

The Chronicles of Henry Roach-Dairier

The Re-creation of Roacheria



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Introduction: *The Beginning:*

as revealed to Daeira Dairier in dreams and meditation

In the beginning, Essence roamed the skies looking for the right place to start a world. She saw that our planet already had cycles of day and night, water and air. It had a set path around its sun so its cycles could be numbered, but it had no life.

“I will see what can live and grow here,” she said, and joined herself with it. The Creative Life Force of Essence endowed the waters with miniscule plants and creatures and the cycle of life began.

Essence cherished this new life, but was tired from her journey across the cosmos, so she entered the earth and went to sleep.

Eons later, when she awoke, the planet was filled with life forms. The water and land and air teemed with a great variety of plants and creatures. Some were tiny and frail, others huge and fierce. There was great variety even in their coverings—smooth, hard, scaly, furry. The large, scaly ones dominated at that time.

Essence watched her world. The sun fed the plants, which fed the moving creatures, who then were eaten by larger ones, and on and on. They grew, propagated, and returned to feed the earth when their time was over. Some creatures failed and disappeared, but new ones evolved to take their place.

And ants were there.

Essence, satisfied with the balance and cycles, cradled her world, and went to sleep again.

The pain of many shocks woke Essence. Chunks of matter hurled through the cosmos and struck the planet, killing millions of life forms and knocking the planet in its cosmic path. The dust from their impact screened the sun’s light, denying life-giving energy to plants. Essence watched in dismay as thousands of species disappeared from her

cherished world. In her grief, she shook. Hills tumbled. Mountains sent forth liquid fire from within.

But even in grief, Essence's Creative Life Force found its way again. An infinite variety of flowering plants came to be. A few species of the scaly creatures and the small ones with fur and feathers survived.

And ants were still there.

Essence watched for many eons as the fur creatures increased in size and began to dominate. "What would happen," Essence said, "if I interfered and gave one life form an advantage? If I gave a tad of my intelligence to a creature, could it create something original, as I have?"

Essence looked closely at each species and finally chose one that seemed different from others. This species was not entirely covered with fur, stood on only two appendages, and had a well developed nervous system. She infused them with more intelligence and waited to see what would happen.

Season cycles passed. Generations of Duo Pods came and went. Essence saw that they made tools, built things, and developed the planet. Their machines grew ever more complex. Satisfied, Essence took a nap.

Essence awoke with a fever. The planet's surface was a shambles. The air and the water were fouled. All the Duo Pods, all of the feathered creatures, and most of the furry ones were dead forever.

"What has happened to my world?" Essence cried.

Grief for her failed experiment and illness consumed Essence. The earth shook. Storms raged. Her tears covered many lands. Then slowly, the earth healed itself. Although it would take many more eons for all of the Duo Pod creations to return to the earth, the world looked new and fresh once more. Essence found that one substance the Duo Pods had made would not break itself down and feed the earth. They had indeed created something original. Her experiment had not been a total failure.

She looked around hopefully and found that ants, roaches and other insects were not only still there, but had grown greatly in size and changed in other ways.

"Ah, my faithful ants," she said. "You have been with me from the earliest days and have always been civilized. Perhaps the intelligence I gave the Duo Pods was not enough, I will try again. I will give you not only the gift of knowledge, but my compassion as well. And this time I will not sleep, but will watch over my world. I will be available to my creatures, speaking to their minds when they seek me. When each one's time on earth is done, the part of me that is in them will return to me in unity forever. Eat then, my ants, of the lasting creation of the Duo Pods—plastic—and receive my gifts. Cherish my world and seek to understand its mysteries."

And so we are.

While Essence was speaking, a group of roaches approached. They took the gift of intelligence, but ran away before the more important gift of compassion and inner essence was given. Thus they received no more of Essence than had the extinct Duo Pods.

Bemused, Essence observed the roaches as they ran from her. "I must watch and see what comes of this development."

Looking Back:

In *To Build a Tunnel*, the first book of the original trilogy, Henry narrates the story of his great-grandfather and two other ants who were tricked by roaches into building better tunnels in Roacherian plastic mines. The ant colony realizes too late that its members have been forced into slavery. South Harvester Colony 45's Council would prefer to solve the matter diplomatically, but are prepared for war.

