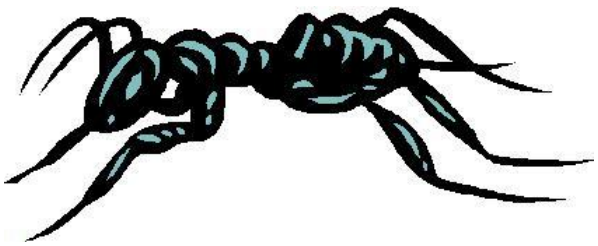
The Ant & I

By Dave Woetzel

"So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee."
(Psalm 73:22)



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CHAPTER ONE
"A Chance Acquaintance"

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding." (Isaiah 40:28)

It was a sultry September day when I ceased my toil in the yard to find repose beneath the outspread limbs of a mammoth maple tree. In my exhaustion, I lay prone so as to exert minimal energy supporting myself. The gnarled roots of the aged tree here provided shelter for a miniature world, a tiny garden fenced in by the feet of the maple. Where the trunk met the ground, my gaze fell upon a familiar sight--the mound of sand and pebbles forming the abode of one of nature's most humble creatures. And as I reflected upon such a tiny home nestled within this corner of the yard, a single inhabitant of the anthill emerged. I watched in fascination, with my face a mere several inches from the ant, as her antennae beckoned up to me in an inviting manner. Without thinking. I found myself drawn to address the tiny insect:

"Ant," I began, "your whole world is but a tiny speck of my universe, and yet I can relate to your desire to make this miniature corner comfortable and secure. You have laid claim to a piece of land that is rightly a slice of my real estate, but I don't begrudge you its use."

To my utter amazement I heard the tiny voice of the creature as clear as any discourse I had ever before engaged. Was it the acoustical features of this ancient root system about me? Or was my newfound acquaintance in possession of a gift of communication unprecedented in her lowly kind? The ant replied to me, "I understand your voice, stranger, but I don't see you here anywhere." I watched as the ant twitched its antennae curiously. It started up the roots on one side and then scrambled across its hill of sand to survey the wall of wood behind its little home.

"No! No, silly creature," I replied, "I'm way up here *above* you!" The ant glanced about on every side nervously, but it clearly was unable to comprehend my gigantic frame stretching far beyond its realm of perception. "Here," I instructed after a moment's thought. "I'll show you myself directly." I slowly extended a single finger to my tiny companion. The ant immediately noticed the finger and began to "feel" me with its antennae and front legs.

For my part, I watched with newfound admiration the versatility of this minuscule creature. Built like a miniature tank, the ant, on close examination, appeared to be a low-slung, highly mobile organism; the design clearly favoring rugged mechanics over delicate beauty or streamlined agility. Its shiny black body was composed of three joined spheres like a horizontal snowman. It possessed six legs and two antennae, large compound eyes atop its head, and a heavy pair of pincers hanging just below. With considerable force the insect plied at the grooves in my skin and then took my fingernail gently in its jaw.

Finally, the ant, appearing to be satisfied with its cursory perusal, declared, "You are a bit like a worm, though less advanced in your features." I chuckled at the ant's simplicity, her difficulty at grasping that which was beyond her immediate perception.

"No," I replied. "I'm no worm. I'm far bigger than that…thousands of times your size! Here, look at this part of my leg." I nudged one knee up close to the ant. In the process of my drawing near her, the grass, twigs and leaves on the ground moved about and the tiny creature appeared to grow uncomfortable. "Don't worry," I assured her, "I'll stop moving and let you climb up to me." But the nervous ant had lost interest in exploring and darted close to the entrance of its home. I held perfectly still for a few moments so as to calm what had no doubt been an earthquake-like tremor in that small ant's world.

Throughout the time of my conversation with this particular ant, a number of her companions scurried busily in and out of the anthill. For some reason they did not hear my voice or perceive my presence in the surprising way this singular representative of their community had done. It had been a most remarkable interchange. As I glanced again at the little worker, I felt compelled to confirm that I was not dreaming.

"What is your name, my friend?" The ant timidly informed me that she was called Fidelis. Thinking this a rather imposing name for one so little, I nonetheless complimented her on its significance and decided to call her "Fidey." The ant seemed quite amazed that as one of the elders of the colony she had never before heard of such a thing as a human. We talked for a few brief moments more before going our separate ways. It was agreed that tomorrow at sunup we would again rendezvous by the old maple to further discuss our different realms.

