

THE MEADOW

By Michael Soetaert

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CHARACTERS

(Minimum of 8 characters, no gender preference.)

DAFFODILS [DAFFODIL #1, DAFFODIL #2, DAFFODIL #3] – They are the plant world's equivalent of sheep. They never think . . . much. They have a very limited view of the world and act out of tradition. They will never show any emotion. The script is set up for three Daffodils, but could easily be modified for more or less.

DANDY – A spunky dandelion. A guy would probably work better in this role. Refuses to accept the label of being a weed. Really needs to have an Afro, either for real or a wig. Excites easily; has a short temper, and especially doesn't like others thinking they're better than him, mostly because down deep he believes he's better than everyone else.

CRABBY – Crabgrass. Realizes that he is nothing but a despised weed, and hates the world and everything in it because he has been dealt such a role by the fates.

POPPY – An older, more worldly flower. Very cynical. A bit of a snob, which he speaks like (I'm thinking Boston blueblood.)

DAISY – A young, innocent flower. Naïve. A girl would probably work better in this role. Very positive and very happy.

BUZZ – The younger, innocent Killer Bee. I'm thinking a guy here. He doesn't realize just what it means to be a Killer Bee, namely, that he has to kill things. He is enjoying the world and the excitement that each new day brings.

BENJAMIN – The older, more worldly Killer Bee. He has accepted his place in life and knows how to play the game, so to speak. He just wants to go along with tradition and not have to think too hard about anything. Deep down, he is not a nice bug.

NOTE: *Whereas a particular character may be labeled as he or she, any of the characters can be played as either male or female, or both, not that there's anything wrong with that.*

SETTING

One set. Simple. The idea of a meadow, but no fake foliage. Could be very minimalist. Will require lighting to show the sun rising, either a follow spot or an offstage light set up behind a scrim on a pulley system. Be creative.

TIME

Morning. A nice day. Say, next Thursday . . .

COSTUMING

The only specific costuming required is a driving hat for Dandy . . . you know, one of those hats your grandfather wears when he plays golf . . . The rest of the characters could be done with or without costumes, depending on how much money you have and how good your actors are. Costumes, though, would be fun. And probably not that hard to do. Plants and bees. The flower costumes should look like the flower, or at least give the impression of that flower. The Daffodils should be stiff, the Dandelion should be laid back, the Poppy should be snooty, the Crabgrass should be a bit slovenly, and the Daisy should look young, carefree. And of course, bees are bees. Buzz, however, should not have an obvious stinger, whereas Benjamin's needs to be quite obvious. And if you are going to costume them as bees, make sure they have an obvious dark patch on their backs beneath their wings.

PROPS

There really is none. I mean, they're plants and bees. What would they have?

THE MEADOW

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At curtain, the stage is dark. The DAFFODILS are UR. RC is DANDY (the Dandelion.) UC is POPPY. DL is DAISY, and C is CRABBY (the Crabgrass.) The “sun” will slowly rise SR, unless you actually want it to rise in the east relative to your stage, but that sounds like a lot of work to me, especially since most people in the audience won’t know the difference anyway. But, hey, if you want the extra work, knock yourself out. As the “sun” rises (which can be done with a follow spot or even a bright light backstage on a pulley system behind a scrim) the DAFFODILS, which have all been stiffly leaning over in the same direction (away from the sun) at the waist with their arms to their sides and their legs together, will all slowly straighten and turn in unison toward the sun, their heads following the sun as it rises. DANDY will yawn and stretch and begin picking out her or his ‘fro. CRABBY, who has been sleeping soundly, curled up on the stage, will lift his head, take a look at the sun, and then cover his head with his arms. POPPY will turn toward the sun, straighten out his “petals,” and then generally look bored. I’m sure you can find somebody who knows how. DAISY will continue to “sleep” during the opening lines.

DAFFODILS: *(chanting choppyly as one, which THEY will always do, unless otherwise indicated)* Good morning, Mr. Sunshine. You brighten up our day.

CRABBY: *(lifting his head; annoyed)* Oh, give it a rest! *(muttering to himself)*

DAFFODILS: Hey there, mister blue; we're so pleased to be with you.

CRABBY: Shut up! Stupid Daffodils. *(HE puts his head back down.)*

DANDY: Well look who woke up on the wrong side of the flower bed.

There’s nothing like the sound of crabby crabgrass in the morning, that’s what I always say. And Crabby, you are the crabbiest crabgrass of them all.

CRABBY: *(lifting his head back up; sarcastic)* Well, thank you, Mr. Dandelion, for starting my day on a cheery note.

DANDY: All I’m sayin’ is, there’s no need to start each day like you got a bee up your stamen.

DAFFODILS: Bees are good. They aid in pollination.