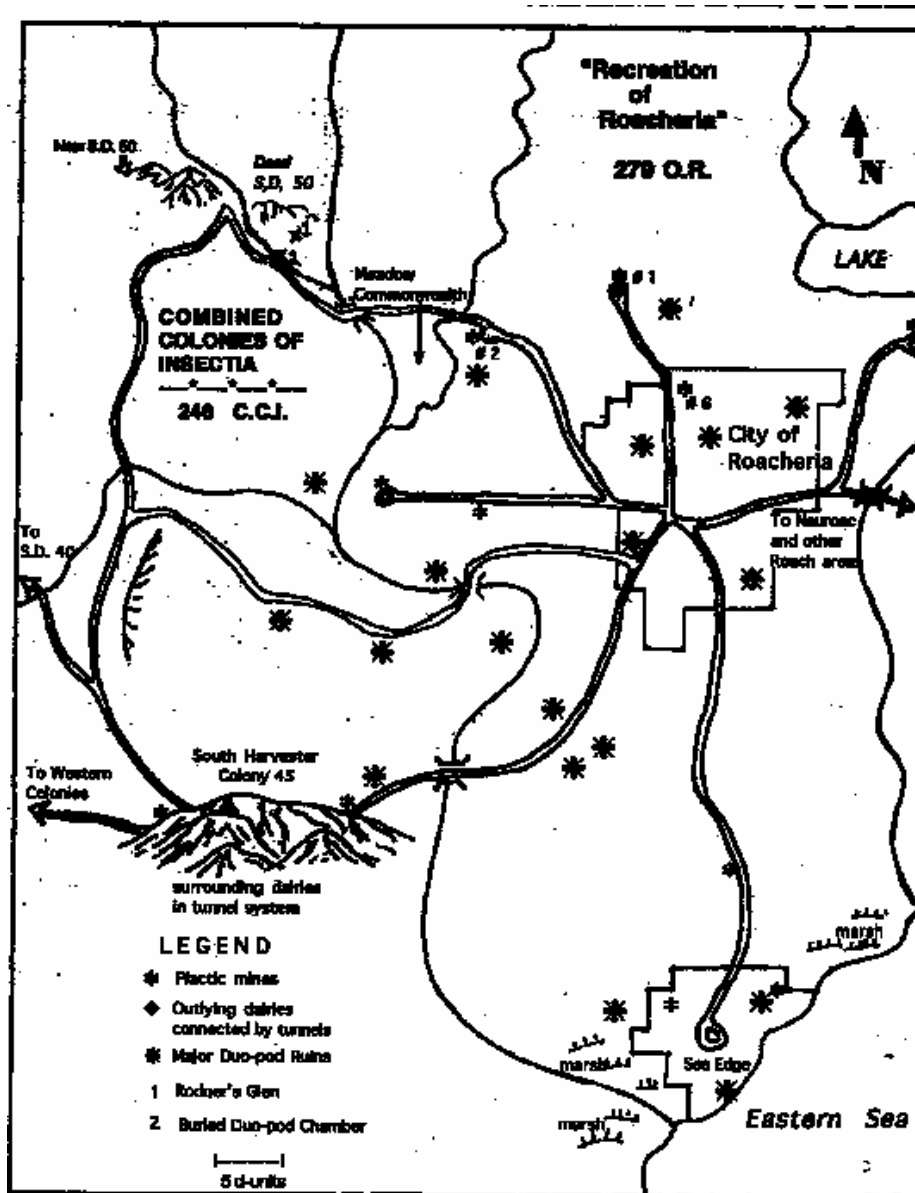
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New South Dairy Colony 50, the second book of the original trilogy, opens with Henry as a nymph, in a coma after ingesting a bad combination of medicines in his physician-father's lab. His ant grandfather, Anthony Dairier, decides it's time to straighten out his grandson. He reveals to Henry the details of his own life: the war and the emotional pain which resulted in his dedication to the ideal of the experimental ant/roach colony, New South Dairy 50.

