



The Bumble-bee and the Rabbit



THERE was once a large round bumble-bee who flew from flower to flower on the sunny hillside. His coat was velvety and his hum was loud. He was a beautiful bee, and very happy.

One day he flew into a spider's web. The spider crouched under a leaf, fearful of going near the bee and hoping that he would free himself. The spider did not like either bees or wasps in her web. Sometimes, if the wasp or bee was small, she cut the web around them so that they dropped to the ground and crawled away to clean their wings. But she did not like to go near this great bumble-bee. The bee was afraid. He did not like the feel of the sticky web around his wings. He tried to fly away but he flew into more of the web, and soon he could not work his wings at all.

The spider watched. Suppose the bee could not get away? He would soon tire himself out and then she could kill him. She stayed under her leaf, watching with all her eight eyes.

A sandy rabbit, hearing the anxious buzz made by the bee, ran up to see what the fuss was about. He was astonished to see the bee caught in the web. The bee saw him and called to him.

"Help me, rabbit! I am caught here! If you could break the web for me I should drop to the ground and be able to clean my wings and fly. Please help me!" The rabbit went closer. He lifted his paw and broke the web. The bee fell to the ground. He cleaned his wings carefully and spoke to the kind little rabbit.

"You are good," he said. "I am only a little thing and may never be able to repay you for your kindness, but I thank you with all my heart!"

The rabbit laughed. "It was nothing," he said. "As for repaying me, that you can never do, little bee. You are so small and I am so big-a tiny creature like you cannot help a rabbit. I do not want to be repaid. Fly off in peace."

The bee soon flew off with a loud buzz. The rabbit went back to his play. The spider carefully mended her web, and hoped she would catch no more bees.

The days went by. The bee was careful to look out for webs, and did not go near them. The sandy rabbit played happily about the hillside.

He didn't know that a red fox was watching him each morning, hoping that he would go near to the bush under which he was hiding-then the fox would pounce out, and the rabbit would be caught!

The sandy rabbit did not know that any fox was near. He and his friends played merrily each evening and morning. And one morning he went near to the fox's bush.

The fox lay still. He hardly breathed. He kept his eyes on the fat little sandy rabbit. He looked round. No one was near to help him. The rabbit's father and mother had gone down their holes. The shepherd-boy was not yet up. There was no one to save the little rabbit.

A large bumble-bee came sailing by, up early because the sun was warm. He settled on a late blackberry flower to get the honey. The flower was not far from the fox. In alarm the bee suddenly saw the fox's sharp eyes looking at him.

He flew up into the air, wondering why the fox was hiding. He took a look round and then saw his friend, the sandy rabbit, playing very near-oh, much too near that thick blackberry bush!

"The fox is waiting to catch the rabbit!" thought the bee, in fear. "How can I save him? He was so kind to me!"

He saw the fox stiffen ready to pounce. Straightway the bee flew down to the sharp nose of the red fox. He dug his sting into the fox's nose and then flew off in a hurry.

The fox barked in pain as the bee stung him, and swung his head from side to side, rustling the bush. The sandy rabbit heard and in a trice he was off to his hole, his little white bobtail bobbing up and down as he went, a danger-signal to all the other rabbits there.

"Fox!" he cried, "redfox!"

The fox knew it was no good waiting any longer. He would never catch the rabbit now that he knew his hiding-place. He slunk off, furiously angry with the bee. But the little bee was pleased. "I am only



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small," he hummed, "but I can do a kind turn as well as anybody else. You did not know I should save your life one day, rabbit, when you saved mine! Little creatures can often do big things." The bumble-bee was quite right, wasn't he!