CRABBY: You see? That’s what I’m saying! What? I’m supposed to wake up happy every stinking morning because the Daffodils are saying the same stupid thing that they’ve said every stupid morning forever! Day in. Day out. *(mocking)* “Bees are good. Bees are

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good.” Good for what? Nothin’! *(to the DAFFODILS)* Get some new material!

DANDY: Oh, I kinda like it. It makes me wanna dance. Get down. Get funky.

POPPY: To use the terminology of the common foliage, get real!

DANDY: Oh! Poppy woke up in a good mood, too. *(to POPPY)* You’re just jealous because it takes poppies all summer to bloom, and a dandelion can do it in a day.

POPPY: Even if that were true, and it’s not, why would I be jealous of a weed?

DANDY: *(immediately defensive)* A weed? Who you callin’ a weed?

POPPY: If you had half as much intelligence as you have volume, it would be more than obvious that I’m talking to you, *puff brains*.

DANDY: Puff brains! Don’t you move. I’m gonna come over there and kick your stem!

POPPY: I’ll be right here . . . *weed*.

DANDY: I’ll tell ya what I’m gonna do. I’m gonna get me some Roundup. That’s what I’m gonna do!

POPPY: You know what would improve this meadow?

DANDY: Yeah, I can think of a few things.

POPPY: A weed eater.

DANDY: What!

POPPY: Just a quick “zip!” And then peace and quiet. It’s not bad enough that I have to live in the same neighborhood with weeds, but I have to listen to you day and night as well.

DANDY: What makes you think that weed eater wouldn’t get you while it’s at it?

POPPY: Because weed eaters only eat weeds.

DANDY: Huh! *Weed*. I bet you don’t even know what a weed is. I bet none of you stupid plants know the difference between a flower and a weed. Well, I’ll tell you the difference: There ain’t none.

DAFFODILS: A flower is a plant conspicuous for its blossoms. A weed is a plant considered undesirable, unattractive, or troublesome.

POPPY: “Undesirable, unattractive, *and* troublesome.” You’re three for three, Dandy.

DANDY: *(to DAFFODILS)* Do you guys know the definition of “Stupid?”

DAFFODILS: Slow to apprehend; dull; obtuse; showing a lack of sense or intelligence . . .

CRABBY: *(raising his head; with a strong southern accent)* My mama always said . . .

DANDY: *(to CRABBY)* Don’t you dare! Not a word!

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(During the above lines, DAISY has started to stir. SHE is totally unaware of the arguing, which wouldn't be anything unusual, both the arguing and her being unaware.)

DAISY: *(after a yawn and a stretch; cheery)* Good morning, everybody.

DANDY: *(putting on a driving cap, which HE will almost immediately lose; polite)* Oh, good morning, Miss Daisy.

DAFFODILS: Good morning.

CRABBY: You call this good? *(HE lays his head on the stage and covers it with his arms.)*

DAISY: Good morning, Poppy.

POPPY: I don't know how many times I have to tell you, Daisy, it's Mister Poppy. Show some respect to your elders. And, yes, it is a good morning.

DANDY: Rain or shine, it's all divine.

DAFFODILS: The sun brings us energy through photosynthesis. The rain brings us nourishment through moisture.

CRABBY: *(lifting his head)* Do you guys ever say anything different?

DAFFODILS: Without the sun, we could not thrive.

CRABBY: Go ahead and thrive, and see where it gets ya. One moment, you're standing there enjoying the sun, and the next thing you know, somebody comes along and rips you out by the roots. That's what thriving gets ya.

DAFFODIL #1: It's all we can hope for, to be picked . . .

DAFFODIL #2: . . . To be taken and placed in a vase . . .

DAFFODIL #3: . . . Where we'll spend the rest of our days making others happy . . .

DAFFODIL #1: . . . With our fragrance . . .

DAFFODIL #2: . . . And our beauty . . .

DAFFODIL #3: . . . And the reminder that nature is there to please others.

DANDY: You honkies are out of your mind. Me? I'm just gonna lay low and hope to live to be old.

CRABBY: Good luck layin' low. *(HE puts his head back down.)*

DANDY: *(trying to ignore CRABBY)* And if the sun is kind . . .

DAFFODILS: The sun is always kind.

DANDY: *(trying to ignore the DAFFODILS)* And if the sun is kind, maybe I'll be back right here next year. And the year after that. You know there are trees that live to be over a thousand years old. Them brothers are into some serious sun. I'm thinkin' if they could do it, so can I. Heck, I'd be content with 10.

POPPY: What do you know? You're just a common weed.

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DANDY: I may be a weed – and I ain't sayin' that I am – but even if I was a weed, I can assure you that there ain't nothin' common about me.