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Wise saying from a Duo Pod book of Spiritual Philosophy:

Idler, go to the ant. Ponder its ways and grow wise. No one gives her orders, no overseer, no master, yet all through the summer she makes sure of her food, and gathers her supplies at harvest time. Proverbs 6: 6-8



THE CAST OF RE-CREATION OF ROACHERIA, roughly in order of appearance and by family group

THE ANTS:

Antony Dairier: Grandfather by adoption of Henry Roach-Dairier, founder of New South Dairy Colony 50

Henrietta: Mate of Antony, grandmother by adoption of Henry Roach-Dairier

Andrew: Henrietta's youngest brother

Allie: Physician's assistant in New South Dairy Colony 50

Master Donna: Archeologist who takes over Henrietta's work after her death

Dell: Distant ant cousin of Henry, granddaughter of Hilda, Henrietta's younger sister

Donald: Dell's mate

Corina: Dell's mother, granddaughter of Herbert and Corina. Herbert was one of the ants enslaved by Rex in *To Build a Tunnel*

Al: Corina's mate, son of Corin who was one of the founding members of New South Dairy Colony 50

THE ROACHES:

Henry Roach-Dairier: Title character, son of Rodger and Genny, grandson of Antony and Henrietta

Rodger: Henry Roach-Dairier's father who was adopted by Antony and Henrietta

David, Dorothy, Arthur and Drew: Older siblings of Henry Roach-Dairier

Genny: Mate of Rodger

Rayann: Genny's sister and Gerry's mate

Gerry and Rene: Renegade roaches who changed their lives and became members of New South Dairy Colony 50

Regina: Mate of Henry Roach-Dairier, daughter of Robert and Rebecca

Robert: Great nephew of Sir Rex

Rebecca: Mate of Robert, daughter of Rochelle (who is actually of Gabriel's line)

Gabrielle: Daughter of Henry and Regina

Henry Roach-Dairier II: Son of Gabrielle, grandson of Henry Roach-Dairier

Ronald: Younger brother of Gabrielle, named for Sir Ronald of a previous generation

Trainer Renard: Teaches Roachstory and other units at Training Center for Business and Professional Work

Rick: Son of Master Roland, with whom Henry lives during training

Genelle: Rick's mate

Ray: Rick and Genelle's son

Ramona: Ray's mate

Gatlin: One of Henry's fellow trainees

Gabby: Gatlin's mate

Rusty: Another of Henry's fellow trainees

Master Riedel: Director of the Training Center for Business and Professional Work

Reese (the younger): Son of Sir Reese and one of the trainees in Henry's Aunt Language and Culture training unit

Sir Reese: Supreme Executor of the South East Roach Control Board

Rundell: Member of Henry's training group

Racine: Young female in Henry's training group, daughter of Master Robin

Master Robin: Youngest member of the Legal Counseling Services Committee and a supporter of Henry

Ronda: Cousin of Henry, granddaughter of Sir Ronald who was Rodger's biological grandfather

Sir Rubin: Member of the S.E.R.C.B. and one of Rundell's customers

Ruth: One of Henry's trainees, becomes Rundell's mate, descendent of Gabriel from *To Build a Tunnel*

Gallo and Griffin: Ruth's younger brothers who are named after their grandfather and great-grandfather

Gallo: Ruth's grandfather, brother of Gabriel in *To Build a Tunnel*

Richard and Ginger: Ruth's parents

Georgette: Client of Henry who joins Meadow Commonwealth

Master/Sir Raphael: Member of the S.E.R.C.B. and Chief Archeologist of Roacheria

Forward: *Gabrielle Roach*

With a shriek, my brother Ronald's youngest nymph scooted, his six legs a blur, out of the sleep chamber where he had been playing with my oldest nymph. He ran past his mother and the others in the parlor, straight to Ronald squealing, "Daaaaad, Henry says if I'm not good, fire ants will tunnel under my sleep cushion and come up and sting me!"

I stormed out of the kitchen, where my father and I had been putting our Last Day feast on the dining surface, into the parlor to confront my son. "Young Henry! Shame on you! Only this morning you made your pledge to care for and cherish everyone. Now here you are frightening your little cousin with foolishness. Apologize this instant."

