

## My Name is Honey

*They greet us humming  
Buzzing along*

“Good morning!”

“Good morning!” They reply. “How are you today?”

“I’m doing just fantastic! The sun is shining, birds are chirping. I cannot complain,” I say back, overly enthusiastic. They smile. Another man walks over (the enthusiasm drew him in).

“Well you’re in a good mood today,” he says.

“Yessir! It’s always a good day at the market.”

He chuckles and walks away.

*All hives stay alive  
Always moving, changing all day long*

I notice Kim’s tent isn’t up. No tables. No chairs. No crochet dishcloths. No kiddos ran over to my car the moment I pulled up. “Honey!” They always called me. They don’t know my real name (perhaps they think Honey is my real name). “We missed you!” They’d yell when I stepped out of my car into all their little arms for a big group hug.

I notice a new tent on the other end of the market path. A forest green (it’s a little blue-ish too, maybe teal? Or forest blue?) tent, folding tables underneath. Light sand tan burlap tablecloths and coffee bean bags. Lots of coffee bean bags. Lots of flavors. An old man sitting unbothered, sunglasses and bucket hat that put emphasis to his chill demeanor.

Nancy left halfway through. "Bye Honey!" She called to me from the driver's seat of her truck. She ran out of cookies.

The produce family rolled in. I pray they'll have strawberries today, they looked so good last week. I wait for them to set up and then mosey my way around the market for my normal rounds. I greet everyone individually everyday, welcoming new vendors and catching up on the past week with the old. "Strawberries today?" I ask. Pedro shakes his head and tells me they didn't have enough. Crap!

*They work and make sweet intake  
They work their whole lifelong*

After the market, I head back to the bee shed (the shed where we extract honey from our bees' honey hives). It was a \$200+ day at the market meaning, so far, I've made roughly \$75 (\$35 + 20% commission). But now we must get to working on these frames (\$12/hour). I walk on in and set up the shed to prepare for the work ahead of us. Grabbing tools and putting a water bowl aside for when our hands get too sticky. My boss arrives in his full white suit. He opens the shed's garage-like sliding door before starting to carry in supers (the boxes holding the frames). Masses and masses of supers. I shake my head, unready for the hours of work ahead of us. I start picking out frames. The heavy things are double side coated in honeycomb capped, cells full of honey. We get to scraping and popping. We'll be here until the sun starts to set. We won't finish and will be back at it bright and early tomorrow.

*Particular tiny twitching sticklers  
Making sure nothing is done wrong*

While we work the day away I'm reminded time and time again to be gentle with the combed frames. We only scrape the surface wax in order to not harm the comb.

"And do you know why we don't want to harm the comb?" He asks me for just about the millionth time this season.

"So the bees can focus on the honey and don't have to worry about rebuilding the wax before making it for us," I say not the slightest bit annoyed. I could hear about bee science over and over again. I could never get bored.

"Exactly!" He replies with pure joy. "That's why you're my number one worker!"

"And," I add, "We check both sides are done before putting them in the extractor."

"Very good!"

Everything we do is precise. It must be in order to maximize the honey we harvest each season.

*On they go, on honey flows  
Keeping going strong*

I feel a tickle beneath my dangling ponytail. Thinking it's just my hair I shoot my hand back for relief. I feel the bug, my stomach sinks a millisecond before I feel the pierce and sting. I let out a tiny screech. He rushed over to me and brushed off the bee. He picked out the stinger. I think I'm fine until I start feeling itchy. I see red hive-like bumps. We conclude it's nothing more than a topical reaction so I drive home. After a long benadryl-induced nap, I wake up puffy with an even under shade of pinkish red. Mom tries to feed me a strawberry.

The next thing I know, Mom's rushing me to the hospital. She tells the emergency room check-in table: "She's having an allergic reaction to a bee sting."

Distress overwhelms them and panic starts to set in. I am rushed to the back. Past a vomiting pregnant woman. Past an athlete in a wheelchair concealing his injury with a towel.

It's just me being rushed straight through. I throw up. I lose breath quicker than when I landed on my back when I was jumping on my best friend's trampoline at age seven. Eyes fog. Needles are stuck in my arm. Immediate relief.

Mom looks over to me when I ask if that was my last time beekeeping. She nods her head sorrowfully and says, "I'm sorry."

How can you be allergic to something you love?

How can you be deterred from where you believe you fit in?

How can you be allergic to where you believe you fit in?

*Like a family, stay steady*  
*Bees know where they belong*

I stay a vendor at the market, unable to let go of passion and love for the creatures. My coworkers are family too. I don't take anything for granted. I know where I belong. I know too much about little buzzing bees to be without them. Although I cannot beekeep, I keep the bees close at heart by greeting passersby at the market. Beekeeping keeps me sane. Bees are of the utmost magnificent species. To be or not to be, I will be what I must and keep my smile fresh at the market. Although we run into obstacles, we should not let them stop us in our tracks. We must walk on and persevere no matter our biggest fears.

*Keep on strumming*  
*Buzzing along*