CHAPTER TWO
"A Revelation of Magnitude"

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" (Romans 1:19-20)

The next morning dawned warm and humid, portending yet another sticky September day. But a glance at the far horizon provided a new insight. Dark storm clouds were gathering in the distance, and it appeared that the weather was about to break. The official forecast confirmed my suspicion. A cool front would be bringing us rain and high winds, perhaps some hail and even the possibility of tornado activity. By the time I had finished my morning chores and headed across the yard toward the great maple tree where the previous day's drama had unfolded, those storm clouds had mounted in a giant swell clearly headed my direction.

The ant colony seemed oblivious to the coming storm and many of them were bustling about, pursuing their summer activity of gathering provisions through the tiny hole that marked the entrance to their home. One particularly little rascal caught my attention as I tried to stealthily approach them. Apparently she had found a dead dragonfly somewhere. Although it was multiple times the size of her small frame, she was valiantly dragging the corpse she'd collected toward the mound. In tiny little jerks and with much dancing about, the much larger insect was easing almost imperceptibly closer to the ant home.

"There you are!" I was startled out of my reverie by the voice of Fidelis. How had she seen me hovering high above her this time? But glancing down I noticed my friend was mounted on an arching tree root above the anthill. She was surveying my thumb since I had nearly planted my finger on top of her. I made a mental note to be a bit more careful approaching in the future.

"Hello, Fidey!" I greeted. "What are you doing way up there?" The ant explained she was just returning from a spot where the sticky sap was oozing from a blemish far up in the maple tree.

Leaving aside the pleasantries, Fidelis began blurting out many thoughts that had apparently been churning in her little mind. I could see that she was addressing my finger as if it were I. She declared: "I've been thinking about you, human. I don't believe you are all that you claim to be. You can't be so huge as to be thousands of times my size. More likely you are just an oversized worm." At this point the ant glanced indecisively back and forth. "Perhaps you are only another ant playing a trick on me somehow."

Rather than taking offense at her tiny impudence, I good-naturedly determined to prove myself to her. But here I faced a problem. How could I reveal myself in my entirety to a creature so small that she could not possibly observe me? In a very real way, I lived in another dimension...one of height. The ant knew only a world of north, south, east, and west. She knew which direction to travel in order to arrive at a given place, but she was practically oblivious to the larger terrain she was traveling up and down.

Then I had a sudden inspiration. Glancing off into the horizon I predicted that there would be a large storm before night fell. Fidey knew well what rain was. I warned her there would be plenty of rain and that she should advise her associates to hunker down. Fidey took in my prediction but it was clear she remained unconvinced.

Another thought occurred to me. "Look," I began, "I may not be able to directly reveal myself to you, but let me demonstrate my knowledge and abilities." I reached inside my pocket and drew out a small mint breath-freshener. After breaking off a piece I dropped it just on the other side of the maple tree. "Now, Fidey," I explained, "I want you to go around to the other side of the tree. There you will find some food."

"But I have already been all around the tree this morning," Fidelis protested, "and the only easy food we found today was the maple sap." However, at my insistence, the ant started traveling around the tree. She reached the other side and, to my chagrin, continued walking right past the piece of candy.

"No," I shouted, "You went too far!" I blocked the ant's progress with my hand. Seeing my hand before her the little creature understood and turned back. But again she missed the treat. Again, I set up a roadblock. This time Fidelis turned and walked directly into the mint.

"Oh, my goodness!" she exclaimed. "How did you know this was over here?" She clasped the piece of candy tightly in her jaws and started back toward her home, holding the newfound treasure aloft.

As Fidelis was walking I broke off another piece of the mint. "Let me tell you that there is another piece of candy on the tree trunk directly where you were talking to me earlier." My ant friend deposited the candy near the entrance to the anthill where it was promptly attended to by some smaller ants. Then Fidelis immediately turned and traversed the maple root to where she had been earlier. Her astonishment knew no bounds when she found that again my assertion proved true.