POPPY: Oh, the allusions of the common weed . . .

CRABBY: (*lifting his head up; sarcastic*) Why can't we all just get along?

EVERYBODY: (*even the DAFFODILS*) Oh, shut up!

DANDY: You're just jealous because you don't have a flower. You're just crabby old crabgrass.

CRABBY: Well, that may be true . . .

DANDY: What? You're finally admitting that you're crabby? That you're jealous?

CRABBY: (*exasperated*) It may be true that I don't waste my time showing off. (*mocking*) "Look at me! Look at me! I've got a flower!"

DANDY: Sounds jealous to me.

CRABBY: Yeah. Right. Do you think having a flower makes you any less a weed than me?

DANDY: What? Now *you* think you're better than me? It's everybody against Dandy. Is that the way it is?

CRABBY: Why is it necessary to be better than anybody?

DANDY: I ain't sayin' that I am.

CRABBY: You could've fooled me. Well, we'll just see who's still here when the mower comes through.

DAISY: (*scared*) The mower! Where?

POPPY: I don't hear a mower.

DANDY: (*to DAISY*) Don't you worry your pretty little head. He's just messin' with us. There ain't no mower.

CRABBY: (*evilly*) Maybe it's a *quiet* mower.

POPPY: There are no quiet mowers!

CRABBY: Or worse! Maybe it's Roundup.

DAISY: Roundup! (*after a beat*) What's Roundup?

DANDY: Now see what you've done? Got everybody upset.

CRABBY: What's it to me?

DANDY: Dude, that's just cold.

CRABBY: Kind of like a killing frost . . .

DANDY: Killing frost! Where? Ahhhh!

POPPY: I hate to be the one to break it to you, Dandy, but it's July.

DANDY: (*trying to cover*) Oh. I knew that. I was just playin' with ya. (*to CRABBY; irritated*) Killin' frost! Huh. (*making a fist*) I got your killin' frost right here.

DAISY: Well, I'm glad that there isn't a frost.

DAFFODILS: The frost is part of the wheel in the sky that keeps turning.

DAISY: And I'm glad it's not raining.

DAFFODILS: The rain is good. It falls like tears from on high.

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CRABBY: (*sarcastic*) I bet you'll still be glad when you start to shrivel up and your leaves begin to turn brown.

DAFFODILS: Tra, la – la, la, la, la – live for today.

CRABBY: Give it a rest! (*HE puts his head back down.*)

(*The DAFFODILS, with a sudden look of concern on their faces, as one, will stiffly twist and look to their right, and then to their left, and then back again, and finally back forward.*)

DAFFODILS: I can feel it, coming in the air . . .

DANDY: I knew it was bound to happen. They've done flipped their petals.

DAFFODILS: I've been waiting for this moment, for all my life.

DAISY: Waiting for what?

DAFFODILS: Today is pollination day.

DAFFODIL #1: Pollination day.

DAFFODIL #2: Pollination day.

DAFFODIL #3: Pollination day.

DAISY: What?

DAFFODILS: Today is the day that we will be pollinated.

DAFFODIL #1: Today is pollination day.

DAFFODIL #2: Pollination day.

DAFFODIL #3: Pollination day.

DAISY: What's that?

DAFFODILS: Pollination is the conveyance or transfer of pollen from an anther to a stigma in the process of fertilization.

DAISY: Fertilization? I don't want to be fertilized. Do I?

DANDY: (*annoyed*) Oh, don't listen to them. They don't know what they're talkin' about. (*to the DAFFODILS*) You don't know that! (*as an after thought*) Do you?

DAFFODILS: Can't you feel it, coming in the air . . .

DANDY: I can't feel nothin'!

POPPY: Ughh! I don't want to feel anything. Bugs crawling on us. Nosing around. How . . . common!

DANDY: It don't bother me none, as long as they're gentle . . . and not hungry.

POPPY: That doesn't surprise me.

DANDY: What do you mean by that?

CRABBY: Of course, bees ain't as bad as aphids.

POPPY: (*with a shiver of disgust*) Those little green insects! Crawling all over me!

DANDY: Dude, aphids won't hurt you.

POPPY: But aphids are so . . . so vile. So common.

DANDY: Dude, anybody can get aphids. It don't mean squat.

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POPPY: Not me!

DANDY: Yeah. You keep sayin' that.

CRABBY: Ah, the heartbreak of aphids.

DANDY: At least aphids don't have an appetite.

(ALL of the plants shiver.)

Besides, we weren't even talkin' about aphids. We were talkin' about bees.

(During the next lines BUZZ will wander on the stage UR. HE won't notice the flowers, and THEY won't notice him.)

DAISY: What's a bee?

DANDY: Wow. You are one green flower, I'll say that.

