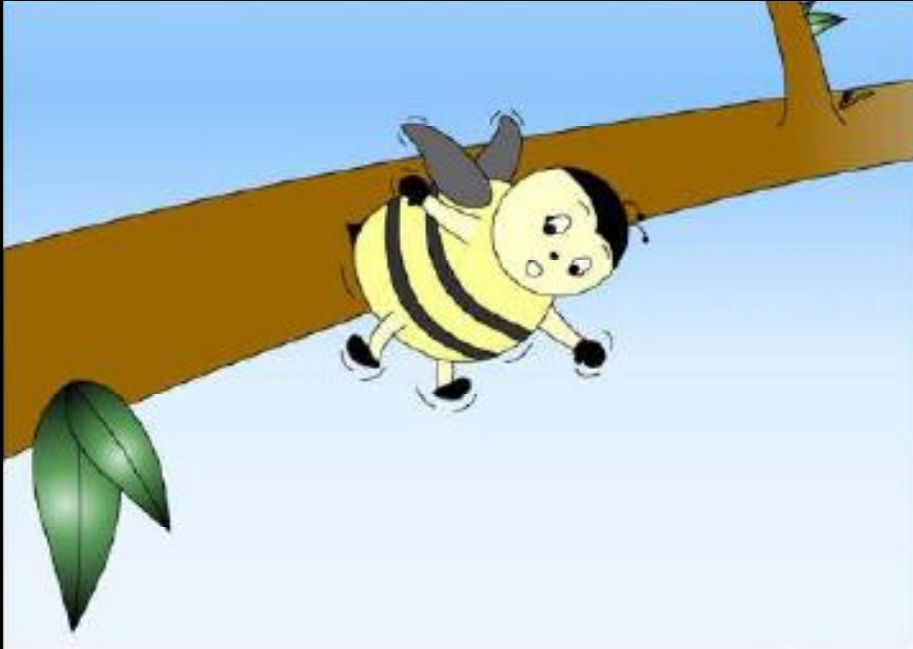
And so they started buzzing—started buzzing very fast,  
while Bobby stood there watching—stood there watching quite aghast.

Then they rose into the air and circled over Bobby's head.

“You’re a chicky-chick-chick-chicken, baby bee,” they meanly said.

Then off they went, right through the air, without a single care,  
the three of them zigzagging and zagzigging here and there.  
They had made it to the branch without a moment left to spare.  
With wings so very tired, they had made it by a hair.  
Then Johnny yelled, "HEY BOBBY, COME ON OVER IF YOU DARE!"

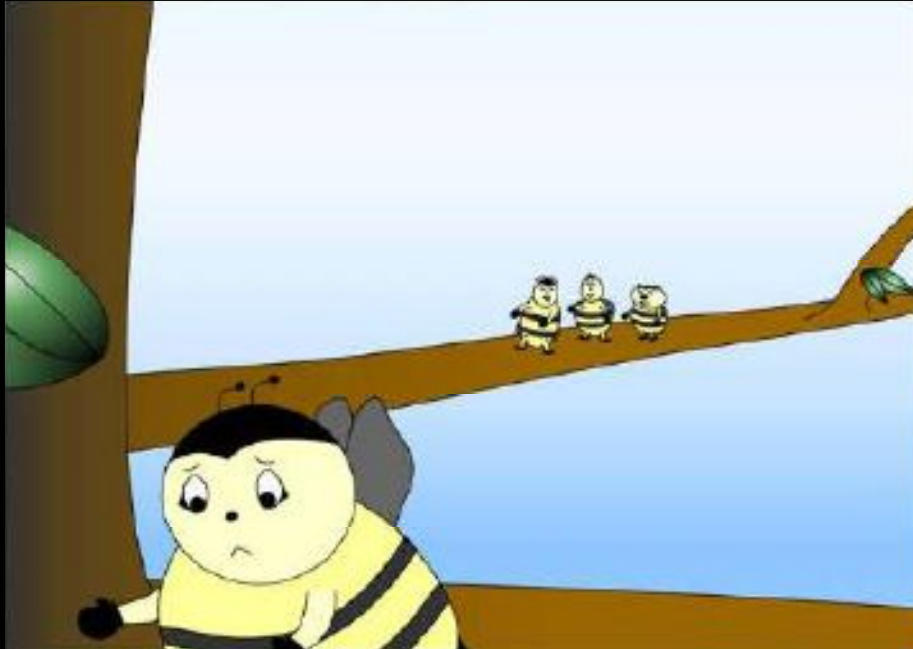




“If you can do it, so can I,” said Bobby, feeling pressed to try.  
And so he flapped his wings a bit and heaved a heavy sigh.  
And with a quiet humming sound, he slowly rose and buzzed around,  
wobbling left and right, now quite afraid, but not sure why.  
And with a lump stuck in his throat, and all the hair up on his coat,  
he flew out hardly half an inch when something caught his eye...