Finally, reality seemed to have dawned on Fidey. She would have to take my size on faith since she would never fully understand how I practically live in another dimension, one incorporating a perspective inconceivably higher than hers. But my claims were credible because she had come to see me as possessing great power, predicting the future, and making insightful statements that proved true in her own personal experience. Although our worlds were magnitudes apart, we were building a relationship that was mutually enjoyable. But the ominous crack of thunder directly overhead brought our conversation to a close. I departed for the cover of the deck of my house, leaving Fidelis to return to the anthill with her second treat.

CHAPTER THREE
"The Stubborn Ants"

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psalm 14:1; 2:4)

The storm lasted all that evening. It was a memorable one, sporting the thunderhead's full bag of tricks. Initially it rained large, heavy drops lit by the brilliance of the lightning. Then came the sheets of rain, driven before the wind. The tempest climaxed as hail briefly fell, making what would be a short-lived blanket upon the ground. It seemed to stretch out from my porch like a freshly-laid white carpet across the yard. By the time I turned in for the night, the lightning had redoubled and the rain was rapidly melting away the icy rug.

Dawn found me up early. The stranglehold of the September humidity was finally broken and the morning was fresh and clear. I began surveying the damage done to my flowerbeds by the hailstorm. After making some minor repairs I strolled around to the back of the house. The wet grass sparkled in the morning light.

As I rounded the corner of my home I was confronted with a rude surprise. The far end of the yard, which only the day before had been neatly manicured lawn, was a rubble of sticks, leaves and broken tree limbs. The large maple tree was scarred down its side and nearly half of the tree had been torn away. I rushed up the yard to where the tree's gnarly roots sheltered the anthill. To my dismay I saw that the mound of sand had been ruined to a large degree from a branch that had speared the ground nearby and from other brush lying on top of it. The entire ant colony was also up early. I called for Fidey. She must have been near the surface, for she heard me and I saw her glancing upward as she responded, "Look what has happened!"

I expressed my concern to Fidelis and immediately began to help her. I plucked the stick from the ground and began to carefully pry away the twigs and leaves that had landed about the anthill, cautiously avoiding any of the busy ants. I noticed that the large supporting limb that had fallen from the maple tree had landed only a scant few feet from the unfortunate ant colony. I began to discuss the incident with Fidelis. She informed me that the ants had heard the wind and thunder. Some water and even a couple of hail particles had rolled down into the entrance to their home. But it was not until late into the night that the ground shook and their world changed.

Needless to say, Fidelis was impressed by my ability to forecast the weather and warn her of the impending storm. She had explained my prediction to her peers, but none of them took her claim seriously.

While we conversed, another worker ant approached Fidey and drew her attention away for a moment. I watched the two interact briefly. Then, as I saw the other ant trudge away, I queried Fidey about the encounter. "She claims," sighed Fidelis, "that I am being derelict in my responsibilities. We all are very busy with repairing the colony and have been given strict assignments by the Queen herself."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," I replied. "I'll straighten out that ant that was chiding you and at the same time demonstrate my existence to the Queen and the other members of the colony by helping out with the reparations. You tell those ants that doubt just

because they don't readily observe me that I am making *another* prediction. In a few moments I will arrive here with a mountain of sand and will gather it around the entrance to your anthill. They will merely be required to finish the task by forming the mound to their satisfaction." Fidelis agreed that this was a reasonable approach and she returned to her friends while I went off to find a shovel and get some sand.

Several minutes later I was back at the anthill with a shovel filled with clean sand. Only three ants had joined Fidelis at the top of the anthill. "Just a few had any interest in listening to me," my friend apologized.

"That's OK," I replied. "We'll persuade them after they see what I can do." Using the utmost caution, I slowly poured the shovelful of sand around the hole in the ground that marked the main entrance to the ants' home. At one point I had to pause while one of the ants scrambled out of the way of the falling sand.

After delivering my bounty I attempted to strike up a conversation with the skeptical ants through Fidelis. "Come, let us reason together," I invited. Then I proceeded to lay out in a logical way the credible demonstration of my claims: my unique communication with them, my predicting the future, my conveying broad knowledge that proved true in their personal experience, and my changing Fidey's life for the better. But they abruptly made it clear to us that they did not have the inclination to pursue the several lines of evidence I had presented. After a pathetically brief conversation they casually dismissed my claims, as communicated through Fidelis, and departed to go about their new business of transporting my sand to their liking.

