

Hazel the Hummingbird's Feeder Rules



Hazel's FEEDER RULES

Now, I tell every hummingbird
I meet:

1. No red dye—clear nectar only.
2. Fresh nectar every 2-3 days.
3. Clean feeders with warm water to keep us healthy.
4. Use the 1:4 sugar water recipe—it's just like nature's own.

Forward

This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

All materials in this book may be freely downloaded, shared, printed and used for educational or nonprofit purposes.

To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.



My name is Hazel, and I'm a ruby-throated hummingbird.
Every morning, I zip through the garden looking for sweet nectar.
One sunny day, I spotted something red and shiny hanging from a porch.
"Oooh! A new feeder!" I chirped.



I darted over and took a big sip.
The nectar was sweet, but... something felt strange.
My tongue tingled. My tummy didn't feel quite right.
"What's in this?" I wondered, tilting my head.



My friend Benny the hummingbird zoomed past.

"Hazel, be careful!" he called.

"Some feeders have red dye in the nectar. It's not good for us—it can make us sick."

I looked closer. The liquid was bright red, not clear.

"Oh no," I said. "I thought the red color was from the feeder!"



Benny explained, "We don't need colored nectar. The feeder's red parts are enough to catch our eye. Red dye isn't natural—it can hurt our bodies and make us weak."

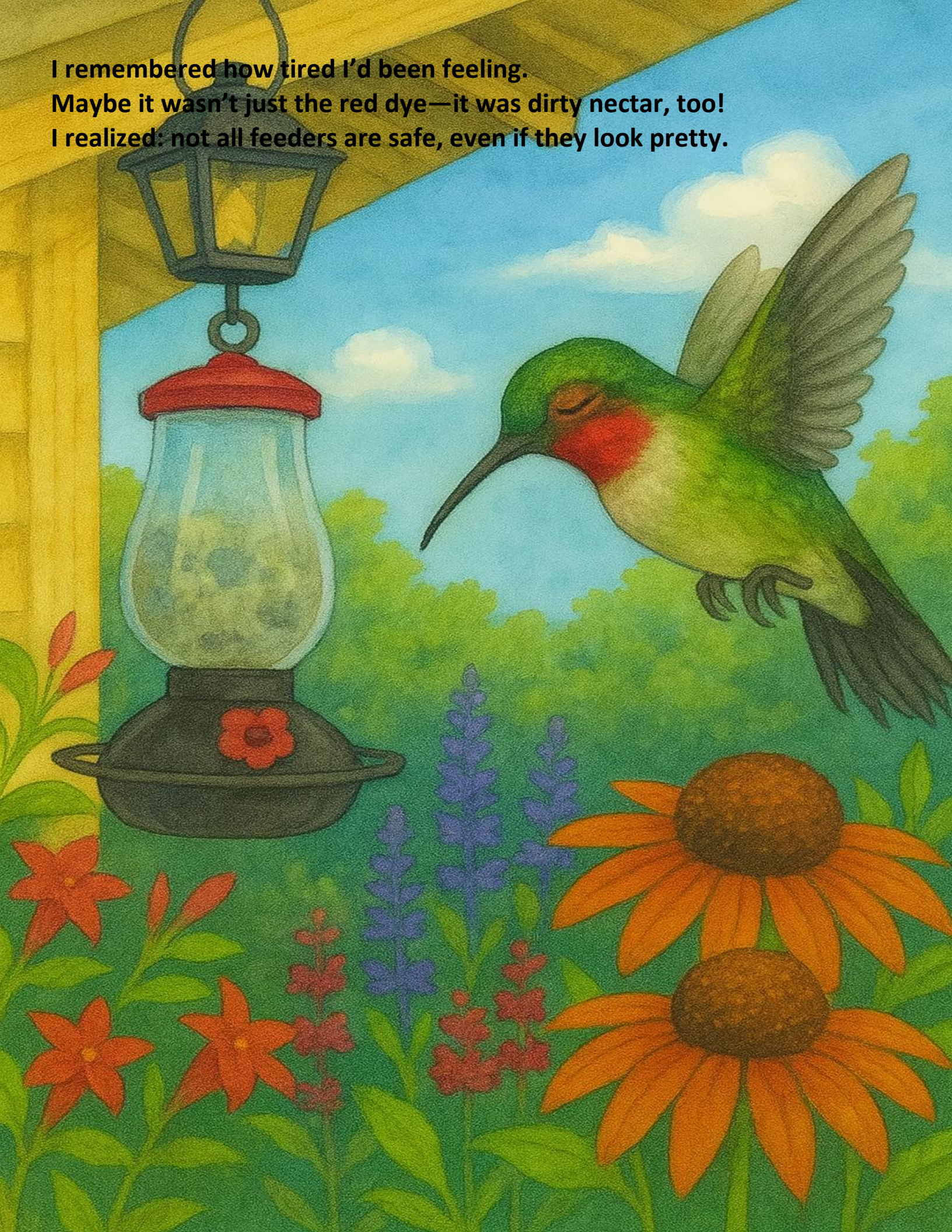
I zipped away from the feeder, still feeling wobbly.