That “something” was the ground so very far below the sky—  
far enough to make him dizzy—far enough that he could die.  
“ITS TOO HIGH!” Bobby cried. “OH-ME-OH-MY! IT’S FAR TOO HIGH!”  
Then he dropped back on the branch and slumped his head down for a cry,  
and wept, “Why, if I’m a Bumble, am I so afraid to fly?”





Then back inside the hive he went while Johnny laughed at him,  
where he sulked and sulked and sulked and felt so very sad and grim.

Bobby hid away for days inside his Bumble honeycomb.

Poor Bobby couldn't bear to show his face outside his home...

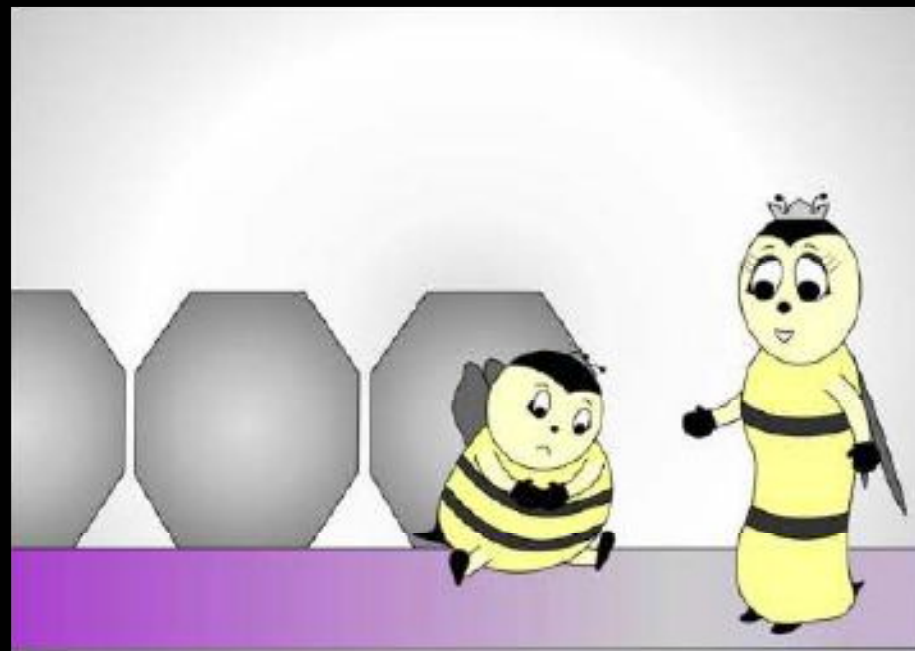


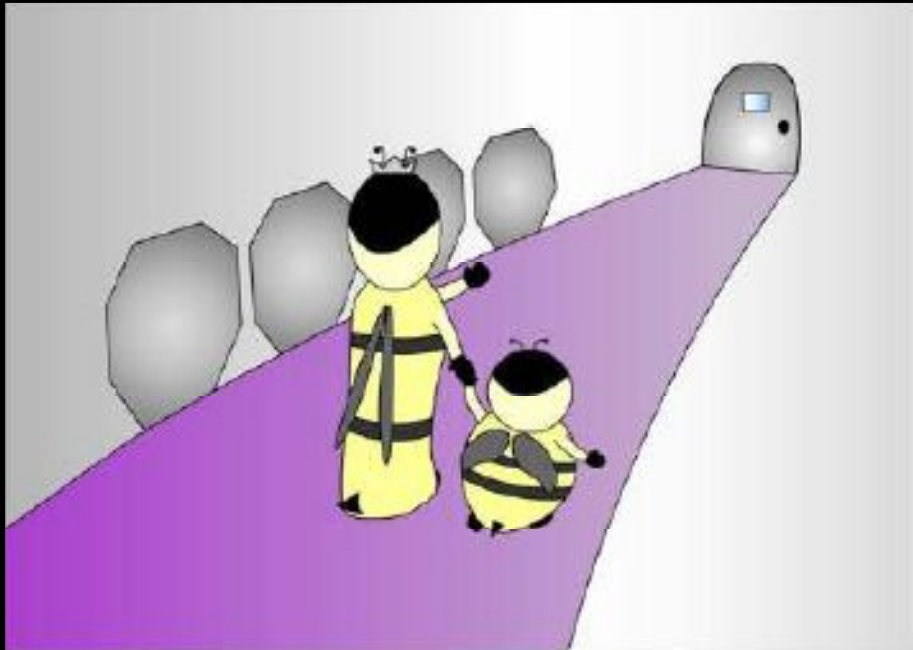
...Until the day when Queen Marie had found his hiding place,  
and said, “Hey Bobby, how’d you get that frown upon your face?”

Bobby said, “I can not fly. I am a washed up Bumble bee.

I’m afraid of falling down, right to the bottom of the tree.

I think there might be something very, very wrong with me.”





“That’s quite a problem,” said the Queen, “you have to overcome, but you can’t just stay inside all day and be a Bumble bum.