(During the following description, DANDY will mime out all the parts – thumbs in armpits for wings, stretching his hands out for emphasis... you get the idea, while all the OTHER PLANTS nod in agreement. Meanwhile, BUZZ, still unnoticed by the flowers, will be listening to DANDY's description and checking out his own "wings" when DANDY is describing them, his stinger, and so forth.)

DANDY: A bee is this huge bug. It's the biggest bug in the world. They got giant wings out to here. They're so big that when they fly they'll blow you over. And they got these eyes that bug out – that's why they call 'em bugs, because of their bug eyes. And they can see you no matter where you are. They can see in the dark and even behind their own head. In fact, they can see things that ain't even there. And they got these huge feet. If they grab on to you, they'll never let go, unless they want to. Why, they're so strong, if they wanted to, they could rip you out of the ground and fly you around the world. For no reason at all. Just because they're mean. And, sister, they can be mean. But the worst part of all, worse than all that, is they got stingers. Big, sharp, nasty stingers. They're so sharp, they can poke a hole clean through a rock – so fast the rock won't even feel it . . . until it's too late. And the only reason they got stingers is so they can sting things. Anything they want. Pray it ain't you.

ALL THE OTHER FLOWERS: *(except DAISY, who's noticed BUZZ)*
Amen.

DAISY: Oh, thank goodness. I thought that bug over there was a bee.

(ALL the FLOWERS turn and notice BUZZ.)

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DANDY: Ahhh! A bee!

DAFFODILS: Do be a good bee. Don't be a bad bee.

POPPY: Hush! We're not supposed to let the bees hear us.

DANDY: He didn't hear us.

POPPY: Oh, I'm pretty sure he did.

DANDY: *(to BUZZ)* Hey, you didn't hear us, did you?

BUZZ: Ummm . . . No?

DANDY: See? Not a word.

(ALL the PLANTS, except DAISY, will strike a pose toward the sun – we're trying for the stiff military at attention pose, trying to ignore BUZZ. DANDY will be nervously trying to sneak peeks the whole time. Of course, CRABBY will just be lying there. BUZZ will "buzz" around the FLOWERS for a few moments before stopping near DAISY, who has been openly watching him the whole while, more curious than afraid.)

BUZZ: I didn't know that plants could talk.

POPPY: *(breaks his stiff pose just long enough to say . . .)* Don't listen to her. We can't. *(HE immediately returns to his pose.)*

DAISY: *(ignoring POPPY)* I didn't know that bees could talk.

BUZZ: I thought everybody knew that. We have to. When we go out and find something really cool, like talking plants, then we can go back to the swarm and tell everybody about it. And then they can all come and see it. It's how we play.

POPPY: *(breaks and returns to pose, like before)* You can't tell them we can talk. And even if you do, we won't. We'll just sit here like . . . like vegetables, and not say a thing.

BUZZ: *(sad; almost in tears . . . HE is a young bee, after all.)* I don't think I'll tell anybody anything. I'm lost.

(ALL the PLANTS break their poses and admit that the bee is really there, and that THEY really can talk.)

DANDY: You're not lost. This is the meadow. *(indicating the rear doors of the theatre)* All you have to do is go past those trees and . . . and . . . and take a left.

BUZZ: *(hopeful)* Where will that take me?

DANDY: Left.

BUZZ: But where will left go?

DANDY: I don't know. Do I look like I travel much?

BUZZ: What am I gonna do?

POPPY: How about flying somewhere else and worrying about it there?

BUZZ: How will that help me?

POPPY: Who's worried about you?

DAISY: You can wait here. One of your friends is bound to come along. And then you can go home together. It's always better to go places with a friend, anyway.

BUZZ: Really?

DAISY: Actually, I don't know. I've never been anywhere but here. But if I were ever to go anywhere, I'd want to go with a friend.

BUZZ: Are you sure it's OK if I stay?

POPPY, CRABBY, and DANDY: No!

DAFFODILS: We are non-committal.

DAISY: Oh, don't worry about them. (*confidentially*) They can't do anything to stop you, anyway. What's your name?

BUZZ: They call me Buzz.

CRABBY: Now *there's* an original name.

DANDY: Wait a minute. I don't recognize you. I've never seen you before.

BUZZ: This is my very first time in your meadow. It's really my first time out at all. They told me to stay close. But that's hard to do when there's so much to see.

DANDY: That's not what I mean. I mean, I've seen honey bees, and I've seen bumble bees, and I've seen those annoying little bees that might as well just stay at home, the amount of work they get done in a day. And they all look different. But I've never seen a bee that looks like *you*.

POPPY: (*becoming suspicious*) Yes. Just what kind of *bee* are you?

