

Pest of a Bug Work Humor

just Deirdre.

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Dedication

*For my mother, children, grandchildren, and my significant other.
You give me purpose.*

A sudden flood incident had destroyed Inner City Ant Colony, leaving them without a home. The day the flood happened; none would have guessed such calamity would befall their colony. The ants had woken up that morning going about their daily activities in high spirits. The sun had shone on them, and the skies were clear with no sign of what was to come.

The rains had started. It was so unexpected that most continued their activities thinking the light showers would let up. The showers increased just as suddenly as the rains began to surge heavier pelts. Soon, before their very eyes, the rain washed away everything the members of the colony held dear.

All the ant families that existed in Inner City were still below ground, surrounded by only mudslides, barely alive. Some were rummaging through the mud trying to gather whatever they could salvage from the muddy ruin. The day that started looking so bright ended with them losing everything they called their own. Disaster had struck.

It was no use; everything had gone up the river with the floodwater. Several ants lost; several injured with no hospital available for treatment. Survivors were traveling in a single column trying to find signs of daylight so they could crawl above ground to start anew.

The journey wouldn't be easy. It meant a long trek to the closest colony; three days of travel they weren't equipped for. Physically and emotionally, they were not suited for this new lease on life they looked for – so unexpected, so unprepared.

Much of the colony had never traveled outside of Inner City. It would take a strong will, the bravest of mindsets and a lot of hope for them to conquer these tough times.

Despite the misfortune and the challenging situation, the ants marched on with persistence. Theirs was a strength born within. Despite the hard times, the colony would push through.

Abruptly, a worker with a stout body shouted, "Hey, everyone! Look up ahead! Light!"

This instantaneously raised the morale of the tired soldier ants relentlessly heading the traveling colony. They quickly marched ahead to check it out.

"Okay, now. Wait a minute!" said Steven, a gangly looking male ant wearing eyeglasses over his large protruding eyes, as he jumped in front to stop them. With baseball cap perched on his head and one antenna pointed up, he stood on his hind legs and pleaded, "Just hear me out please..." as they all kept marching on around him. One ant with an injured leg, walking briskly with the support of a tree twig, replied,

"Move, Steven. No one wants to hear what you have to say."

Another, with a fractured thorax, quipped, "Not today, man. Get out of the way."

"I'm only trying to help," Steven protested. If only they would stop and listen to him. They hardly ever heeded what he had to say. He complained to the Commander and other bugs in higher positions about everything. Often, he had their interest at heart.

“Yeah, right! We do not need your kind of help today, Steven. All you do is complain,” countered another with a red scarf tied to her right hind leg.

“He’s a butthole,” retorted the ant with one crutch, now up ahead as they all continued toward the light. The primary goal was getting to the promised land, not listening to the rumblings of a renowned complainer.

The General marched ahead and stood right beneath the spot where the light shone down. He gazed into the brightness to confirm if the opening was safe enough to navigate through. The General thought the light at the end of the tunnel was a train making its way through. He did not want to be the one who would lead his colony to their death.

Drops of water splashed on his temple. Startled, he shook his head from side to side. The light was not an oncoming train, but a way out. In a twisting motion, he turned around to the soldiers who stared at him with interest. “It’s all clear. Bring the rest of the colony up. We will form a ladder and climb out,” the General shouted with anticipation.

Everyone trooped forward the minute they heard the instructions. Each ant linked with another to form the required ladder. There was a way around these things; the ants had a method of “looking after” their citizens in times like this. The injured, the elderly, women and children were the first that went up the self-made ladder. Antennas and intertwined hind legs connected until everyone was above ground.

“Stay close together everyone!” the General ordered.

As they examined the environment that surrounded them, distress crossed their faces. Not knowing which way to start their journey, they felt lost and helpless. Muddy debris everywhere, nothing looked familiar. This was nothing like the promised land they were expecting to find. Another wasteland, much like the one left behind. Something better up ahead was the hope. They had to keep going to reach it.

“Does anyone know what direction we should go?” a dispirited voice from behind asked.

Some stood still, as others turned around in circles searching for answers. Even the General was quiet.

“Excuse me!” Steven cried, pushing through the crowd, nudging ants in the side as he came forward.