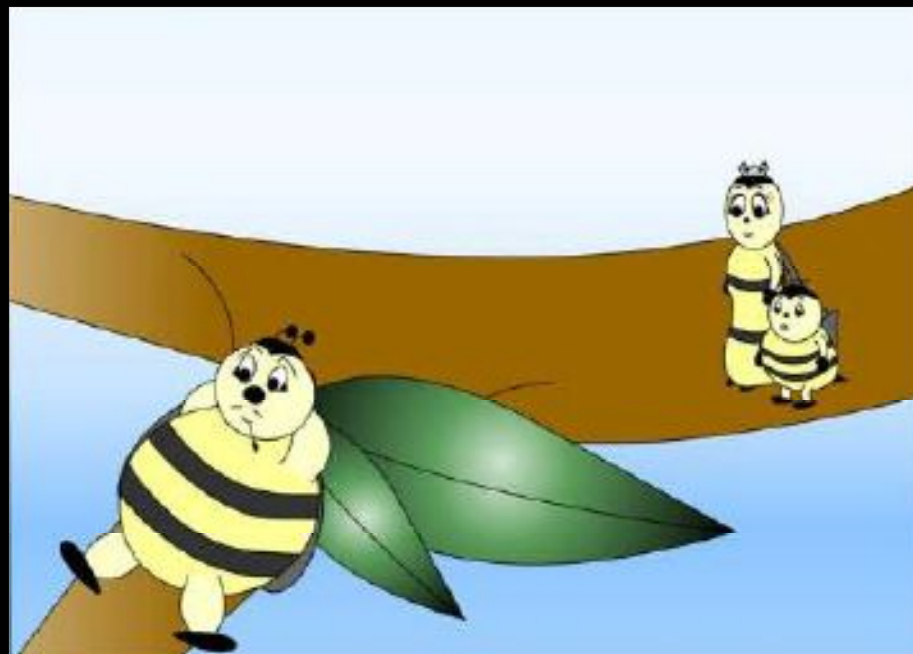
There are flowers to be pollinated, honey to be made; there is work that needs a-doing; we are Bumble bees by trade.

Perhaps you need a lesson from the Bumbliest bee of all. He can teach you how to fly. He can teach you not to fall.

His name is Ringo Bumble, and he’s big, just like a ball. He’s at least two inches wide. He’s at least two inches tall.

And if you’d care to visit him, we’ll make a social call.”

So off they went, outside the hive, to find this Ringo bee.  
He wasn't very hard to spot—not very hard to see.  
That Queen Marie just wasn't kidding when she said how big he was;  
he was bumbly, and was bouncy, and was full of Bumble fuzz.

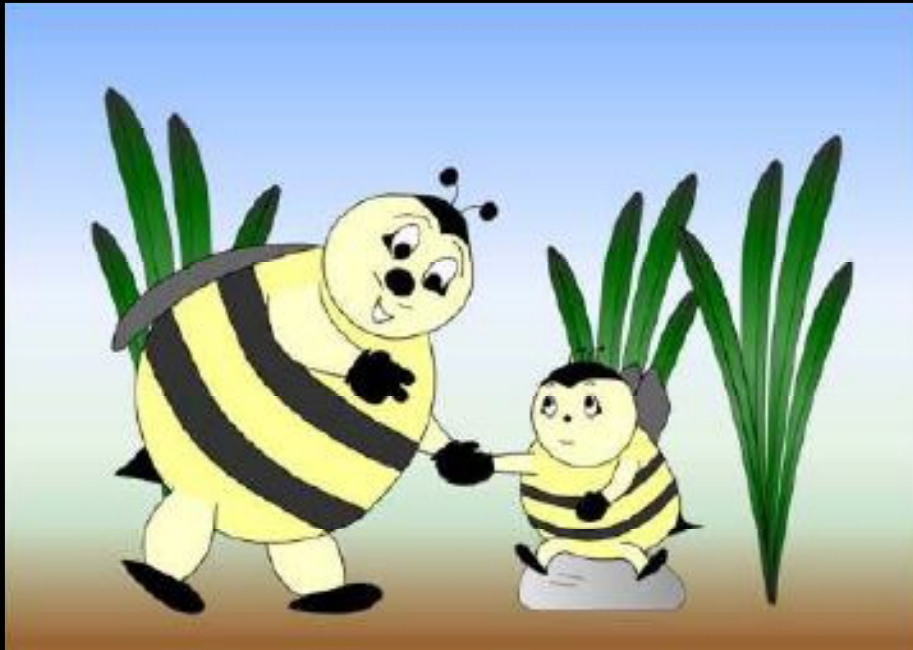




“I have a little matter,” said the Queen, “to put to rest.  
Bobby needs a little coaching—needs to pass his flying test.  
So take him under your wing and make him Bumbly through and through.  
Teach him how to fly, high in the air, the same as you.”

So Ringo said, “Hop on my back. We’re going for a ride.” Bobby did, and, with two handfals, grabbed the hair upon his hide. Then off they went a-buzzing. Ringo hollered, “HANG ON TIGHT!” Then they spiraled to the ground with Bobby trembling in fright—with poor Bobby hanging on to Ringo’s scruff with all his might.