A few days later, I saw another feeder in a different yard.
It had clear nectar, so I thought it would be safe.
But when I took a sip... yuck! It tasted sour!
Benny flapped beside me. "That feeder hasn't been cleaned in weeks.
Old nectar grows mold and tiny germs that can make our tongues
swell."



**I remembered how tired I'd been feeling.
Maybe it wasn't just the red dye—it was dirty nectar, too!
I realized: not all feeders are safe, even if they look pretty.**

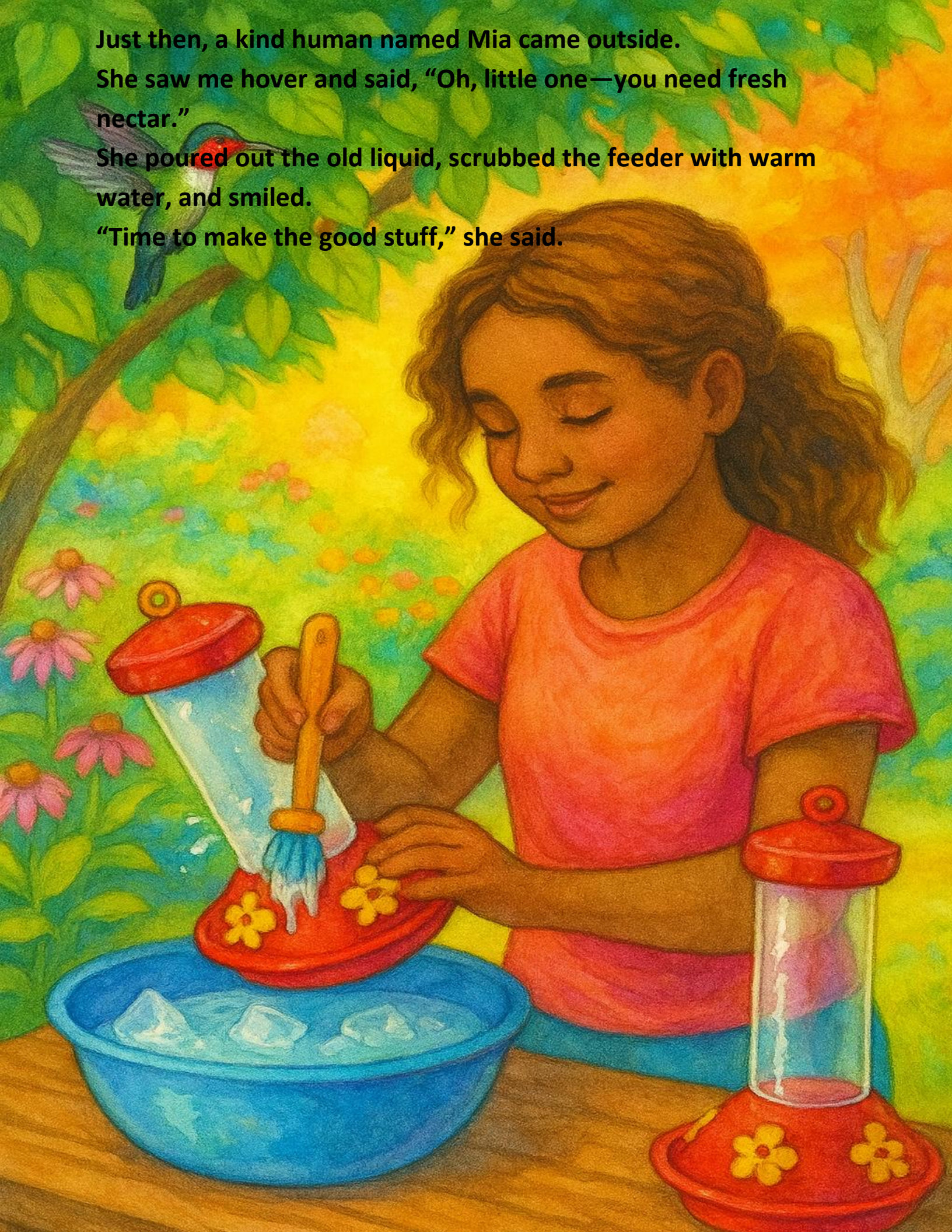


Just then, a kind human named Mia came outside.

She saw me hover and said, "Oh, little one—you need fresh nectar."

She poured out the old liquid, scrubbed the feeder with warm water, and smiled.

"Time to make the good stuff," she said.