“Excuse me, excuse me,” he repeated, his tall, lanky frame towering above everyone. They did not seem ready or willing to listen to him, but he would not give them a choice. Steven would make them listen to him whether they wanted to or not. “I know you all think I don’t know what I am talking about, but, see this.” He pulled something flat, round, and shiny from his pocket. “Err, what’s that?” asked the old male ant with the walking stick. Murmurs of curiosity rippled through the gathered crowd.

“One winter while scouting for food in the woods, I found this gadget. Out where those humans hunt animals,” Steven replied low-key.

“Err, okay, but what is it, Steven?” again asked the old ant.

“Well,” he opened the lid, “they called it a compass, it tells

you which way is north, south, east, and west.” That would teach them to listen to him whenever he spoke. He reckoned this would earn him another level of respect from the other ants. Baffled murmurs of “Huh?!” “Ooohh!” and “What?!” rippled through the gathered crowd as each tried to get a close look at the weird object. All at once, they wanted to be close to him and the object he held. As guessed, he reached celebrity status.

“So, now, which way we headin’, brothers soldier?” asked the female ant with the red scarf.

The General, speechless for a moment, studied the compass in Steven’s possession.

Steven tilted the compass this way and that, saying, “Let’s get these ants on the road, Papi!” He laughed at his own awkward joke as he lowered the compass for all to see. They watched as the arrow in the compass trembled, shook, and turned. Finally, it stopped, then pointed to the west.

“This is the direction we should begin our journey,” he told the General.

The General doubted Steven because of his history, but this was actionable intel he could act on. Due to the dire nature of their situation, he didn’t want to be the blame. So, he went along with it. How bad could it get?

“We are heading west. Let’s move out!” the General declared, facing the crowd, and pointing westward.

“You heard the man, let’s move!” Steven said, mimicking the General’s tone of voice. He planned to milk this new status as

much as he could. The colony could withdraw from him within the twinkling of an eye.

“See? I told y’all I could help, but you didn’t wanna listen to me,” he bragged, showing those big bug eyes and grinning. He might as well turn the knife in the wound by reminding them he brought the solution to the problem.

They traveled four days and three nights before reaching Outer City Ant Colony. Steven had talked over everybody that was around him. He ate their heads off with unnecessary talks he felt were necessary to tide them over. To him, talking about anything and everything did them a favor, taking their minds off the walk ahead. He didn’t grasp that he made them tired. With no idea where they were headed, the walk alone was exhausting. Adding Steven and his yapping was an ordeal worse than they could bear.

“You know, the day I found that strange instrument, which is saving us, I thought to myself, ‘Steven, sonny, today will be amazing. The sun is bright. The day is clear. Something good is about to happen.’ Never would have thought my find would be such a great masterpiece,” he said, speaking at the top of his voice. Only the elderly ant who needed a stick to support himself listened beside Steven.

“You see,” he started to say again to the utmost chagrin of the old ant.

“Why you botherin’ me, Steven! Find the Queen to bother.

Go away.”

“I ain’t bothering you, sir. I’m telling you the amazing story of our survival.” He meant every word of what he said. How could the elderly ant accuse him of pestering, when all Steven was doing was keeping him company? He did not even consider Steven’s celebrity status.

“Go bother someone your own age,” the ant said, swatting him away with his stick.

And so, Steven went in search of another prey. He continued to move around from worker to soldier ants, boring them with one story or another. They chased him away, insulted him, threw things at him, but Steven stuck with them regardless.

The colony felt disappointed when they arrived at their destination. This was not the Outer City they were coming to, to take refuge. This place was worse than a wasteland. There were diverse types of debris floating around. The rain had swept away most buildings and the few still standing were half destroyed. Every ant from Inner City fell over themselves in despair. Even Steven could not speak, his glory was taken away by the harsh realities of what they were facing. Of what use was the instrument he had found if it had led them to a wasteland?

The General was at a loss on what was happening and what to do. They had left their own ruins in their own part of town, seeking hope and a better settlement.

But here they were experiencing the very same thing. He decided it was best if he went in search of the members of the

colony.

“What will we do now? The whole place is a horrible mess. They don’t even have their own place together. How can we stay here with them if they don’t have a home themselves?” one ant complained. This saddened the General.

“Hold on, fellow ants. Let us not lose hope yet. I will go out there in search of any sign of life. We can still get help. I want three able-bodied ants to follow me in search of the ants of Outer City Ant Colony.”