Then Ringo took him to a place to teach him all he knew.

He said, "Just listen to me, and I'll tell you what to do."

And then he took him by the hand, and looked him in the eye,

and said, "This flying stuff is easy. Why, it's easier than pie.

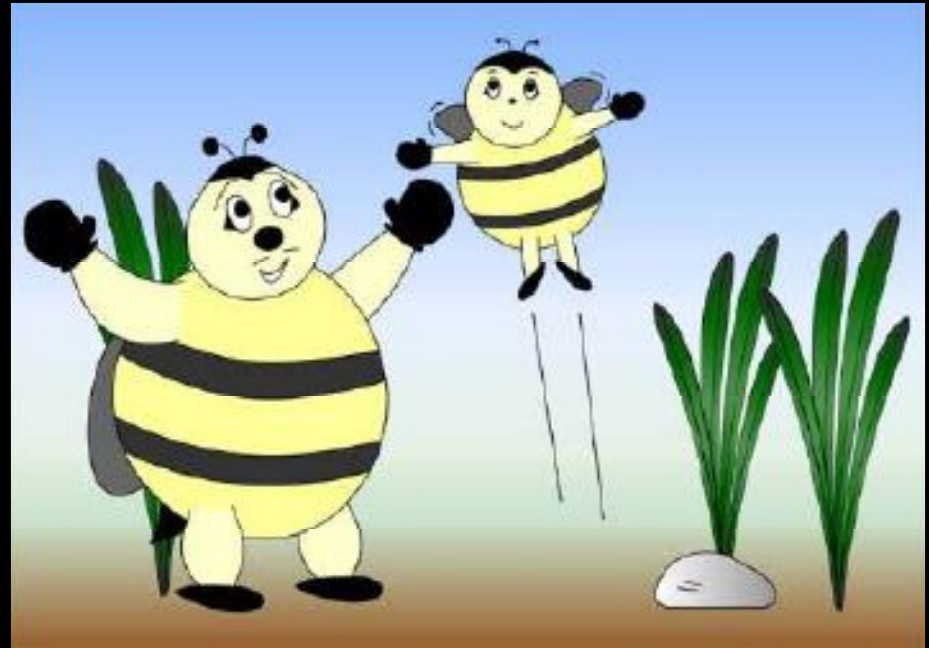
All you really need to know are two important things:

Number one: you're a Bumble.

Number two: you have wings.

And if you bounce as though your Bumble legs are just like springs,  
you can launch up in the air and let your wings just do their things."

So Bobby bounced a bit and gave his wings a little flitter.  
Then soon his little flitter got so fast it made him jitter.  
He said, "I think I'm ready now—I'm ready for a try."  
"If you're ready," Ringo Bumble said, "then shoot up toward the sky."  
And with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye,  
Bobby catapulted upward, climbing more than two feet high.  
"I CAN DO IT!" shouted Bobby, "I CAN DO IT! I CAN FLY!"





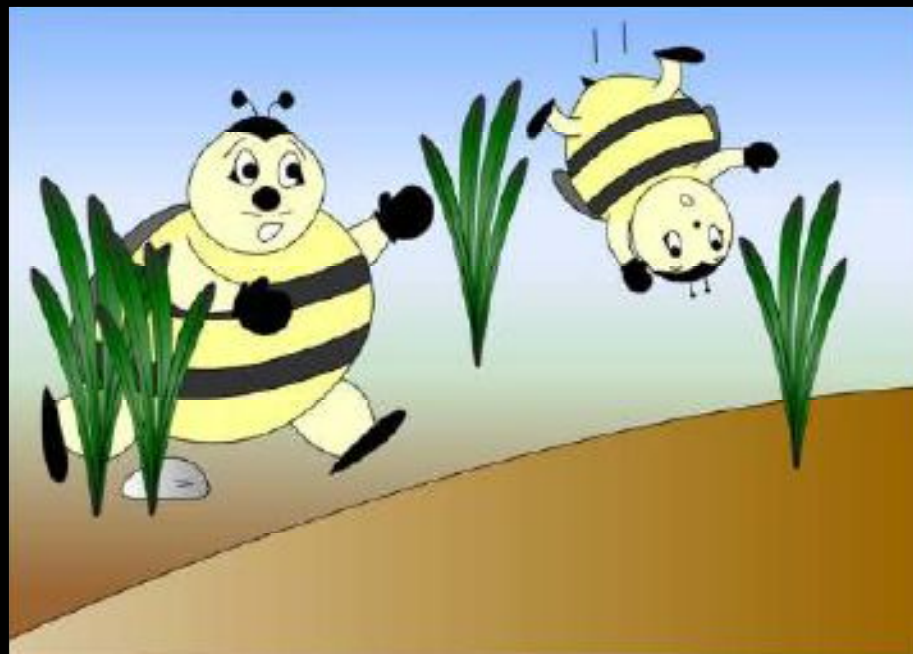
But as he hovered over head, something filled him full of dread.  
Something wasn't right. He looked around. What could it be?