"They still don't believe," declared Fidey sadly. "They think that the same natural forces that destroyed this area have now reversed their fortunes by delivering these materials to build the anthill bigger than ever." Upon hearing this, I lost all patience with them.

"Listen, Fidey," I retorted. "I've got better things to do than to sit here all day arguing with a bunch of recalcitrant ants! For example, I have some repairs of my own to do. This tree's falling has left my yard a mess and I will need to clean it up. Let me again give you some advice. I will be busy throughout this area for the morning. Tell the ants to stay in the region of your anthill. There is plenty of work to do there with the sand. I will be preoccupied with my cleanup, and so if they leave the mound and travel around I will not be responsible for what harm comes to them!"

With that final pronouncement I left to dress in my work clothes and prepare my chainsaw. Never before had I felt a modicum of concern for the welfare of the ants below me as I pursued my yard work. But as I returned some time later I remained vigilant to avoid stepping upon any ant that had not made his way back to their home. All morning I worked to clean up the rubble in my yard: cutting the limbs, removing the brush, hauling the wood away in my wheelbarrow, and finally raking the area. I was pleased to finish by noon, exactly as I had projected to Fidelis. I returned to the maple tree by the ant colony to take a rest and inform Fidey that the ants could again move around without danger.

To my dismay I found that the ants were in a state of turmoil. Fidelis was waiting on the tree root to inform me of the problem. She had warned the other ants, but they ignored my commands to go into their house and instead had pursued their own agendas at their peril. It quickly became apparent that I had inadvertently squished a couple of scouting ants while clearing up the brush. Though the ants remained skeptical of my

claims, they were prepared to fight and defend their colony from a perceived enemy. I shook my head at the silliness of the situation as I saw the soldier ants swarming all about, organizing to fight. Before I even realized what was happening, an ant had discovered my shoes and a stream of the angry insects was crawling up my pants!

I leapt to my feet and, taking a quick sidestep, began brushing ants off my trousers and shoes. A couple of persistent warriors had managed to get inside my pants and were applying their jaws to my leg. I was able to extricate one without harm to her, but the other was less fortunate and became decapitated in the process, leaving the disembodied head & jaws still tightly clinging to my leg. Not wishing to cause further harm to the belligerent ants, I quickly informed Fidelis that I would visit her again and withdrew from the area. The furious ants were still rushing around, sporting for further confrontation, even as I left them to return to my house.

CHAPTER FOUR
"Some Higher Purposes"

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Days passed before I could again take the time to visit my friend. I brought along a conciliatory treat for her and the others in the form of a packet of sugar. As I waited at the rebuilt entrance to the ant's home, I noted with admiration all the work they had done since the storm. Suddenly Fidelis appeared, scrambling out of the hole. I courteously addressed the ant to capture her attention. Never given to loquacity, Fidey greeted me briefly and then immediately began to pour a stream of thoughts that apparently had been stirring in her mind.

"Human, clearly you are able to do amazing things, beyond my comprehension. You have accurately predicted the future. You have demonstrated knowledge of things far removed from me and my family. You are powerful enough to squash my kind in an instant, and yet sufficiently beneficent to have used your immense power to warn me of danger and help my colony recover from the storm's damage. But I still have many questions…."

Fidelis had indeed been contemplating deep matters for the mind of a tiny insect. She struggled to understand why I had taken the life of the ant that was biting my leg. She had trouble grappling with why I would not continue on in charitable pursuits and merely spend all my time meeting the ant colony's needs for food, defense, and building supplies. She believed that nothing bad should ever happen to her, given the massive power that she now believed I possessed. She wanted to know why I permitted the storm to damage her home in the first place. Patiently I tried my best to answer each of her questions and convey the existence of higher purposes beyond those that immediately presented themselves to her.

"Fidey, I know it is hard for you to understand," I explained, "but there are many other priorities in my life. For example, you can't really identify, understand, or even appreciate how important an aesthetically pleasing and clean yard is to me. I operate within certain constraints of which you know nothing. I am pleased to assist you and the ant colony but will not grant every little whim and desire. Not only would it be detrimental for ants if they never needed to work, but I have other responsibilities to attend to that you will never understand."