BUZZ: I don't know. I didn't know there could be different kinds of bees. I always thought that I was just a bee.

POPPY: (*still suspicious*) So . . . where are you from?

Buzz: Everywhere. I think we're just passing through. We don't have a hive. They keep saying we're going to get one, but I don't think they ever will. I don't understand why adults just can't tell us the truth.

DANDY: (*defensive*) It's a good thing you're just passin' through, because we're gonna be havin' issues if you try to move in on our turf. Ya dig?

BUZZ: Oh, no. We don't burrow, either. We just fly from place to place. We're heading north. Whatever that means.

POPPY: (*suddenly alarmed*) North! No hive! That can only mean one thing . . .

CRABBY: What? That they're going north without a hive?

POPPY: No! He's a killer bee!

DANDY: Oh dear Sun! (*to the DAFFODILS; alarmed*) I thought you meant that the honey bees were comin'. That's the last time I listen to you!

DAFFODILS: They are. Soon.

DANDY: Soon? In the meantime we got killers!

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BUZZ: Who's a killer?

DANDY: (*alarmed, too*) You're a killer! A killer bee!

BUZZ: I am?

DAISY: He doesn't look like a killer to me.

BUZZ: I don't feel like a killer.

DANDY: Don't let that fool you. It's just a matter of time.

BUZZ: Until what?

DANDY: Until you kill something. (*once more with all the hand motions*)
Until you stab someone, or strangle 'em, or beat 'em over the head
with a tire iron . . .

BUZZ: What's a tire iron?

DANDY: It's . . . It's a *tire iron*. It's something you beat someone over
the head with.

BUZZ: I don't have one of those.

DANDY: Yet . . .

BUZZ: What is it I'm supposed to kill?

DANDY: I don't know.

CRABBY: Maybe it's Flowers.

DANDY: Ahhh! A Flower killer! Run away! Run away!

POPPY: Run away? You've been in the sun too long.

BUZZ: How am I supposed to kill flowers?

POPPY: Like I would know?

DANDY: Don't tell him! Don't tell him! Hey, wait a minute! I'm not a
flower. (*quickly putting his driving hat back on*) See? No blooms!
It's them you want! Take them! Take them!

BUZZ: (*pleading*) But I don't *want* anybody . . . except my friends. I'm
not a killer!

POPPY: Listen, *bug*, this meadow is for flowers . . .

CRABBY: And other non-blooming species . . .

POPPY: This meadow is for plants.

(*DANDY and CRABBY nod in agreement.*)

POPPY: We don't want your kind here. You don't belong. Now go
away.

DAFFODILS: So long, farewell, *auf weidersein*, goodbye.

BUZZ: But I don't have anywhere to go.

POPPY: That's not a concern of ours.

DANDY: Yeah! Make like a bee and buzz off.

CRABBY: He *is* a bee, you idiot!

DAISY: (*pleading*) You can't make him go.

POPPY: This doesn't concern you. You're too young to understand.

(*BUZZ puts his head down and heads toward DL to exit. When HE's
almost there, BENJAMIN will enter. BENJAMIN is obviously bigger than*

BUZZ with an obvious stinger. ALL the PLANTS will immediately notice him and strike the pose of looking at the sun, including DAISY, who, like ALL the OTHER PLANTS, will sneak peeks every chance they get.)

BUZZ: Oh! Thank goodness I found you.

BENJAMIN: Where the heck have you been?

BUZZ: I've been talking to the flowers.

BENJAMIN: You've been *talking* to the flowers?

BUZZ: Y . . . Yes . . .

BENJAMIN: Flowers don't talk.

BUZZ: These do.

BENJAMIN: It's a little early to be hitting the nectar, don't ya think?

BUZZ: Really. They do.

BENJAMIN: Then why aren't they talking now?

BUZZ: Because they're afraid.

BENJAMIN: Afraid of what?

BUZZ: Us. They think we're going to kill the honey bees that are coming.

BENJAMIN: (*immediately interested*) Honey bees? Coming here?

(In the background, DANDY is trying to motion for BUZZ to stay quiet, but BUZZ will not see him frantically waving his hands.)

BUZZ: That's what the flowers said.

(DANDY, upset, stops waving.)

BENJAMIN: Oh, the flowers. They told you that, did they?

BUZZ: Uh huh. They also said that we're killer bees.

BENJAMIN: (*sarcastic*) Didn't you get the memo?

BUZZ: There was a memo?

BENJAMIN: Lookit, kid. If ya ain't figured it out by now . . . We are!

BUZZ: (*shocked*) We're killers?

BENJAMIN: C'mon, dude. You can't be that naïve. Why do you think we have stingers? To tickle things?

BUZZ: But I don't want to kill flowers.