Listening very closely, he could hear, in part but mostly,  
a sound that sounded something like a tiny little bee.

It was Ringo far below him now quite smaller than a flea,  
and looking up so proudly shouting, "THAT A-BOY, BOB-BY!"



And even though he'd climbed to only two feet, maybe three,  
the height had made him dizzy—made him feel so awfully  
that his wings just stopped a-buzzing oh-so very suddenly.  
Then Bobby started falling, crying out, “OH-MY-OH-ME!”  
Then he hit the ground so hard he nearly broke a Bumble knee.





“That wasn’t bad. You did all right,” said Ringo with a smile.

“You took off like a pro, and you were airborne for a while.”

“But I fell,” said Bobby sadly. “I was not supposed to fall.

I think I’ve got to be the worstest Bumble of them all.”

“Nonsense!” stated Ringo. “I will tell you what you need.

A little bit more practice would do perfectly indeed.

We will practice everyday. We will come to this here spot.

I will teach and you will learn, or Ringo Bumble I am not.”

So Ringo taught, and Bobby learned; they practiced every day.

But Bobby kept on falling in exactly the same way.

“I give up! I can’t do it,” Bobby said with one more try.

“I guess as Bumbles go, I was just not meant to fly.”

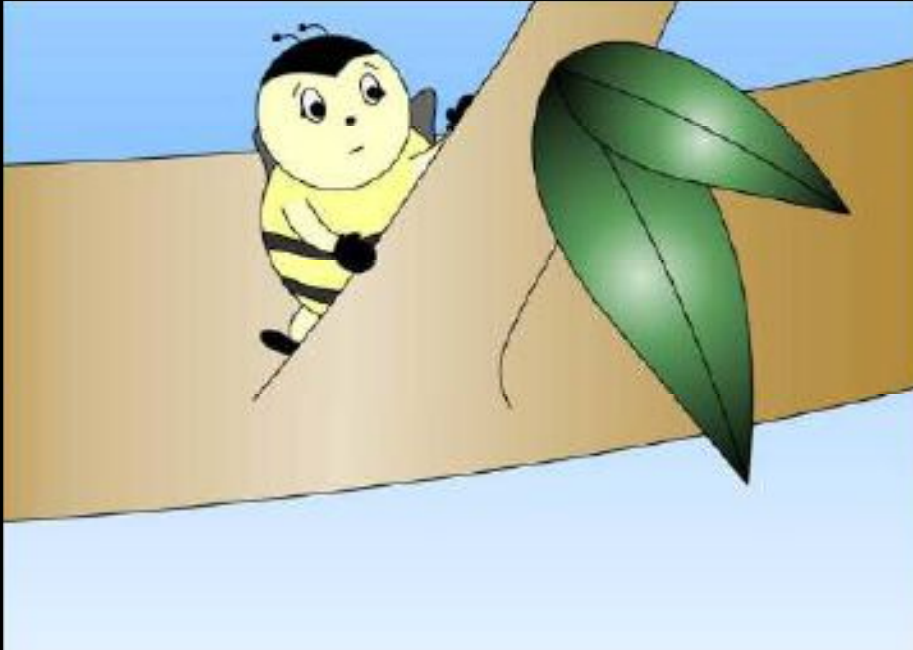




Then Ringo sat him down and calmly took him by the hand.  
He said, "I've one more thing to tell you, and I hope you understand.  
If you keep your wings a-buzzing, you will never hit the ground.  
There is magic in your wings and in that humming Bumble sound."