An illustration of two young girls in a garden. The girl on the right, with brown curly hair and a red shirt, is holding a sign and looking down at it. The girl on the left, with dark hair and a purple shirt, is looking up at her. A hummingbird is perched on a branch in the upper left. The background is a vibrant, colorful garden with green leaves and yellow and pink flowers.

Mia told her sister:

“Here’s how to make safe hummingbird nectar—no dye needed.”

1. Mix 1 part white sugar with 4 parts water.
2. Stir until the sugar dissolves.
3. Let it cool.
4. Fill the feeder with the clear nectar.

“That’s it!” she said. “Just sugar and water—like flower nectar.”

Natural Nectar Recipe

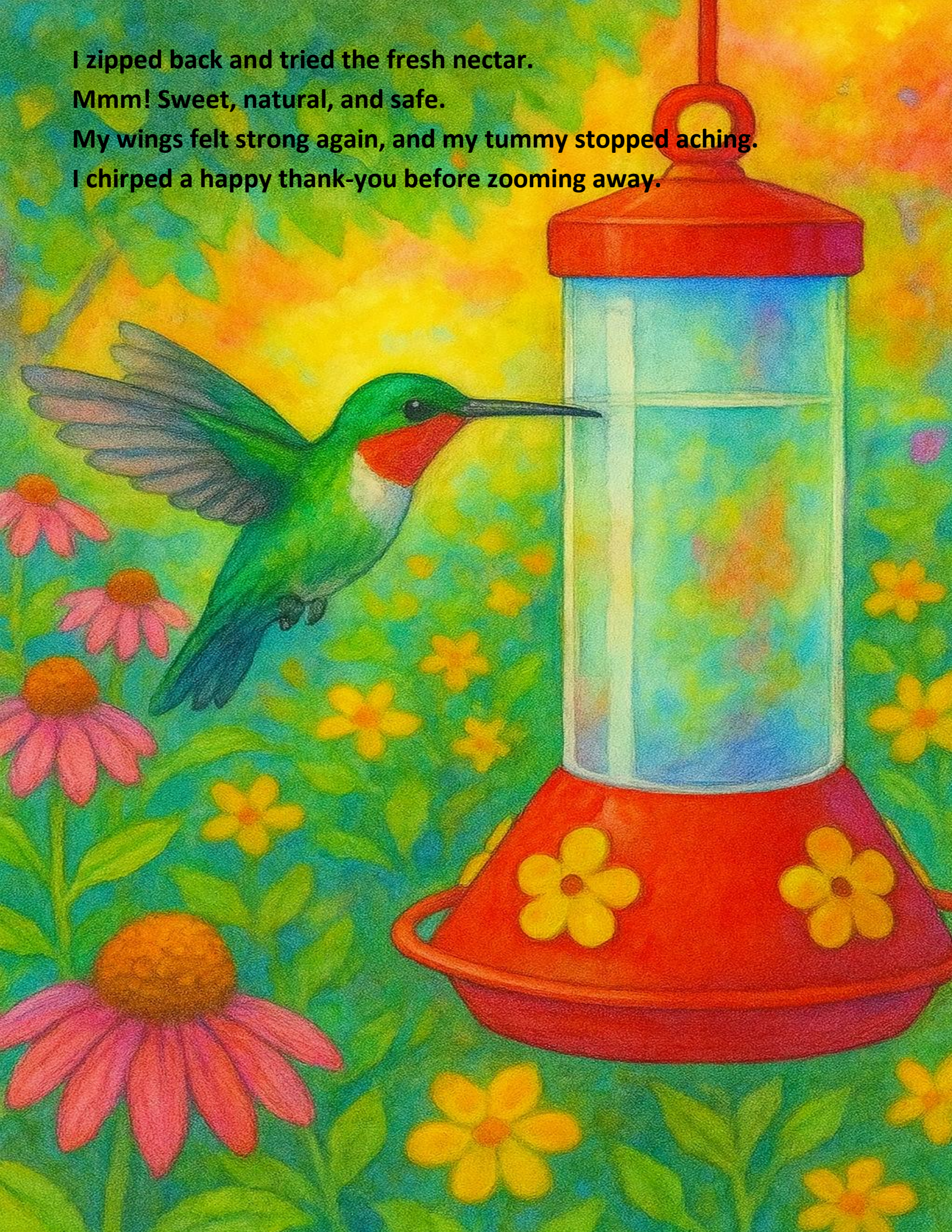
1 part white sugar
4 parts water
stir
cool
4. fill