My son stopped and faced me and everyone else in the chamber. "I was only teasing. He sees ant larvae and roaches together every day in the nursery. I didn't think he would start crying."

My mate interceded. "Gabrielle, nymphs have been telling each other that silliness for ages."

"But Henry's nearly an adult and should know better."

Embarrassed, Henry put his pods around his cousin. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you."

In the silence that followed, my father walked slowly over to his namesake, put one pod on the back of his thorax and said, "There was a time long ago in Roacheria when roach parents used that old line on their nymphs to frighten them into proper behavior. The story had a basis in fact. What you and I know, that your cousin doesn't, is that the last violent conflict between ants and roaches was in Roacherian season cycle 219, and hatred finally died here in Meadow Commonwealth in 281. Come, let's all eat before the food grows cold."

My father took my mother's pod in his and led his three adult offspring, our mates, and seven grandnymphs to a table filled with the best of two cultures: roasted grasshopper, fungus muffins, fried bee's wings, shredded plastic salad, fried fly eggs, roasted grassfrond seeds, honey dew and honey cake.

My father raised his pods. "We celebrate with joy the end of the 319th season cycle of Organized Roacheria, but may we never forget the past. Let us strive to build an even better future for our young."

As we began to eat, Ronald's mate asked, "Henry, what did you mean when you said that old line about fire ants had a basis in fact?"

"Have you forgotten your basic training?" my father countered.

"I wasn't trained here."

We all looked at him expectantly. My father enjoyed relating the past, and he was an expert. The way he told things made those listening feel as though they were part of it.

"Roaches formed Organized Roacheria thirty-three season cycles before the ant colonies combined. That's why in The Colonies this is the 286th season cycle. Then they set about to take over nearby ant colonies which were rich in plastic. A dairying colony, later named South Dairy 1, was the first to fall," he said, passing the sliced grasshopper around.

"They enslaved the colony to produce plastic for them and discovered a taste for grasshopper meat and honey dew. Dairying ants were the only ones at that time who knew how to milk aphids for this deliciously sweet and refreshing drink. Gabrielle, would you please refill my mug?"

We sat silently, waiting for him to continue after downing the mug and eating a slice of roast grasshopper. "They gave the ants barely enough food to survive and no plastic. Since most colonies did not communicate with each other in those days, many season cycles passed before anyone knew of their plight.

"When the first severely plastic deprived young who managed to live, emerged from pupation horribly deformed and with no intelligence, the ants knew they must get help or perish. Secretly, a few began to dig an escape tunnel. When it was ready, one named Duncan was chosen to break the surface."

My father paused and chewed half a muffin. Even the youngest nymph did not interrupt. All the nymphs' eyes were fixed on their grandfather.

"Duncan ran westward toward another dairying colony, later known as South Dairy 50. On the way, he made a wide circle around a fire ant colony. I've often wondered if that was when he got the idea about how to save his colony. Surface workers recognized him as a dairying ant when he reached the dairying colony and took him to their Council Chief. 'That makes two colonies they've taken,' the Council Chief said after Duncan told what had happened, 'We've been trading with a harvester colony half a day's journey from here, getting plastic from them

since our mine ran out. The roaches took over their colony a short while ago. We were going to approach your colony for a new supply.'

"The whole council grew more anxious, realizing they had no plastic to nourish their young and unsure that the colony would continue to thrive. 'Perhaps we could ask the fire ants to help us fight,' Duncan proposed.

"'We've never gone there. As long as nobody goes near their surface, they don't attack,' he was told.

"Duncan persisted, 'We either ask their help or perish one colony at a time.' Filled with fear, he and the Dairy Council Chief set out, bearing baskets filled with honey dew, grasshopper meat, and the last of the harvester ants' seeds as gifts. Fortunately, for all of us ever since, the fire ants' Council Chief, Fredrika, was a female of great wisdom, and that colony's members revered her in the manner of the ancient queens."

Henry stopped to drink more honey dew.