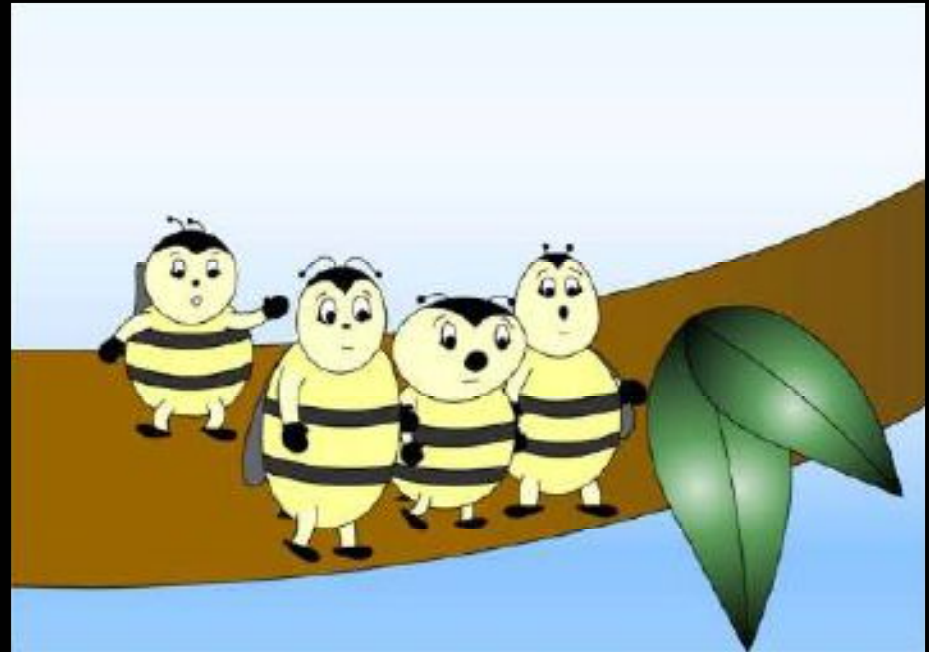
“Magic?” stated Bobby. “I just don’t believe that’s true.  
I don’t believe that such a thing could come from me or you.”  
“And that is why you’re falling,” Ringo Bumble wisely said.  
“You’re not listening to your wings; you’re only listening to your head.  
You’re not afraid of flying; what frightens you is height.  
And looking downward seems to lock your Bumble wings up good and tight.  
So remember what I’m telling you, and ponder this tonight:  
A Bumble’s always buzzing and their wings are always right.  
There is magic in our buzzing. Buzzing keeps a bee in flight.  
So always keep your wings a-buzzing. Buzz—buzz—buzz with all your might.”

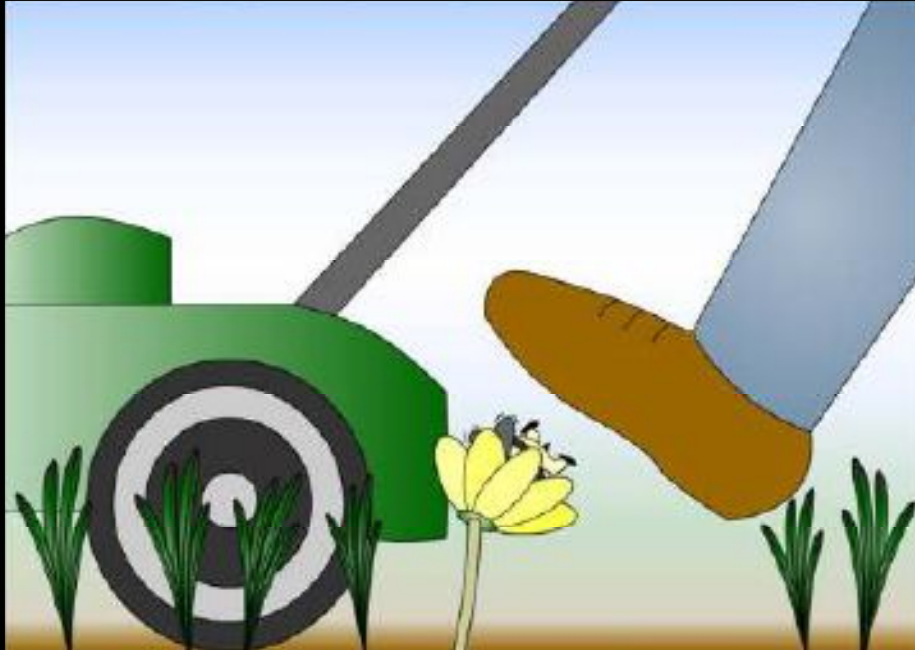




And in the morning after, Bobby went out for a walk—  
out in the tree to look for Ringo for a little Bumble talk.  
He had pondered Ringo's words for nearly more than half the night,  
and he was curious to see if Ringo Bumble's words were right.  
He was ready for his lesson. He was ready for his flight.  
But it seemed that Ringo Bumble wasn't anywhere in sight...

And as he walked a little further, just a yard or two in all,  
Bobby came across his Bumble brothers Johnny, George, and Paul.  
They were standing there just gawking, all without a single sound.  
They had spotted something awful down below along the ground.





“What is it?” Bobby asked. “What are you looking at down there?”  
And as he looked where they were looking, something gave him quite a scare.

It was Ringo being stepped on by a man quite in a hurry,  
who was pushing his lawnmower through the grass without a worry.

Ringo never heard him coming; he was off his Bumble guard.

He was pollinating daisies that had grown up in the yard.  
But the man was not to blame; he didn’t know that he was there.

There’s no way he could have seen him, to be honest, to be fair.