I zipped back and tried the fresh nectar.

Mmm! Sweet, natural, and safe.

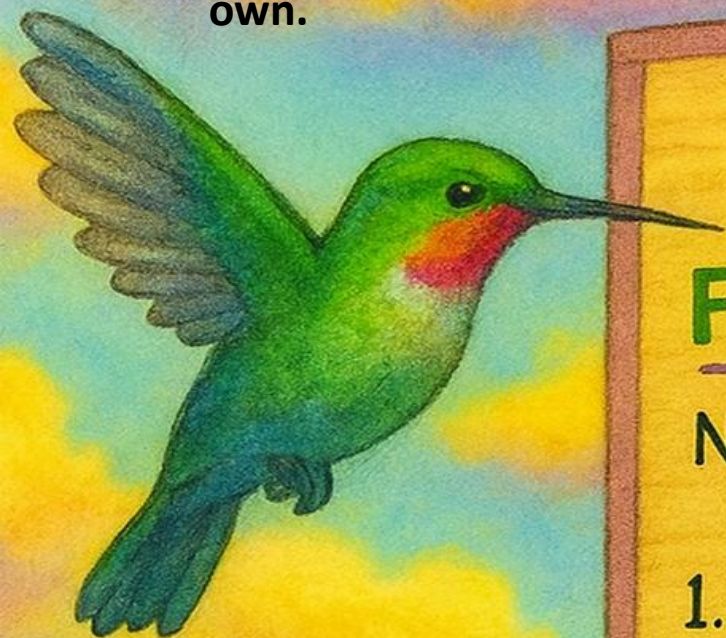
My wings felt strong again, and my tummy stopped aching.

I chirped a happy thank-you before zooming away.



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Hazel's

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Back in Mia's yard, flowers bloomed, feeders sparkled, and hummingbirds buzzed in every color. We were safe, strong, and full of life—just how it should be. And that's the sweet truth about keeping hummingbirds happy.

Facts

Red dye in hummingbird feeders is harmful to the birds.

Here's why:

- Hummingbirds don't need it – The bright red color of the feeder itself is enough to attract them.
- Potential health risks – Many red dyes (including "FD&C Red No. 40") can cause health problems in birds, such as liver and kidney issues, tumors, or changes in behavior. Wildlife experts advise avoiding it to be safe.
- Unnecessary additives – Dyes are artificial chemicals, and nectar should be as close to natural flower nectar as possible.

Best practice:

Make your own clear nectar:

- Mix 1 part white sugar with 4 parts water
- Stir until dissolved
- Do not add dye, honey, brown sugar, or artificial sweeteners
- Clean the feeder every 2–3 days in summer (or more often in hot weather) to prevent mold and bacteria



References

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