BENJAMIN: Who said we kill flowers? Oh, yeah . . . (*hooking a thumb*) . . . the flowers. No! We don't kill flowers.

BUZZ: That's a relief.

(ALL of the FLOWERS, for a brief moment – as opposed to a moment that's not brief – will show relief as well.)

BENJAMIN: (*happily*) We kill other things. Butterflies. Bugs . . .

BUZZ: (*shocked*) We kill bugs?

BENJAMIN: Well, yeah. But nothin' that lives under a refrigerator. You don't wanna mess with them bugs. They're nuts.

BUZZ: (*disbelief*) But we kill bugs . . .

BENJAMIN: We kill all *sorts* of things. Reptiles, amphibians, small mammals . . . Haven't you been to any of the swarm meetings?

BUZZ: I didn't think they were serious. I thought swarming was a metaphor for getting along. Working together.

BENJAMIN: (*gleeful*) Yeah. Working together . . . to kill really big things. But the one thing we really like to kill are other bees, especially honey bees. Now what's that you were saying about honey bees coming this way? That's just the sort of thing that would make the rest of the swarm estatic, if you know what I mean. Nothing like a good slaughter to make the day perfect. C'mon, let's go back and get the rest. You'd be surprised how much fun it is to kill a honey bee.

BUZZ: (*horrified*) But I don't want to kill a honey bee. I don't want to kill anything.

BENJAMIN: Lookit, dude. I don't know what to tell ya, but it's a little late to be reborn as a bunny rabbit. (*as an after thought, to himself*) You know . . . rabbits aren't that big . . .

BUZZ: But I don't think I could kill anything. I know I couldn't. I could *never* kill anything. I just couldn't.

BENJAMIN: Let me let you in on a little secret, kid. And I'm tellin' ya this only because I wanna help you out. You know I'm in the All Bee Glee Buzz Band, right?

BUZZ: Yeah. You guys are great.

BENJAMIN: I can't buzz a tune to save my life.

BUZZ: (*shocked*) What?

BENJAMIN: I can't even hit a sharp. And trust me, (*indicating his stinger*) most bees can hit a sharp. Every note I try, they all come out the same . . . Yup, B flat.

BUZZ: So, how can you be in the Buzz Band?

BENJAMIN: (*checking to make sure no one hears him*) I fake it.

BUZZ: (*once more shocked*) You fake it?!

BENJAMIN: (*nodding affirmation*) Every last bit of it.

BUZZ: But . . . but that's dishonest? Why? Why do you do it?

BENJAMIN: (*with a shrug*) Ahh . . . It's a good place to meet girls. But that's not the point. You see, the thing is, you don't have to kill anything. All you have to do is pretend. Besides, honesty is overrated. Just go along with the crowd and nobody will be the wiser.

BUZZ: But . . . but that's wrong.

BENJAMIN: I'm not followin' ya.

BUZZ: If you're with a crowd and they're doing something . . . something that isn't right . . . aren't you . . .

BENJAMIN: Aren't I *what*?

BUZZ: I don't know. It's so confusing. I'd just . . . I'd just feel so guilty.

BENJAMIN: Guilty? That's a hoot! I'll tell you what, we'll get you into therapy. We'll find you a support group. Bees Anonymous. (*mocking*) "Hi. My name is Buzz . . . and . . . and . . . I'm a wuss." "Hello, Buzz." I'm sure we can find a whole hive that agrees with you. You can all move to Portland. Maybe build a happy little hive in a happy little tree that you can all hug every happy little day with all your happy little friends.

BUZZ: Well . . . There might be others!

BENJAMIN: Yeah. Right. Listen, kid. I'll let you in on the biggest secret of all. It's a secret so big that we're not even supposed to let on that there's even a secret. Let me tell ya, it's big kid. Are ya ready?

(*BUZZ nervously nods his head.*)

BENJAMIN: All right, kid. Here it is: *Nobody cares*. Nobody cares at all. About nothin'. About anything. Nada. Zip. You just go along with the swarm, act like you're doin' what you're supposed to be doin', and nobody'll ever say dirt. I mean, what do you think it is that we're doin' half the time when we're off lookin' for stuff? Me? I'm out back hangin' out with the ladies. Nobody checks to see where you've been. You don't have to clock in. Sure, we gotta work every once in a while. But face it, it's a good gig. Now c'mon kid, it's time to go back. (*with a smirk*) Unless you're not done talkin' with the foliage.

BUZZ: (*to the FLOWERS*) Listen guys, if you don't tell him, he's going to go back and get the swarm. When the honey bees get here, they're going to kill them all.

(*The FLOWERS remain expressionless.*)

There'll be no one left to pollinate you!