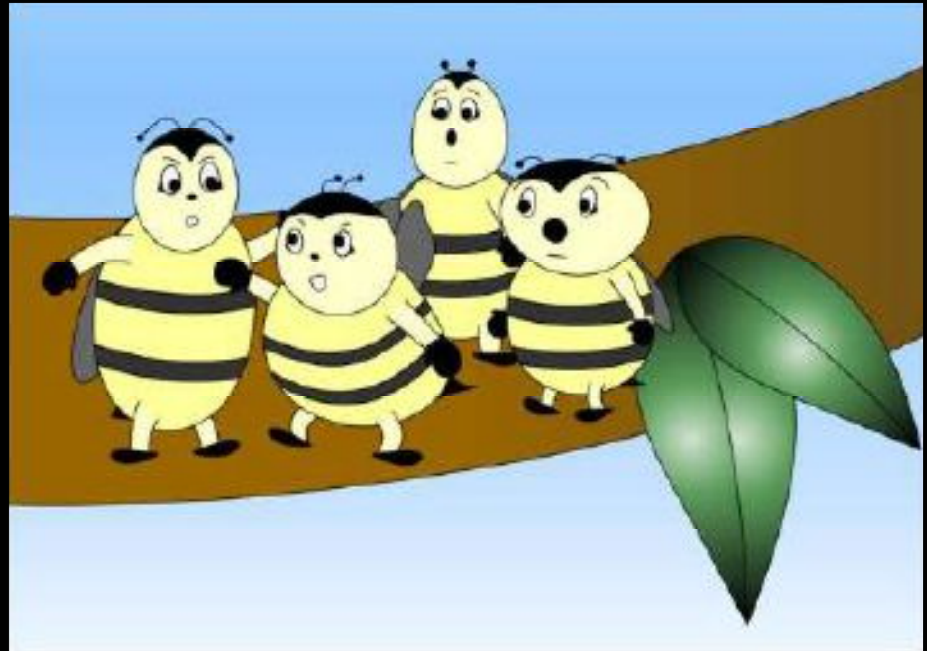
“His Bumble wings are broken!” Bobby gasped. “He can not fly!  
And the mower’s coming ‘round! We must help him or he’ll die!”

“Are you crazy?” stated Johnny. “That is really quite a haul!

It’s impossible to lift him. And the four of us could fall.”

“Are you chicken?” Bobby asked him, then he looked at George and Paul.

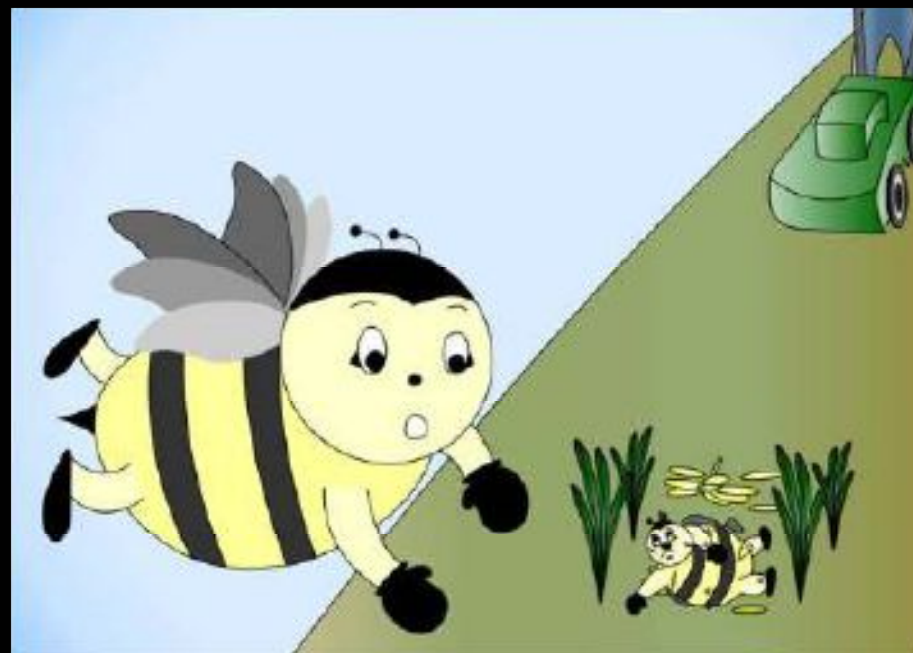
But the three of them just stood there, never answering at all.