"'Here in my colony,' Fredrika said, 'we protect even our weakest members. Why shouldn't we extend that to other kinds of ants? Our ways of hunting are not sufficient any more. If you will share your crops and knowledge of managing herds with us, so we may have a better life, we will give to you our protection. We should not let the roaches enslave any of us. The roaches know better than to attack us, but they watch constantly. They will see if a force of us sets out to free your colony.'"

My mother and Ronald quietly rose and cleared the soiled bowls and mugs and empty serving containers. Then Ronald cut the honey cake and passed the pieces around.

"So they set about a plan to build a tunnel from the fire ant colony to the free dairying colony, and from there to the harvester colony and Duncan's. They also sent explorers to seek out other colonies. By the end of that season cycle, the Combined Colonies of Insectia had been established. The invasions were successful, of course. The roaches didn't have time to react to a sudden, underground attack. They quickly retreated from both colonies. I suppose many of them had nightmares of fire ants popping up from the ground all around them long afterward. The strangest part is that, even many season cycles later, while they still feared tunnels under their surface, they never figured out that all the colonies were connected underground."

He laughed and all of us joined him. "And that is the origin of your silly story, my precious namesake. Now, let me eat my honey cake."

Later, as the others cleaned up the remains of our feast, I sat near my father while my mother massaged his painful leg joints. In spite of the fact that most roaches could expect to live many season cycles longer than his sixty-two, his health was failing and his joints had stiffened. Movement was quite painful for him. I feared losing him, and with him all his wisdom.

He had done so much in his early adult years to break down the hatred most roaches had for ants. His published writings of the lives of his antcestors helped both cultures understand the mistakes of the past. His life was an important part of Antstory and Roachstory, yet he was reluctant to reveal it. So often, when I was young, he would tell me a bit, and then stop.

"Dad," I said quietly, "there are so many things about you these little ones need to know. Please, tell it to them."

"The facts are in official records. Anyone can look them up."

"The records don't tell it with feeling," I said reaching out to stroke him.

"I don't think I want to relive that. No one needs to know what your mother and I went through."

“Forgive my rudeness, but we do need to know. What if your grandfather had not shared his life with you? You learned from his pain, and that made it better for everyone. We mustn’t lose that. You stand with them: with Fredrika, Duncan, your great-grandfather, your grandfather, and my namesake.”

He turned and put his pods around my mother. “Regina?”

She nodded.

He looked deeply into my eyes and said slowly, “It will take more than one afternoon.”

“I’ll bring all the little ones to you each Seventhday for an h-unit, for as many quarter time frames as it takes. Will you allow me to use a voice imager? My memory is not like yours, and I can’t write as fast as you can speak.”

After another long silence, he nodded.

The following Seventhday, my father, Henry Roach-Dairier, son of a roach who was adopted by ants, began to reveal the chapters of his life to his grandnymphs. Sometimes my mother joined him, adding her perspective as well. I also spoke with his brothers, his ant cousins, and the other original members of Meadow Commonwealth for a broader view. I give you his story, as he gave us *To Build a Tunnel* and *New South Dairy Colony 50*.

1.

Henry, a roach nymph of ten season cycles, sat at the slanted work surface in New South Dairy Colony 50’s training center. He stared at the list of reading symbols again, then off into space, wishing he were out in a meadow somewhere. A pod touched his solid brown thorax, bringing his mind back to the plain earthen walls of the training chamber.

“Henry, you can’t learn if you don’t concentrate on the task. Name the thirty symbols in order for me,” the training ant said, taking the list from him.

Henry named only the first five. “Why do I have to learn these anyway? I can already read in Ant.”

“You can barely read in Ant. You know we live and work together in this colony. You must know both if you are to learn about yourself. Your grandfather and all of us here have spent most of our lives trying to show others that ants and roaches can live together in harmony instead of hatred and distrust. You are named for your grandmother, Henrietta, who helped prove that the ancient Duo Pods caused their own extinction. The Combined Colonies count on us to set the example for others. You must live up to your family’s expectations.”

Roacheria. Why did everyone, or so it seemed to Henry, dislike it so much? His older brothers, David and Arthur, had both spent a long time there. David had been back for a season cycle. He refused to speak of it, saying the only good thing that ever came from there was his mother and the thin, young female he had brought back with him. Their mating ceremony took place a time frame later and they now had a nymph. Arthur’s communications spoke only of how he longed to come home.

