

The Bee's Gentle Friend

People always get mad at bees for stinging them. But let me tell you something, you would sting someone too if they were that much bigger than you. My name's Bert, and I just happen to be a bee. I'm here to tell you that when a person is about to step on you or swat you, there's not much else to do but sting them. And it's not just people; animals also try to step on you or eat you when you are a bee. Then when you sting them, they always get mad at you. Like it's your fault they didn't know you were there! I mean, I buzz all day long just to give others a warning. But the truth is, nothing helps. I don't like to sting people, but it's my only protection.

Let me tell you a little story about one animal I was really sad to have to sting. This animal was a very polite and calm bull named Fred. He wasn't like the others. Fred would sit quietly in the grass under a tree and smell the flowers. He never stomped around or hurt anything. He was actually my favorite animal of all. I loved to watch him smell the flowers and tiptoe around so he could sit in cooler grass. I am a lover of flowers and am delighted when other animals like flowers too. It was really nice to see such a large animal bend down to smell a pretty flower. The best part about this bull was that he didn't care what the others thought. Fred was proud of who he was. In fact, I had never seen him lose his temper.

The other bulls wondered what was wrong with him. They just could not understand why he didn't like to run around and show off. Each bull wanted to be the biggest and strongest bull around. Not my friend. In fact, over the years he and I talked a lot about why he didn't like to run around and stomp his hooves. Fred told me that he was simply happy sitting in the shade, smelling flowers. He enjoyed the cool grass, and it made him happy. His favorite place was resting peacefully under the tree. It didn't matter to him that the other bulls ran around like they did. He was content simply being himself.

One awful day some men in very large hats came to the field where Fred lived with the other bulls. When these men showed up, the other bulls ran around like crazy. They stomped their feet and smashed their heads together in a frenzy. Since I am not a bull, I don't understand why they do these things. All I know is that it looks painful. I just don't understand how they can hit their heads so hard without knocking themselves out. Anyway, as usual Fred, my favorite bull, came to lie under the tree and smell the flowers. He didn't want any part of these men or bulls fighting.

Fred walked up to the tree very slowly. I could tell he had some things on his mind. Maybe he was wondering why the others hit their heads or ran around in front of the men.

I'm not sure what he was thinking about, but I know he wasn't paying attention to where he was sitting. It just so happened this day I was relaxing on a very lovely flower when I noticed this very large bull's backside about to sit right on me. I started screaming for Fred to stop. Being a bee, I don't really have a very loud voice. I screamed with all my might, but Fred kept getting closer and closer to me. I thought for sure he was close enough to hear me. After all, we chatted almost everyday, and he could hear me just fine when we talked. But Fred just kept on sitting down.

Now I'm not proud of what I did, but what is a little bee like myself to do when a bull is about to sit on you? I know I could have tried to fly away, and maybe I should have. At the time I was in shock. I was frozen with fear. Ok, maybe I wasn't frozen, but I was scared. So I did what any bee would do. I stung that bull. I felt awful. This bull was my friend, and he hated violence. That was why he never ran around like the other bulls. And here I was stinging him as hard as I could. This was terrible. When I stung Fred, he jumped higher than I have ever seen a bull jump.

Fred jumped around all over the field. He stomped harder than any bull I have ever seen. The men in their enormous hats saw him jumping too. When they saw him running around, they wanted him to fight in their bullfight. They took Fred to a bullfight. Now I really felt terrible. Not only did I sting my friend, but now he was getting taken to a bullfight. He never, ever wanted to be in a bullfight, and I was the reason he was going there. I didn't even get to say I was sorry before he got taken away. I was the saddest I have ever been. And I couldn't do anything to help.

Fred was gone for several days. The men in big hats took him to a bullfight. I knew he would hate it there. I just hoped they would bring him back, and they did. When Fred returned, he told me all about what he had gone through. He told about how they took him to a bullfight and wanted him to fight with all these different people. That part Fred didn't like. He refused to fight anyone. All he did was sit in the center of the bullring and smell the air. He told me how all the women in the crowd had flowers in their hair. There were lots of flower smells on the hats he had never smelled before. He thought he could be happy sitting there for hours just trying to smell all the different flowers. But the men in big hats got angry after a while. They didn't like him just sitting there. He was brought there to fight. Finally, they gave up trying to make him fight and decided to bring him home.