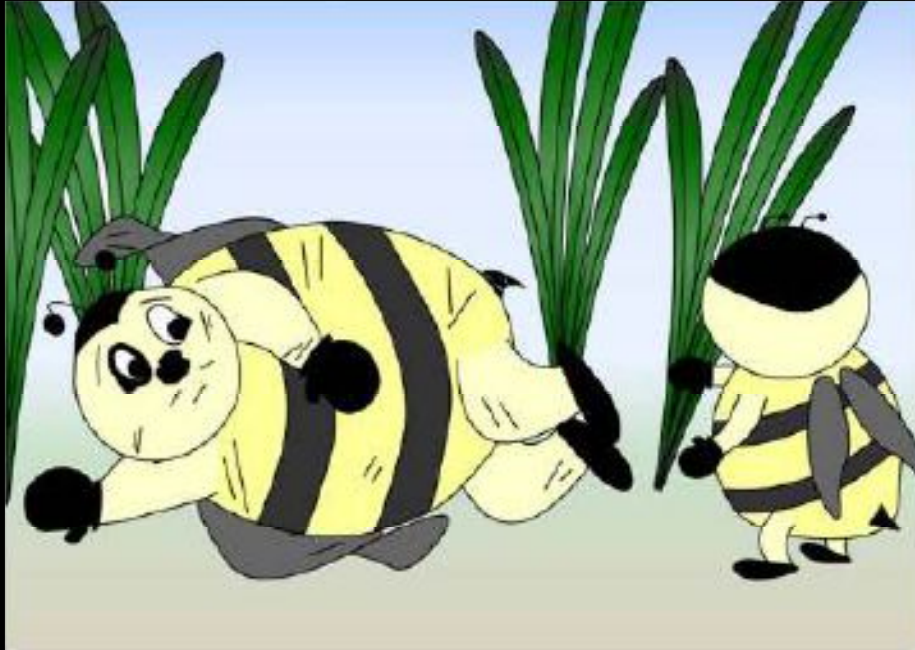




“I’m going!” stated Bobby, just as firmly as could be.  
“I will save him while the three of you just sit here in this tree.  
I will lift him by myself . I will take him to the hive.  
I will save him from the mower. I will help him stay alive.”  
And so Bobby started buzzing—started buzzing very fast,  
while Johnny, George, and Paul stood there watching quite aghast.  
Then he rose into the air and circled over Johnny’s head,  
and though he could have called him names, Bobby held his tongue instead.

Then off he went, right through the air, and headed for the ground,  
with his Bumble wings a-buzzing with a mighty humming sound.  
He could see the mower mowing, getting closer by the inch.  
He could see his Ringo Bumble in an awful Bumble pinch.





And in a flash, he was there; he had landed in the yard.  
He was standing next to Ringo. His Bumble heart was beating hard.  
Ringo's fur was quite a mess, and his tail was in a twist.  
He had several broken ribs, and a sprained Bumble wrist.  
Not to mention both his wings; we'll just add them to the list.  
There wasn't any part of Ringo that the man's foot had missed.

“You see!” said Ringo proudly. “There is magic after all.  
You kept your wings a-buzzing, and you flew, you didn’t fall.”  
“But you really shouldn’t be here,” Ringo told him with a moan.  
“Save yourself while you can, Bobby. Fly off alone.”





There was no time to waste. There was no time to squander.  
There was no time for thinking or stopping to ponder.  
The mower was close and in moments would pass  
and would chop them up both with the weeds and the grass.

So as fast as he could, Bobby grabbed Ringo's hand,  
firmly planting his feet in the dirt and the sand.  
Then he started to buzz, and got ready to fly,  
and with a deep Bumble breath he looked up at the sky,  
and said, "Don't worry, Ringo. I won't let you die."







And with the mower at hand, Bobby started to bounce.  
He felt lighter than air—just as light as an ounce.  
The blades of the mower were as loud as could be.  
Oh yes, the mower was close—just an inch less than three.  
And with one final spring, he took off like a rocket,  
nearly pulling poor Ringo's arm out of its socket.  
Then up, up he went with a loud buzzing sound  
as the mower passed by where they were on the ground.



Then he climbed and he climbed, holding Ringo's hand tight,  
with his Bumble wings buzzing with Bumble bee might.  
They were buzzing so loud—it was all he could hear.  
They were humming so high—ringing high in each ear.  
And for miles around you could hear it quite clear;  
Bobby Bumble had finally conquered his fear.





And with Ringo still in tow, Bobby flew back to the hive.  
They were in one Bumble piece, and they had made it home alive.  
And as quickly as he could, the Bumble doctor came to call,  
and he fixed up Ringo Bumble in no Bumble time at all.  
He mended both his wings and put a cast around his wrist,  
and said, "I think he'll be all right now, but I really must insist  
that for seven solid days—at least one-hundred-sixty-eight hours,  
he must stay inside and not go out to pollinate the flowers."

And later, Queen Marie had made it known throughout the nest  
that when it came to flying Bobby Bumble was the best.  
That night she threw a party, and, in front of every guest,  
she draped a golden medal down across his Bumble chest.  
It was big, and it was shiny, and it bore the Bumble crest.  
Then she stated proudly, “Bobby Bumble, I’m impressed.  
You have proven that you’re worthy and are far above the rest.  
And I declare, with flying colors, you have passed your flying test.”





And in the years that followed no one really could explain where Bobby got the strength to lift up Ringo like a crane.

Nobody ever knew or even asked the reason why he was suddenly so brave enough to fly up in the sky.

Perhaps it was the magic in the buzzing sound he made. Or perhaps the magic buzzing was the spinning mower blade.

It really didn't matter what had given him his might, but what mattered most of all was that they made it home all right.

And every time he lays his Bumble head down for the night,  
Bobby thinks of Ringo's words before he shuts his Bumble light:  
"A Bumble's always buzzing, and their wings are always right.  
There is magic in our buzzing. Buzzing keeps a bee in flight."  
And he never did forget those two important Ringo things:  
Number one: he's a Bumble  
Number two: he has wings.



It's amazing what you can do  
when you believe in yourself.



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