Then Fidelis expressed a desire for me to go to greater lengths to reveal myself to her peers. No doubt she felt some stigma because of our relationship and her steadfast belief in me. But I believed that sufficient evidence had been given to them. Finally, Fidey confided how she struggled with powerlessness in my presence. Since I already knew the future, she wondered, why she should even bother to pose a request to me? What I had determined to do I would do. Again, I tried to assure her of my interest in her affairs and my pleasure at simply granting something and seeing her delight.

At last Fidelis seemed satisfied and we were able to discourse on matters less philosophical. I asked her how preparations were coming for the winter ahead. Fidey

and the ants seemed to understand well what was in store for them, even though none had personally experienced the cold season. It intrigued me to discuss all that went on in their burrows beneath my feet. Fidelis explained the ant castes and their mound's various compartments: nurseries, the queen's chambers, the granaries, the waste repositories, and even the aphid farms they carefully tended.

It struck me that these aphids are a bit like cows in my realm. The ants established a symbiotic relationship with them such that they transport the aphids into their farm, feed them, defend them, and safeguard their eggs. In return for such protection and care, the aphids generously secrete honeydew that the ants "milk" and greatly enjoy. By employing such analogies to good effect, I was able to enlighten Fidelis just a bit on the human realm as well.

After learning much about the diligent preparations for the upcoming winter and the instinctive delegation of responsibilities in the ant colony, I reflected on the juvenile ant I had observed some days earlier, struggling to transport that large dragonfly. It brought back to my mind the ancient proverb:

> *"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." (Proverbs 6:6-8)*

The time quickly passed and the shadows grew long. "Fidelis," I sighed, "it is time for me to be leaving again. But it was wonderful to spend the afternoon with you! Here, let me give you something special. Hold yourself completely still and don't be afraid." The ant did as I had instructed. Carefully I opened the sugar packet and poured it all over her. The sugar particles covered her in a mountain of sweetness, leaving only the antennae and head protruding!

Needless to say, Fidey was ecstatic. It had become clear to her that a few moments visiting with me could be far more productive than a great deal of working on her own. As I took my leave, I chuckled at the impact so small an action could have in the life of an ant.

CHAPTER FIVE
"Altruism for the Ants"

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;" (Psalm 8:4; 103:2,4)

Because of my warm relationship with Fidelis I had invested some substantial time educating myself on the subject of ants, coming to understand trivial matters like the ant's acute sense of smell. It turns out that these industrious insects face a host of enemies. A variety of birds prey upon any hapless members of the scientific family Formicidae whose path might cross their own. The snake, the toad, the dragonfly and, of course, the anteater happily make a snack of ants. Bears devour them by the mouthful. Even the vegetable world takes its toll, with certain carnivorous plants regularly imprisoning unwary ants. Some few types of ants possess stingers or venom with which to defend themselves in some measure, but most are veritably defenseless.

Doubtless, dear Reader, it is a foreign thought for you to contemplate expending your concerns and affections on so humble an object as an ant; however, my emotions had been sufficiently excited by my experiences with Fidey that I found myself deeply interested in the ant colony's welfare for her sake.

On one particularly memorable visit I brought a candy bar along, as I made my way up to the old maple to check up on the ants. They were pursuing their unceasing preparations for winter. After calling numerous times, I succeeded in drawing my friend out from her cavernous abode. I was immensely surprised to see that another ant was following Fidey up onto the gnarly tree root where I had become accustomed to meeting with her. The solitary ant that had joined us for this visit stood shyly behind my friend as we talked.

"Her name is 'Credo'," Fidelis informed me. "Credo was one of the ants that had joined us when you delivered the sand to our mound. She has been observing me regularly bringing your gifts into the anthill and I have kept her apprised of our conversations. Perhaps she finally believes in you, for she has agreed to join me today as we meet together."

It was a delight to see one of the skeptical ants join us. Credo had some questions for me that were reminiscent of those Fidelis had originally posed. I patiently answered them via my communication to Fidey until the newcomer was satisfied.

Because of my freshly acquired knowledge of ants I had accumulated some questions of my own. "Fidelis," I began, "it is my understanding that some species of your kind will invade the nests of smaller ants and carry off larvae or pupae to be reared into a slave caste, subservient to the rest of the population." Both Fidey and her companion were quick to assure me that their colony did not engage in such oppressive practices.

"Has your ant colony ever been attacked by a large creature?" I further queried.

