

The Honey Bee, the Bear, and the Crocodile
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A honey bee who was looking for a new home found a tree by a river.
In the water beside the tree lived a crocodile, who was happy to have a new neighbor.

Every day the bee searched for flowers to gather pollen, which she brought back to the tree to build her hive.

The crocodile watched the honey bee fly off and return each day, but he was too shy to show himself, afraid he would frighten her away. So the crocodile stayed hidden, happy to watch the honey bee come and go, collecting pollen and building her home.

One day, a fuzzy brown bear saw the honey bee collecting pollen from a far off flower field and followed her back to the tree.

Although her hive was still new and had not started producing honey yet, the bear was clever.

"Good morning, honey bee. What a fine place to build your hive."
The bee thought the bear was charming and handsome. "Thank you. I try to keep busy and do my best."

The next day, the bear brought the bee flowers. "I hope these can help you build your hive."

"Thank you." The honey bee was impressed by the bear's thoughtful gesture.

Sensing someone in the water, the bear said, "Just watch out for crocodiles. We wouldn't want you getting eaten before you've finished your hive."
The honey bee was surprised by the news and a little bit worried, too, so she thanked the bear for his helpful advice.

That evening, the bee flew over the water, looking for the crocodile.

"I see you there. Are you going to eat me? Why are you hiding?"

The crocodile came to the surface nervously. "I would never eat you," he said.
"Watching you build your nest brings me joy, but I'm just an ugly crocodile and I thought you wouldn't want to be friends."

The honey bee was relieved to learn that the crocodile was nice. "I'm happy to be your friend," she said.

Every day after that, the bear brought flowers to the bee and, gradually, the hive grew bigger.

Every evening, the bee flew over the water, looking for the crocodile.

Because he wasn't nervous anymore, the crocodile swam to the surface and greeted the bee.

While the crocodile floated on the water, the honey bee landed on him to rest her tired wings.

One day, the bear arrived at the tree and the bee wasn't there. Although he was thirsty for a drink of water, the bear was afraid of the crocodile.

"Hey, crocodile," the bear shouted. "If I drink some water, will you try to eat me?" The crocodile wasn't hungry and he was curious to learn about the bee, so he told the bear he wouldn't eat him if the bear answered his questions.

"Why do you bring her flowers?" the crocodile asked.

"Once her hive is finished, it will make honey," the bear replied as he lapped up the water. "I bring her flowers to help her build it..."

"That's nice," the crocodile answered, but the bear wasn't listening.

"...and once the hive is finished," the bear continued, "I'll eat all the honey inside!"

The crocodile loved the honey bee and was shocked by the bear's plan. Suddenly full of rage, he lunged from the water, snapping at the bear with his powerful jaws.

As this happened, the honey bee returned to the tree and saw the crocodile nip tufts of the bear's tail with the tips of his teeth.

"I told you to watch out for that crocodile!" the bear told the bee. "If he ate me, I couldn't bring you flowers to help you finish your hive!"

The honey bee was very upset. She couldn't believe what she had seen. "How could you do that?!" she yelled, buzzing over the crocodile.

The crocodile tried to warn the bee about the bear's plan to steal her honey but the bee didn't believe him. She had seen him attack the bear, just as the bear had warned.

"I think you should go back to hiding," she told him. "I don't think we should be friends."

So the crocodile went back to the bottom of the river, where he continued to watch the honey bee build her hive, but stayed deep below the surface where she couldn't see him.

Meanwhile, the bear came every day with flowers, and was soon drooling over the honey he could first smell and then see.

One day, when the hive was ripe with honey, the bear could no longer resist himself. He waited for the bee to fly away and then had a feast!

It hurt the crocodile to watch the bear destroy the bee's hive and eat her honey, but the bee told him to stay away so he obeyed her command.

When the bee returned to the tree, she noticed her hive was missing and saw the bear napping against the tree. "Hey bear, what happened to my hive?"

The startled bear answered quickly. "That crocodile came out of the water and ate it! I told you to watch out for that guy!"

The bee's wings fell flat. "If you were here, why didn't you stop him?!"

"It's not my nest," the bear answered casually. "Why should I risk getting eaten by a crocodile to protect *your* hive?"

The bear burped and then laughed. "Never mind, I'll help you build another one"

The crocodile had never said anything so rude to her. The only "bad" thing the crocodile had ever done was attack the bear —before he warned her about the bear's plan to eat her hive.

Watching the bear lick his sticky paws, the bee flew into a fury. "You did this!" she buzzed as she tried to sting his body.

But the bear's fur only *looked* soft and fuzzy and he felt nothing through his dense, coarse coat.

"Thanks for the honey, honey!" the bear said, laughing as he rolled to his feet and lumbered away.

The bee collapsed on the ground by the river's edge. She didn't have any strength to fly.

The crocodile stayed hidden beneath the water. He felt bad for the bee but he didn't want to break his promise to stay away.

The bee didn't know if the crocodile could hear her, but she felt badly about how she had treated him.

"I'm so sorry I didn't believe you," she cried. "I don't blame you for hiding. You were my friend and I chased you away. And now I don't have a friend or a hive!"

The crocodile wanted to help the bee so he carefully surfaced near the edge of the water. "All the time that we were friends, you were always so happy. You loved gathering pollen from the flower gardens and building your hive in this tree. If you make a new one, you should build it on a branch above the water so I can protect it for you."

The bee agreed that it was a beautiful tree and she really did enjoy building her hive. She missed the days when they were friends and she would float on top of him at the end of the day.

The bee flew up to a branch that reached far over the river until the tip of it dangled just above the water. As she landed upon it she looked down at the crocodile and they smiled at each other.

“This is where I shall build my new hive.”

As the bee loved to collect pollen from the flower garden, it only took her a few weeks to build a new hive. When it was finished, it was literally dripping with fresh honey.

Because she loved the crocodile, and no bears ever dared come near his river, the bee let her sweet honey drip from her hive down to the water so that she could share it with her friend.

THE END