(*The DAFFODILS give a brief shudder of fear.*)

BENJAMIN: (*pretending to wet his fingers on his tongue and then slick back his antennae*) Au contraire, mon fraire. As the French would say, "Va, va, va voom!"

(*The DAFFODILS give a brief shudder of disgust.*)

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BUZZ: You've got to tell him!

BENJAMIN: I think we need to go back over the list of which plants we pollinate and which plants we leave to the butterflies. They're loopy anyway.

BUZZ: (*shouting*) Tell him!

(*DANDY looks around at the OTHERS, shrugs his "leaves" and, with a wave, says . . .*)

DANDY: (*forced smile*) Hey.

BENJAMIN: (*shocked*) You can talk.

DANDY: (*sassy*) Well so can you, but you don't see me flippin' out.

BUZZ: (*to DANDY*) Tell him.

DANDY: Tell him what?

BUZZ: Tell him that we can get along. Just like you all get along. Tell him that he doesn't need to kill things. Nobody does. Especially . . . especially for no reason at all. *Tell him!*

DANDY: Kid, there's nothin' to tell. If he don't know it already, what difference will it make if some weed in the back corner of some forgotten meadow tells him squat?

BENJAMIN: (*still shocked*) Wow. Can all you plants talk?

DANDY: If they want to.

POPPY: (*tersely*) Count me out.

BENJAMIN: Wow. You know, I just keep saying, "Wow." I gotta say it again: "Wow." What I wouldn't give for a lawnmower.

BUZZ: (*shocked*) Benjamin!

BENJAMIN: Ah, this is pathetic. Even if your new friends could say something more than an incoherent mumble . . . (*responding to DANDY's look of indignance*) Yeah, I'm talkin' about you. I mean, even if they could say *anything*, what business do they have to lecture anybody *on the ways of nature*? They're gonna tell me that I shouldn't be a bee? I wasn't given this stinger to engrave plaques with at the mall.

BUZZ: But . . . but . . .

BENJAMIN: Look, kid. It's OK. We all flip out every once in a while.

Once, at a church picnic . . . Wow. Crazy times. But the thing is, nobody needs to know. In fact, we can play this well for you. I'll go back, get the rest of the guys, and let on that it was you who set this whole gig up with the honey bees. You'll be the hero.

BUZZ: But I don't want to be the hero.

BENJAMIN: Fine. Then I'll be the hero. Hey, I'll tell you what, on the way back, let's cut through the park. There's some hippies there havin' a picnic. We can show 'em what it's like to *really* get buzzed.

BUZZ: (*almost to tears*) I don't wanna hurt anybody.

BENJAMIN: *(to the FLOWERS)* Ah, kids. What are you gonna do?

DAFFODIL #1: Spare the stinger . . .

DAFFODIL #2: . . . spoil the larvae.

DAFFODIL #3: It is easier to train a larva with nectar . . .

DAFFODIL #2: . . . than it is with a stinger.

DAFFODIL #1: Without discipline . . .

DAFFODIL #2: . . . there can be no hive.

DAFFODIL #3: If a larva is raised with violence . . .

DAFFODIL #1: . . . then that larva learns to be violent.

BENJAMIN: I liked you guys better when you didn't say anything. Hey . . . I wonder if my stinger would work on plants.

(BENJAMIN starts toward DAISY, who, in fear, shrieks; I'd say SHE's paralyzed with fear, but SHE's not going anywhere anyway; as BENJAMIN gets near CRABBY, CRABBY rises up and says . . .)

CRABBY: Hey! Hold it right there, bub! If you wanna go stingin' somethin', you're gonna havta start with the Crabgrass.

(BENJAMIN, cocky the whole while, thinks about taking on CRABBY for a minute, and the niggling – look it up – doubt that HE just might lose, makes him decide to take a graceful out.)

BENJAMIN: *(with a cocky laugh, backing off)* Who wanted to get that close to a stupid flower, anyway? C'mon kid, it's time to go.

BUZZ: But I don't want to go. I want to stay here.

DAFFODILS: He's made up his mind to make a new start.

BENJAMIN: *(ignoring the DAFFODILS; disgusted)* You're kiddin' me, right?

BUZZ: No. Tell me, Benjamin, *why*?

BENJAMIN: Why what?

BUZZ: Why do we do it?

BENJAMIN: I'm sorry, but I haven't had my second cup of nectar this morning. Why do we do what?

BUZZ: You know . . . kill things.

BENJAMIN: Well, duh! It's because we're killer bees. It's what we do. It's like asking why dogs bark. If we didn't kill things, we couldn't very well be killer bees, now, could we?

BUZZ: What would be so bad about that?

DAFFODILS: Why must you be such an angry young bug?