Henry sighed and turned back to the list of symbols. The trainer moved on to help someone else. Henry concentrated for a short time, thinking if he learned to read, he could find out about the mysterious Roacheria. He would be happy to go there, if it meant no training. His mind wandered back to the meadow.

An idea came to him. He squirmed at his bench, dropped the list, squirmed again. "I need to be excused."

The trainer nodded.

Henry slipped quietly out of the chamber and headed down a side tunnel that led to a little-used entrance to the mound. In a few moments, he had left the colony and scuttled across the small stream that flowed near it.

He wandered through the meadows, farther and farther from the mound, and wished he were older, like his brothers and sister, so he wouldn't have to go to training. David worked with the grasshopper herds and his mate helped in the nursery while trying to learn to speak Ant. Arthur was in Roacheria hoping to find a mate and learning to manage the plastic trade. His sister, Dorothy, had just begun a mentorship with a chemist in near-by South Harvester Colony 45. Drew, six season cycles older than Henry and closest in age, had completed his basics long ago and was almost finished exploring jobs in the colony. He worked with others in different areas each time frame to see what he might like for his life's work. Then he would enter a mentorship. But he would also have to go to Roacheria for a while to find a mate. There didn't happen to be any young female roaches in New South Dairy 50 at that time.

Henry came upon a path and followed it. It led to a lower part of the stream that passed by the colony to a synthetic stone chamber. He crossed the stream and entered the chamber. A lightning bug lamp sat on the floor near the portal. He turned it on and looked around. Murals covered the smooth walls, depicting life thousands and thousands of season cycles ago.

"This is the place my grandparents found," he said to himself. He looked at the images the extinct Duo Pods had made of themselves and many other creatures that no longer lived. So many varieties, so many shades of their soft outer covering. How had these creatures kept from hurting themselves with their skeleton on the inside? He looked at how they stood erect on only two pods and realized that was why they were named "Duo Pod Erectus."

He compared himself in size. "I'll be almost that big when I'm grown," he said to no one. "My father is much bigger. Oh, who cares about them any way? Studying them is stupid. I would rather be outside."

Henry returned to the stream and spent a pleasant afternoon watching tiny aquatic creatures swim. He dipped one pod in the water and listened to the sounds around him. He lifted his antennae when it suddenly grew silent. Something grabbed his back leg. He cried out, and then turned to see Gerry, an old reformed roach criminal.

Gerry didn't give him a chance to relax. "If I had been a mantis, you would be dead. About twenty ants and roaches are out looking for you. You had better get back where you belong, or you'll end up like me."

"Leave me alone, you ugly old half-face! You can't tell me what to do."

Gerry's outer mandibles had been cut off, Roacherian justice for violent crime. He had mated Henry's Aunt Rayann late in life. Henry disliked him and felt it odd that his aunt would be a companion to someone old enough to be her father. Henry had always refused to call him Uncle Gerry, even for his cousin's sake, because Gerry was not his cousin's biological father.

Gerry said nothing as he took a firm hold of Henry, picked him up, and roughly carried him home.

Henry's mother was pacing about when Gerry entered their domicile. "Henry, where have you been? Why did you leave training? We've been frantic!"

Gerry let go of Henry. "I found him playing in the stream that flows by the Duo Pod chamber, daydreaming. Young fool could have got himself killed. And he had the nerve to insult me. He needs a good stepping on."

Genny put her front pods around her son and embraced him. "Thank you for finding him," she said to Gerry. "You know we don't believe in stepping on anyone, especially nymphs. Rodger was raised with better ways and I agree with my mate. We've never done that to any of our young."

"The others didn't need it. This one does. I only had to step on Rayann's nymph once, and he never needed it again. He laughs about it now and he works hard on our council. I'm proud of him."

Henry moved quietly behind his mother as she spoke.

"Gerry, please don't misunderstand me. I've always admired the change you made in your life and the way you've cherished my sister. I'm not trying to be rude, and I don't expect an answer to what I am about to say. How many times were you stepped on and abused as a nymph? Did it make you choose the right path or did it only serve to make you more bitter and rebellious? There are other ways to help a nymph learn to make good choices."

