

Me and Three Bees

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I'm not sure where the fear began—maybe it was hearing “careful” too young, too many times. But I remember three bad days.

One: Stepped on a strange, Heineken green insect. Mom smeared a putrid, brown jelly over my wound. Recoiled as it soothed.

Two: Fell off a jungle gym, splashing onto a black-and-yellow busybody in the grass below. Less a sting, more an arm swallowing a tiny dagger as our bodies collided. My right wrist swelled for weeks after, while the bee was never heard from again.

Three: Felt a sharp burning through my sock. Profanities burst forth like rapids as I kicked at the offending ankle with my free leg. Collapsed. Apoplectic, I watched the fat little bug hover off with the weak humility of a helicopter who'd just bombed a job interview.

“I didn't think bumblebees stung?” I later asked my wife. “I don't think it would've,” she said. “Not if you hadn't snared it with your stupid sock.”

These days, I watch my buzzing frenemies pollinate our raspberry bush, fluttering and floating with no regard for me. There's a sweet, sweet comfort in knowing they'll be doing all this long after I'm gone... stingers and all.



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