

# Emma and the Honey Thief



“**Q**UICK, EM, GET the pie tins.”

Emma reached across the basket of beans she had just picked and grabbed two shiny tins. Her mother pointed to a dark creature skulking at the edge of the garden.

“Now,” her mother ordered, and Emma clapped the pie tins together.

*Bang-clang. Bang-clang.*

The raccoon stared curiously at Emma, but did not move.

“Young raccoons sometimes forage during the day,” her mother said. “I guess this one’s getting braver.” She took the tins from Emma and banged them louder, whooping and yelling.

The raccoon scampered back into the woods.

“He’s after the melons this time,” her mother said. “I just hope he leaves the bees alone. The honey is almost ready to harvest.”

Emma glanced down the hill to the hive her mother had set up in the spring. It looked harmless, like an old gray dresser someone had left out in the yard. But it wasn’t. It was filled with honeybees. Thousands of them.



Now, sisters, go forth and forage—  
search for food. Pollinate—deposit  
pollen to fertilize plants—,  
and make sweet honey.

by Joanne Lukens  
Art by Blanche L. Sims

Emma shivered.

Last April, a deliveryman brought a large buzzing package to their house. Her mother had explained, “There aren’t many wild honeybees left anymore. We can’t depend on them to pollinate the garden. I ordered these farm-raised bees to start a new colony.”

Though she hated to admit it, Emma knew the honeybees had been good for the garden. The beans were more plentiful this summer, and the melons bigger and juicier. But that didn’t change how Emma felt about bees.

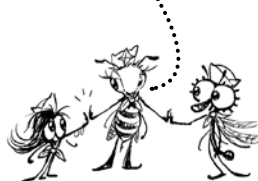
When she was little, she had taken a sip of a soda at a picnic. She didn’t know that a bee had climbed inside the can when she wasn’t looking. It ended up in her mouth, stinging her tongue and her lips before she could spit it out.

Emma’s mother tried to reassure her that honeybees rarely sting unless they are protecting their honey. She also said that the bee that had stung her mouth wasn’t

a honeybee, but a yellow jacket. It didn’t matter. They had stingers, and that was all that mattered to Emma.



Well, we’re back in business.



More like *buzziness*... right?  
Get it?





Two honeybees buzzed by Emma's head.

"Don't swat at them," her mother said. "They're on their way back to the hive to make more honey."

Emma knew her mother was waiting until the last minute to harvest the honey. She was hoping

to skim off enough to fill several jars. The bees would need to live off the rest during the winter.

Every morning that week, her mother had pried the hive's lid open to check the progress inside.

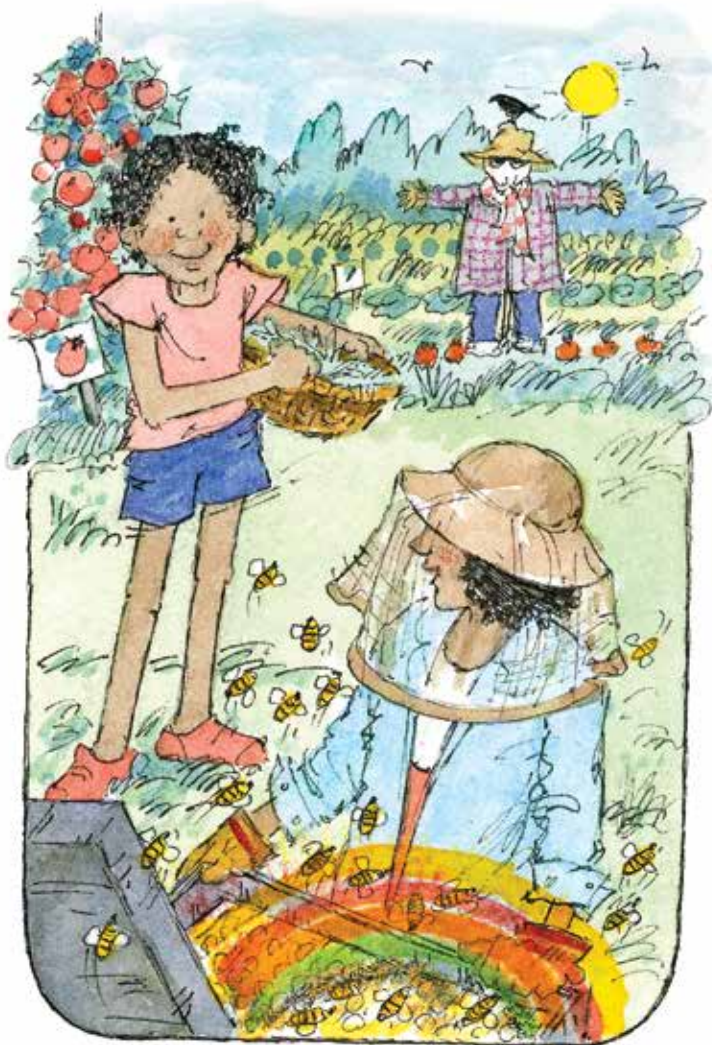
"Come see," she would call from underneath her protective beekeeper's veil. "The honey is dripping off the combs in rainbows—yellow, red, orange, green, and black—depending on which flowers the bees visited."