Gerry sighed. "I'll go tell the others he's been found." He started toward the portal but stopped and turned. "I got stepped on plenty, and I deserved it, too. No, it didn't make me any more bitter and rebellious than I already was. I would hate to see Henry waste half his life like I did, or end up dead." He walked out and closed the portal before Henry's mother could respond.

Genny faced Henry squarely. "You left the training center without permission. Come with me right now and apologize to your trainer."

Henry ran behind his mother, barely able to keep up. She was of the small, thin roach variety, but she ran faster than anyone Henry knew. The discussion between his mother and his uncle and the run gave him time to think. He was out of breath but calm when they arrived at the training center. Since it was late in the day, everyone else had left.

Henry looked up at his trainer with wide-eyed innocence. "Why is everyone mad at me? What did I do?"

His trainer's voice was stern. "You asked if you could go to the sanitation area and you never came back."

"No, I didn't," Henry persisted. "I said I needed to be excused and you nodded, so I thought I was done for the day."

His mother and the trainer stared at him. Henry took advantage of the bewildered look in their eyes. He looked steadily at both of them, as if the whole thing were their fault.

"We were worried because we didn't know where you were," the trainer said. "From now on you are not to leave this chamber during training hours unless I have verbally given you permission."

Henry nodded and let his antennae droop.

"I'm sorry he troubled you. I'll talk to him some more at home," Genny said.

Later, Henry pretended to read while his mother explained the situation to his grandfather, Antony, who lived with them, and everyone who stopped by, relieved to see him safe.

Antony wrapped his appendages around Henry and held him close. The brace he wore on his mid-right appendage rubbed the back of Henry's thorax. Henry squirmed. His grandfather shifted himself, knowing his brace was rough. "While the others were searching for you, I went

to meditate.” He continued to stroke Henry, sliding one front pod to the very tip of Henry’s antennae. “I couldn’t stand the thought that anything might take you from me.”

Henry basked in his grandfather’s caresses. He liked the contrast of his dark brown outer covering against the deep black of his ant grandfather’s exoskeleton. He was still smaller than Antony but Henry knew that would change when he made his final molt into adulthood. He didn’t understand why, but no one else had ever been able to make him feel completely accepted.

Antony moved back and looked into Henry’s eyes. “You may be able to front innocence to others, but you can’t hide anything from me. Why did you leave training with such a sneaky trick?”

Henry’s antennae drooped even lower. He could not stand the penetrating look in his grandfather’s eyes. He stared at the floor and said honestly, “I don’t like being underground. I don’t like training.”

“I may be an ant, while you are a roach, but you and I are more alike than you might think. Just because ants linger long as larvae and sleep seven season cycles as pupas, missing nymphhood as such, doesn’t mean we don’t go through the same feelings. Do you remember the day you hatched?”

Henry hesitated. So many times he had heard his siblings and other roaches recall their hatching. Henry could remember nothing. He secretly feared there was something wrong with him. He thought about lying, but once again, the look on his grandfather’s face prevented it. He shook his antennae.

Antony sighed and caressed him again. “Perhaps that’s just as well. I was with you that day, grieving for your grandmother while your father took care of all the sick of the colony, including your mother. I said many things without thinking. You’re too young to understand, but I believe the day will come when you will remember. In the meantime, try to have a little more respect for others. You may not like training, but it’s a necessary part of your life. See if you can’t be a little less like me and a little more like your namesake. Now come eat your dinner.”

Over the next several time frames, Henry found many ways to slip away from training. He would claim to be sick, then tell his mother he felt better and go off into the meadows instead of going to training. He would ask to go to the research center to get a book and not return. He would write notes to his trainer excusing himself and sign his mother’s name. Each time he got caught, he would manage to turn things around and make his parents or his trainer think it was their fault.

At one point the trainer said, “Henry, if you would put half the effort into your lessons that you put into thinking up ways to trick me, you would be my best trainee.”

* * * *

One Seventhday during the summer, Henry watched his Uncle Gerry wander off into the meadows. Gerry always seemed to be the one to catch Henry when he slipped off somewhere. This time, Henry would follow him.