BENJAMIN: *(stares down DAFFODILS for a few moments; returning to BUZZ)* It's a stupid argument. *(aside; looking back at the DAFFODILS)* Like stupid plants. *(back to BUZZ)* And it ain't gonna

happen. We're killers. (*back to the PLANTS*) Ya got that? It's just the way we are.

DAFFODILS: That's just the way it is. Some things will never change.

BUZZ: But I don't have to be! I don't have to go back to the swarm.

BENJAMIN: (*getting increasingly mockingly nastier . . . yeah, you can string those words together*) What are you going to do if you don't go back to the swarm? Are you going to join up with another swarm? A happier swarm? Uhhh! Maybe you can join that hive of honey bees that's headed this way. Wouldn't that be wonderful! You could all sit around the hive and make S'mores! And then you could all buzz Kumbaya. Wouldn't that be swell?

(*BUZZ happily nods.*)

BENJAMIN: (*sarcastic, turning nasty*) I'll tell ya what, kid. It's a good thing the queen ain't here to see this. It would break her heart. (*pause*) And then she'd kill you.

DAFFODILS: She a killer Queen . . .

BENJAMIN: (*cutting the DAFFODILS off with a nasty look; after a pause*) Look, the honey bees ain't gonna take you in. Not a chance. You think they won't care that you were once (*dramatic pause*) a killer!

BUZZ: (*jumps; saddened*) But . . . but I've never killed anything . . .

BENJAMIN: And you think that'll make a difference to them? I'm sure it'll never cross their minds that someday you might change *your* mind after all and decide to be (*dramatic pause*) a killer!

(*BUZZ gives a short, sharp yelp.*)

Oh, I know. You can go off on your own. Moving from one place to another doing good. Living a life of solitude. Just like a grasshopper. (*HE puts his hands together and says . . .*) Ommmm.

(*BUZZ happily nods.*)

With no friends, no home, no family . . . And you'll have to shave off your antennas. And even then, no one will ever believe that deep down you're really not (*another dramatic pause*) a killer!

(*BUZZ gives another short, sharp yelp.*)

Because deep down that's what you really are: (*snarls*) A killer!

BUZZ: No! No, I'm not.

BENJAMIN: Hey. It's not me ya havta convince, kid. It's yourself.

Someday, you'll be sittin' there, the sun'll be shinin', puffs of clouds in the sky . . . a beautiful day. A happy day. You'll be sittin' there just watchin' a butterfly floatin' on the breeze or a ladybug scootin' across a leaf, not botherin' a soul, not hurtin' a thing. And this idea will pop into your head. An idea from nowhere. An idea you never had before and never thought you could ever have. A *mean* idea. You'll be lookin' at that innocent little bug and for no reason you'll suddenly think, "Hey, why don't I kill it?" And you will. Even though you know it's wrong. You will. But it'll feel good.

BUZZ: I'll never do that!

BENJAMIN: Keep tellin' yourself, kid. Keep tellin' yourself. But in the meantime, if you ain't gonna be a killer bee, you're gonna need a job.

BUZZ: A job?

BENJAMIN: Yeah, you know. A job. Work. The curse of the middle class. You do know what a job is, don't you?

BUZZ: (*indignant*) Of course I know what a job is.

BENJAMIN: I know. Maybe you can get a job on TV . . . do commercials. (*mocking*) "Friends, do you suffer from that stinging sensation?" Or maybe you can be a hairstylist . . . specialize in buzz cuts. Hey, I got it! You can become a social activist! Stick it to the man!

BUZZ: Why can't I just . . . just . . . do nothing? Why do I have to do anything at all? Why do I have to kill?

BENJAMIN: Look, kid, we've been through this all already, and it ain't getting' us nowhere. I'm through with arguin'. Here's the deal: I'm headin' back to the swarm. You can stay if you want. You can go if you want. I don't care. But don't say I didn't warn you.

BUZZ: (*his last act of defiance*) What if I flew ahead and warned the honey bees? What if I scared them off?

BENJAMIN: (*very cold; mean*) That's a *really* bad idea.

BUZZ: (*still trying to be defiant, but more scared*) Why? What are they going to do?

BENJAMIN: Let's just say that one more bee really won't make that much a difference in a slaughter. (*as HE turns to go*) Stay if you want.

(*BENJAMIN exits DR, leaving BUZZ sadly to turn and face the OTHERS.*)

BUZZ: What am I going to do?

DAISY: Maybe we can all run away together!

POPPY: You just don't get this whole plant thing, do you? For me, I say good riddance. Who needs pollination anyway? Who needs insects at all?

DANDY: Hey, maybe she's on to somethin'. I've heard of these places where all sorts of plants live together... inside. They're called greenhouses. Although they're not really green. They're made of glass.

DAISY: What's glass?

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