"Yes," responded Fidelis. "We have not experienced such a catastrophe in our lifetime, but the news from other ant colonies is that some animal has been conducting nighttime raids on ant colonies in the area." I promised to keep a sharp eye out to see if I could be of assistance. Before leaving I broke off a piece of chocolate large enough that it required the efforts of both ants to haul it away.

The wind was picking up as I said good night to the ants and made my way back toward the house. Perhaps on a premonition, I left my bedroom curtains wide open and, after preparing for the night's repose, dropped off to fitful sleep.

In the middle of the night I was awakened by the automatic sensor on my outdoor spotlight being triggered. Its bright rays illuminated the yard and lit up my bedroom. I arose to glance out the window. In the far corner of the yard I could barely make out the dim figure of a large animal bent over the roots of the maple tree.

"It's a bear!" I exclaimed to myself. "Perhaps he is devouring my ants!" Without even pausing to properly dress for the elements, I flew from the house and out across the yard. Indeed the bear had been snuffing at the anthill. But the specter of a shrieking, pajama-clad human sprinting toward him across the yard caused the bear to wheel around tear off into the forest. I knew he had been frightened sufficiently that he would not be returning; however, I wanted to see what damage had been done to the anthill. So I immediately turned back to the house, fetched my flashlight, and crossed the lawn to shine it down upon the mound.

The ants were in a panic, with many of them swarming around the entrance to their home. I was saddened to see that their hill had again been dispersed and fresh ground had been turned up by the bear's prying paws and hungry snout. I had awakened just in time to avert a major tragedy.

There was no need to call for Fidey, for she was already positioned upon her traditional perch, apparently expecting me to show up on the scene. She sadly informed me that several ants had disappeared. Credo was among them. "It is well," said Fidey, "that Credo joined us when she did, for there would never be another chance for her."

I expressed my sympathy and promised to assist the colony in rebuilding, as I had in the past. Fidelis demonstrated her maturity by accepting the tragedy with aplomb and thanking me profoundly for staving off complete destruction. I stayed long enough to convey the enormity of my relief that she was unharmed. But the nighttime air had chilled me to the bone, forcing me to return to the warmth of my own home.

Unfortunately, the chill of the night settled into my chest and the next day I was sick with double pneumonia. Those nocturnal activities resulted in my being incapacitated and bedridden for the entire week. After that I was able to gather sufficient strength to briefly visit my ant friend. I was pleased to see that their diligent efforts had restored the anthill and that all was in order for the coming winter. It was particularly gratifying to receive Fidey's sincere appreciation for my self-sacrifice. She had gained sufficient understanding of me to be completely overwhelmed that I had jeopardized my own well-being to save an ant! Her thanks were reward enough for my altruism. I smiled down at Fidelis, fully aware that she was oblivious of my facial expressions, and bade her a fond farewell.

CONCLUSION

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (Ecclesiastes 12:13; James 4:14)

Fidelis and I enjoyed a wonderful relationship through the remaining days of that month. It was an engaging respite from my activities to come and converse with this miniature acquaintance. She became so comfortable with my presence that I was permitted to pick her up and admire her closely. We shared a great many thoughts in common, the ant and I, despite our vast differences. Through our conversations I came to understand a great deal more about the world of ants.

For her part, Fidey grew to appreciate much of who I was: my immense presence, power, knowledge, and the brevity of her life vis-à-vis mine. The ant had become quite respectful and even awed, unlike her original rash familiarity and skepticism about my claims. She even came to understand things that I enjoyed and eagerly passed on the details of ant life.

Once October came, the weather prematurely turned cold and the leaves started to fall early. The activities around the ant colony slowed considerably. The new month must have marked the end of my friend's life, for I never saw Fidelis thereafter, despite calling on the ants multiple times before the snows came.

In the spring, I came again to admire the busy ant colony and bring them some treats. But no ant acknowledged my presence as Fidelis had done, nor has any ant since, despite my carefully addressing various specimens as I came across them in my travels. Perhaps I may be pardoned for antics so odd as accosting a passing ant because of my unique experiences that summer. Indeed, Fidey's minute perspective offered me greater appreciation of my own place within the vast spiritual realm round about me, a realm infinitely beyond my own ability to fathom. And for that insight I shall forever be indebted to the ant.