Gerry crossed the stream and worked his way along the opposite bank, looking up into the wood plants that lined it. About a d-unit down the stream, Gerry climbed a wood plant nearly overgrown with vines. Henry watched as the old renegade picked several bright red berries from the top vines and began to eat them.

“What are you doing, you stupid old fool,” Henry yelled. “Those are poison! That’s the first thing I was taught when I was allowed to leave the mound!”

His shouting startled Gerry. The old roach lost his grip and fell from the wood plant into the stream, groaning in pain.

Henry ran to him.

Gerry looked at him in anger. "Look what you've done! You've ruined everything. I've broken two legs! Why were you following me?"

Henry stood, staring at the fractures. Gerry's back legs had snapped like dry branches. In spite of his dislike for his uncle, Henry reached out his pod and tried to drag him from the shallow water.

Gerry howled in pain and yelled, "Leave me alone! You're making things worse. Get out of here you little..." he stopped.

Henry backed off. To his surprise, Gerry picked up a rock with his two front pods from the bottom of the stream and threw it at him.

"Go!"

Afraid and confused, Henry ran. Anger replaced confusion. How dare his uncle throw a rock at him! He was trying to help. Let him lie there then. Henry went on down the stream, muttering insults. "I don't care about you," he said as though Gerry could still hear. A giant butterfly caught his attention. He sat down on the edge of the stream and watched as it perched in a near-by wood plant and began to lay its eggs. Henry forgot about his uncle, enthralled by the beauty and grace of the golden creature.

It flew off suddenly. Henry looked across the stream to see a mantis. He rose to run, but the mantis did not move. It was not interested in Henry. It had already eaten. A piece of Gerry's head hung from its mandibles. With a shriek, Henry scuttled away from the stream back toward the colony.

"Gerry! A mantis!" he screamed over and over to the first creature he saw.

* * * *

During fall harvest, when training was suspended so more colony members could help cut the grassfronds and gather the seed, Henry was assigned to help his brother, David.

"Would you like me to go for water?" Henry offered.

"No, because I know you'll disappear again. I need help with this section more than I need water."

"I'll come back," Henry reassured him.

"No you won't, and you'll have some wild excuse. When are you going to grow up and honor your namesake?"

"Maybe if someone would tell me more about my grandmother I could."

David swung the cutting tool and toppled another twenty-five f-unit stalk. "Maybe if you would stay in training, you could find about her for yourself. Now get busy and gather the seed. This crop is our most important. The seed, its oil, the stems—every part of this plant is used. I thought I would say that just in case you sneaked away the day that lesson was taught."

Henry glared at his brother and did his part that day. David's words bothered him enough that for a few time frames he concentrated on improving his reading. He read about his grandmother. She had learned to read the Duo Pod manuscripts found with many other perfectly preserved artifacts in the chamber he had seen. The toxins the Duo Pods left behind had probably begun the evolutionary process that increased the size of the insect world, resulting in their present state of civilization.

“So what?” he thought, but he made himself read on:

“After Master Antony’s leadership established peace with Roacheria, he and Master Henrietta established New South Dairy Colony 50. The colony thrives as a place where ants and roaches work together. The Intercolonial Council decreed that the Duo Pod manuscripts would be placed there permanently for study. Master Henrietta continued to translate the works and train both roach and ant archaeologists until her death in the 224th season cycle of the Combined Colonies.”

Promising to return in an h-unit, Henry went to the records chamber of his colony. There he learned that his grandmother was the first to contract an infection that swept through the colony shortly before his own hatching. His father, the colony’s physician, had been able to save everyone else with infection-fighting molds. She had not responded to treatment.

Henry glanced at the time piece on the chamber wall. His h-unit was nearly up. He returned to training and read the rest of the chapter in the Antstory manuscript about his grandfather’s family and the establishment of his colony.

David had said he should honor his namesake. David’s namesake, his grandfather’s father, had been a dairier. David was a dairier. His sister Dorothy, named for his great-grandmother, had taken up chemistry as her life’s work, just as her namesake had before Old South Dairy 50 died. Was he supposed to spend his life underground reading boring manuscripts?