After Fred told me his story, I told him how sorry I was for stinging him. I told him how I tried to call his name to tell him I was under him, but he didn't hear me. I told him how upset I was that those men had taken him away. I also promised that I would never sting him again no matter what. Fred just smiled. He was always a very understanding bull.

He said he knew I didn't mean to sting him, and he wasn't mad at me at all. Any other day and he would have looked where he was sitting to make sure I wasn't around. He told me that he was trying to understand why folks acted the way they did. Fred figured that each bull, or bee, was special. He might like to sit and smell flowers, but others might like to run and stomp their hooves. It didn't make them weird or wrong, it just made them special. And to me, Fred was very special.

1. What was the special thing that Bert and Fred cared the same about?

- A. They like to be peaceful.
- B. They like to smell flowers.
- C. They like living on the farm.

2. What did Fred tell Bert that the men in the hats wanted Fred to do?

- A. Jump and stomp around.
- B. Fight with other bulls.
- C. Fight with people.

3. What is this story mostly about?

- A. The friendship between a bull and a bee.
- B. What happens when bulls and men fight.
- C. How a bull got stung by a bee.

4. What did the men in large hats want?

- A. To find a special bull that is big and strong.
- B. To find bulls that would be good fighters.
- C. To find bulls that like to run around and show off.

5. What was Bert doing just before Fred sat on him?

- A. Buzzing around a flower.
- B. Relaxing on a flower.
- C. Taking nectar from a flower.

6. How did the story end?

- A. Bert and Fred talked about what makes someone special.
- B. The men brought Fred back because he wouldn't fight.
- C. Fred told Bert everything that happened to him.

7. How was Fred's problem in the bullring solved?

- A. The men in big hats got angry at Fred.
- B. Fred smelled the flowers on the women's hats.
- C. Fred wouldn't do what the men wanted him to do.

8. What did Bert promise Fred that he would do?

- A. Warn Fred before he stung him.
- B. Only sting Fred again if he had to.
- C. Never sting Fred again, no matter what.

9. How did Fred act toward Bert after he got back from the bullfight?

- A. He thought it was all Bert's fault.
- B. He was nice and understanding.
- C. He was only a little upset with Bert.

10. What was Bert like?

- A. He would only sting to protect himself.
- B. He would sting if someone bothered him.
- C. He was careful whom he did and didn't sting.

11. Why did Bert not fly out of the way when Fred sat down?

- A. He wasn't sure if Fred was going to sit.
- B. He didn't see Fred coming.
- C. He was too scared to move.

- 12. What was the reason Bert gave for why Fred should have been able to hear Bert screaming at him?**
- A. Fred could hear Bert easily in their every day chats.
 - B. Fred kept getting closer and closer to Bert.
 - C. Bert was screaming as loud as he could.
- 13. Who was Bert the most upset with?**
- A. Fred.
 - B. The men.
 - C. Himself.
- 14. Which sentence best tells how Bert feels about Fred?**
- A. Fred is an animal he cares about.
 - B. Fred is his favorite animal.
 - C. Fred is one of his more favorite animals.
- 15. What did Fred decide at the end of the story?**
- A. Other bulls would be special if they acted like Fred.
 - B. Bees understand what it means to be special.
 - C. Everyone is special in his or her own way.
- 16. What does Bert think about people or animals that he stings?**
- A. People and animals shouldn't get mad because he is just trying to protect himself.
 - B. He shouldn't have to give a warning to let people and animals know where he is.
 - C. People and animals don't have any right to say what bees should do.
- 17. Where was Fred's favorite place to rest?**
- A. In a field of grass.
 - B. Under a shade tree.
 - C. In a field of flowers.

18. What caused the biggest problem for Fred?

- A. Bert was not able to stop himself from stinging Fred.
- B. The men wanted to find some bulls to take to the bullfight.
- C. The men in hats saw him jump and stomp after he was stung.

19. What would Fred probably do the next time he wants to lie down under a tree?

- A. Smell all the flowers that are under the tree.
- B. Look to see if there are bees on the flowers.
- C. Make sure the ground has grass and flowers.

20. What was the worst thing that happened because of the bee sting?

- A. Men took Fred away to the bullfight.
- B. Fred began to act like the other bulls.
- C. Fred jumped higher than any other bull.