Emma longed to see the rainbow honey, but she couldn't shake the memory of her bee-stung mouth. If only there were a beekeeper's veil that would cover all of me, she thought, standing a safe distance away.

*Clang.*

Emma's mother dropped the pie tins on the ground. "We might as well take these back inside," she said. "They aren't doing much good here. I thought the noise would scare that raccoon away, but he's too smart. He figured it out."

"Same with the scarecrow." Emma looked up at the jeans, jacket,



Is that some kind of joke?



scarf, and hat she had stuffed with straw earlier that summer. To make him look real, she had even used an old pair of sunglasses for eyes, and gloves for hands, but the raccoon hadn't been fooled for long.

Emma's mother glanced at her watch. "I'm picking up a smoker to calm the bees when I harvest the honey. Want to walk with me to the bee farm?"

Emma wrinkled her nose. "No thanks. I'll carry the beans up to the house."

Emma had just hoisted the last basket onto her hip when she heard an angry buzzing. Down the hill, a swarm of honeybees hovered like a black cloud around a figure perched on the hive.

Emma could see that the lid was lifted on one side. Suddenly, the top half of the raccoon disappeared into the hive. A moment later he sat up and licked his paws.

He was stealing the honey!

Emma wanted to run after her mother, but there wasn't time.

The raccoon was already reaching in again. Emma thought of how disappointed her mother would be if the raccoon got all the honey. She remembered that the bees needed honey to live during the winter. Emma didn't like the bees, but she didn't want them to die either.



Should I have said  
"bees-ness"?



Welp!  
Time to fly!



Gotta go.





Emma stepped back and heard a crunch under her foot. The pie tins. She snatched them up.

*Bang! Clang!* Emma beat the tins together. The raccoon didn't flinch.



*“Whooo!”* Emma yelled and moved towards the hive. *“Whoooo!”*

Honey dripped off the raccoon's black nose, and he caught it with a swipe of his pink tongue. Several bees buzzed toward Emma. She ducked and ran back to the garden.

I need something to cover me, she thought.

Then she spied it.

She yanked the scarecrow to the ground, popping jean snaps and ripping open the jacket. Straw pricked her legs and neck as she pulled on the clothes and lowered the hat over her brow. Then she placed the sunglasses over her eyes.

Bending down, she picked up the pie tins with one gloved hand, then tugged the scarf up over her mouth and nose with the other. Slowly she moved down the hill.

*Bang-clang! Bang-clang!*

More bees swarmed around her. Through the hat, she could hear their frenzied hum.

Emma's breath caught in her throat. She knew they would sting to

Great work, Bee Scouts.  
See you at the Jambor-bee, Mel.



Where's Big Mr. Blimpy?



A big nasty raptor ripped him apart!

We was nearly falcon food!



protect the honey, but she couldn't feel a thing through the heavy clothes.

She moved closer to the hive.

The raccoon stopped in mid-lick. His eyes widened.

"Whhooooo!" Emma hollered through the scarf. "Whhooooo!"

The raccoon leaped down from the hive and scurried away.



"Lucky for us, Em," her mother said, inspecting the hive later that afternoon. "He didn't get much of the honey."

Emma looked over her mother's shoulder. A gentle *buzz-buzz* filled her ears as lazy bees glided by. She waved the smoke away with her gloved hand to get a better look at the rainbow swirls of honey.

"I wish I could have seen that raccoon's face when he saw the scarecrow come to life." Her mother laughed.

Emma smiled. "Let's hurry up and harvest the honey." She adjusted the scarf with her gloved fingers.

"I may have invented the perfect beekeeper's outfit, but I forgot one thing—air conditioning." 🐝



Looks like we're walking, then.



But which way is home?



I got this. No hay problema. Follow me.