As he spoke, not one ant volunteered. It was as though they had lost every iota of energy left in them. After two minutes, no ant stepped forward. Finally, a hand raised, and he heaved a sigh of relief until he noticed it was Steven. The General wanted to run as far away from this ant as possible.

“Well, Steven, you should stay back and help with the weak and injured,” the General said to him as he approached.

“Aw, hell naw. Let Steven go with you! We are fine the way we are. We have other able-bodied ants who can take care of us. It’s best if he goes with you,” someone shouted from the back.

The General had no choice but to take Steven with him on the search. The General made him promise not to utter a word. They didn’t have to walk too far before they came across some worker ants already rebuilding their city. It was amazing to watch them work in unison. The ants worked based on the chain of command. Some built homes, others collected materials and tended to others that were sick. The injured were few. It also looked as though they were fast with their

rebuilding. The General and Steven walked up to the red ant and introduced themselves. They then asked to see Queen Mara.

When the ant heard where they were from, he snapped to attention and took them to the Queen. One glance at the General and Steven, a worker ant scurried around in search of food for the visitors. The General told the Queen details of their destroyed colony and ants injured or dead. He added that they needed help with housing.

“Why, I am sorry to hear that, General. We also suffered damage. Yet, we didn’t endure quite as much as you. The worker ants have been working nonstop to rebuild our colony.”

“I can see that.”

“We have to rebuild your colony as well. There isn’t much here to give to you. We have some food stored, and I had hoped that would be enough until we finish rebuilding both. Take as much food as needed back to your colony.”

“That would be great. My colony would be grateful.”

“We need to have a meeting with each Bug Commander to work out the details of how to rebuild your colony.”

And with that, the Inner-City ants carried a food supply and a working team to help rebuild their city. The ants were glad they did not have to move to Outer City. At once, the news was sent out to all corners of the towns about the need to hold an emergency meeting. It would take place in Outer City as there was nowhere to have the meeting in Inner City. As soon as the news got out, the colonies invited for the meeting turned up in

numbers. It was the bug way, you see; helping one another in time of need and putting the needs of the weak first. Commanders from each Bug section met at Outer City Ant Colony to hold an emergency meeting. They discussed how best to work together to rebuild Inner City Ant Colony. In attendance was the Queen of Outer City, Head Sergeant at Arms of Inner City, the General, Queen Bee from up north, and Black Widow Spider from above ground. The General kept reminding everyone that his colony had been washed away and had nowhere to go. Each chose their best workers to work in Outer City's Disaster Response office.

Queen Bee chose one of her brightest members, Desiree, as Project Manager. "Desiree, a small bee but works hard. She's dedicated and can get the job done."

The General from Inner City chose Steven to process all necessary documentation. "He is great with speaking on behalf of all bugs, and very political. Steven slacks and may not be as hard of a worker as your Desiree, but he has an eye for details and knows how to work a crowd."

The General did not add that Steven could be annoying to work with. He was great at the things the General had listed, but that didn't stop him from being a pest anyway. The General hoped that the people he worked with could see the good in Steven and not bash his head.

Black Widow Spider called in one of her newbies, Gretchen, from up top. "She is much older and needs to keep active. But she is a bookworm, this one. Her nose is always buried in one

leaf book or another despite her age. Let her file and make delivery rounds so she can get the hang of how Disaster Response works.”

Created for rebuilding, selected workers would live below ground in Outer Colony, in a small office station with living quarters. They made a backup plan to have their next best workers on standby if Desiree or Steven needed replacing. Memos were sent to all heads of the Bug colonies to help in rebuilding Inner City Ant Colony. Much was destroyed by the flood; food, shelter, and entire families were all gone. It was not only the ants that came to help; all varied species of insects did, too – spiders, bees, the list was endless.

As the workers functioned together to rebuild, moving dirt, and breaking twigs to make new nests, the heads watched over. Two small office cubicles were built for Desiree and Steven, and a small area for Gretchen with a desk and supplies. There was also a break room area for the workers. Gretchen made deliveries from up top and carried all memos to above ground heads from Steven. She also kept supplies inventory and the break room area well stocked with food and water.

In a week, Inner City Ant Colony was abuzz already with Outer City Disaster Response office workers. The displaced members of Inner City lived above ground of Outer City Ant Colony in stitched leaf shelters built by bees and spiders. Food was brought to them by the worker ants from Outer City and other colonies. Some of the Inner City worker ants regained their strength and joined in the search for food and other