



## CHAPTER ONE

# HONEYBEES

It was noon on a hot June day in the Wild West Texas town of Muleshoe.

Sheriff Tuff Brunson walked down Muleshoe's dusty Main Street. He felt lazy. Thousands of cicadas buzzed in the mesquite trees around the town. *What should I have for lunch today?* he wondered as he neared the Happy Days Saloon. The delicious smell of grilled beef tacos and burritos filled his nose.

"Hey, it's the tiny cowboy poet," he said to himself as he looked down the veranda of the saloon. The little poet with the short legs and big hat sat back in his rocking chair and sang:

*I like to smell the corn chips  
I like to hear the bees  
What I like to eat the most  
Are beef tacos with peas*

*'Cause when I eat a taco  
I also like a nacho  
'cept when things go loco  
And the nacho is too macho*

*What a funny song, Tuff thought.*

“Sheriff Brunson, come quick,” said a boy’s voice as Tuff passed the Muleshoe jailhouse, which sat on Main Street next to the Happy Days. “We’ve got a big problem.”

Tuff rounded the corner and looked toward the horse stables behind the jailhouse, where the voice seemed to come from. It sounded like a voice he knew.

“What the –?” Tuff said.

Outside the horse stables stood three people, dressed in white outfits. Tuff couldn’t

see their faces and hands, which were covered by masks and gloves.

“There’s a problem in the stables,” said the tallest masked person. “You need to come and see now.”

Tuff didn’t know who these three people in their strange outfits were but thought he had better make sure his horse Silver Heels was alright. He lowered his fingers to the bullwhip which hung from his star-studded belt and followed them as they kicked hay aside and walked into the stables.

As Tuff stepped inside, the smallest person quickly ran behind him and slammed the stable door shut. “Now,” squealed a girl’s voice.

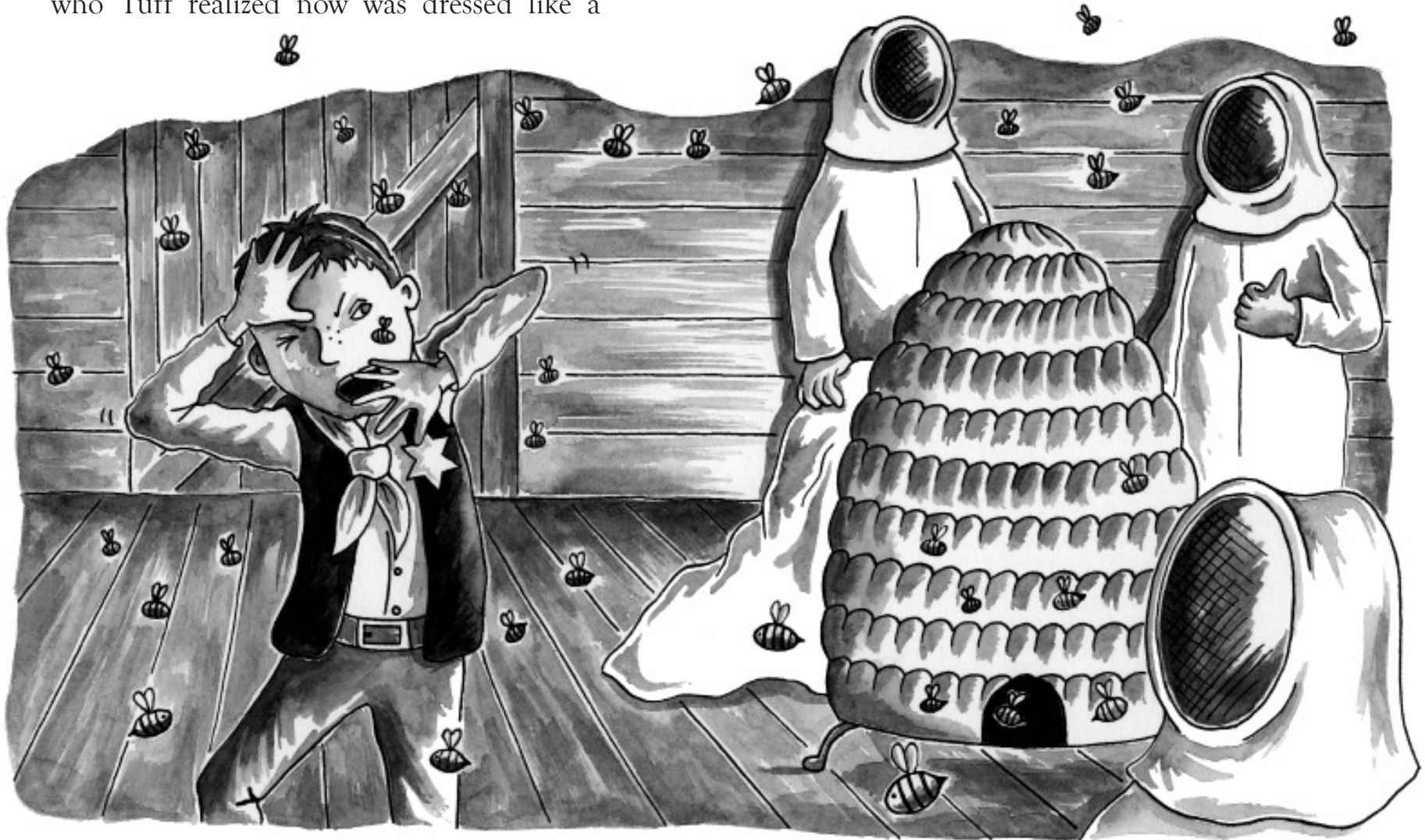
Silver Heels whinnied, “Look out, Tuff.”

He watched in horror as the remaining two masked people threw a saddle blanket aside. Underneath was a giant beehive. As soon as the blanket hit the ground the swarm spread out across the stables. The terrible sound of buzzing honeybees filled the air as they

swooped and dove around Tuff's head. He knew no bullwhip could help him now.

"There's nowhere to hide, you bumbling sheriff," shouted the tallest masked person, who Tuff realized now was dressed like a

beekeeper. "Forty thousand honeybees will sting you. The only place you can escape is inside the jail."



Tuff knew the beekeeper was right. With his arm across his face to protect his eyes from the bees, he ran into the next building. He heard a door crash shut behind him. Tuff lowered his arm from his eyes and realized he was locked in one of his own jail cells.

The three beekeepers appeared outside the cell.

“Ha, ha,” laughed the tallest as he took off his mask. “You fell for our trick.”

It wasn’t a beekeeper at all. Tuff stared into the nasty red eyes of “Big Nose” George Parrot, the meanest outlaw in the Wild West.

“Yeah,” said the other two as they also took off their masks, gloves and white outfits. “It’s ‘Little Nose’ George and ‘Tiny Nose’ Peggy, you dumb sheriff.”

“We’ve got the sheriff locked in his own jail,” said Big Nose George. “Now let’s go have a delicious lunch at the Happy Days Saloon. After lunch we’ll help ourselves to all the hideout kids’ tooth fairy money.”

“Then, for dessert, we’ll come back and have big bowls of honey,” said Tiny Nose Peggy.

“If you rob the kids, you’re the ones who will get stung,” said Tuff.

“Oh, so should we ‘bee’ careful?” said Big Nose George.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed The Parrot Gang as the three outlaws danced out of the jailhouse, slamming the door behind them.