

# An Ant's Eye View

My six legs no longer sparkle in their musty dust coating. I lug a heavy leaf; it's sweet perfumed fragrance not managing to mask the rotting corruption of the colony I head towards. My whole body tenses like a coil ready to spring as I make out the shadow a row of ant hills. They send me to risk my life every day in the jungle like I am worthless, disposable. To them my entire essence, all my thoughts and memories are nothing. I shake off the dust in an effort to rid myself of the thought that I'll one day become a part of it and—.

Suddenly I gallop desperately flailing limbs in any possible forward motion. Boulders of sand are tossed wildly in the wind. My heart hammers in my chest, I have only heard distant whispers of this in far away lands. My antenna traces this unfamiliar scent, it's exactly like the bedtime stories told to larvae; flesh, blood and bone. I had this weird feeling like I was looking at my body from outside of it, all of the panic left. I calmly observed the human hurricane, and with a heavy heart discarded my precious leaf. I saw the human storm was blocking my way to the colony so I decided in a moment of bravery to *ride* it. I clambered on it's fearsome boot, and it spun towards my hill. Wind rushed in my face. It tore through 5 whole metres of dense mud like it was nothing. I quickly lept off to my home, it seemed to hover around us for a while until finally the storm ended. Nobody noticed I was gone, I was usually the last worker to enter. I worked from dusk till dawn, I wanted to become successful and earn a high income. In hindsight that seemed like a foolish notion, only now in taking a peek inside death's door am I able to fully appreciate all the vibrance and zest of life.

The feel of soft brown dust cradling my limbs, the moonlight kissing my cheeks, the sun rising up to greet me. As soon as the adrenaline began to slow my anger went into hyperdrive. I saw tons of gobsmacked worker ants from many different colonies looking up towards the most powerful insect in the world. I used to hate the queen because she was a despot who took 90% of every ant's income, and let's face it she was taller than me. It felt like she trapped me in a glass cage I would never escape, endless cycles of working but reaching nowhere. Able to see the stars above but blocked by the glass ceiling when I tried to touch them.

Today something changed inside me, I was mad at myself and the quadrillions of worker ants who stood below her. In this supercolony alone there are millions of ants, we could easily overtake one. I was always different, I never believed in any of the magi's stories claiming we committed a great sin in our 'previous lives' and deserved to forever serve the queen who has always been virtuous. But what I did buy into, is that the queen is superior to us, there was no way to change it and other colonies had it far worse. I thought that maybe through hard work and following orders I could work my way up to a magi. What a waste of life, I am destined for greater things than that. The queen was just like the rest of us unalterable biological traits should not be the main thing we worship. One day she will become the dust I walk on. I will make my mark on the world. I try to etch my footprint in the sand and watch it fade away. I think of the humanhurricane, and how it's boot print stays.

Speaking of the magi they stand smugly on their pedestal( a millimetre lower than the queen of course). The magi are supposed to be the experts on the meaning of life, the creation of the universe but they don't use any science and mostly make up stories that aid themselves and the queen. It is the highest position a worker ant can reach. The magi are more effective than the military in keeping the population

serving the queen. Everyone bought into their stories because they were desperate to find a purpose inside all the work and suffering they were doing. Pin Drop silence followed as the queen began her speech, I marvelled at society's conformity.

“ You parasites on this colony, filthy worker ants, the magi have conferred it is your sins that have caused humangod to send his hurricanes towards us! Senior magi priest will now explain what we must do to amend your sins.”

I scoffed at this

“ First of all she hasn't seen a parasite in her life, while every single day worker ants risk getting eaten by them so they can feed her, she is like a leech sucking the life out of us. If anyone's a parasite it's her. Secondly all of the Magi's stories are made up, they say wealth and power are sins for us but somehow humangod makes an exception for the queen who is all of those things.”

Wait, did I just say that out loud. From the queen's furious face, to the bewildered expressions of the workers, I can tell that for the first time in history a worker ant has stuck up for herself. The queen cried at the military guards surrounding the exits to detain me. There was some inner strife going on in every worker ant's head. A split second of hesitation before they decided they didn't want to fight it was easier to live a life of following orders, but that was all I needed. Maybe the years of working running away from predators paid off.

With my slight head start nobody could catch me, well maybe the queen with her wings if she wasn't so afraid of venturing outside the safety of the colony. I had an idea, because I couldn't run like this forever. The humanstorm still rested on a rock, no ant would dare disturb it. No ant except for me. I sprinted with everything I had, I was so foolish to think that they couldn't catch up. They are right on my heels. I scuttled and at last hurtled straight in the storm. The militia of worker ants gave up;

they probably figured I was dead anyway. Or maybe just maybe my words affected them more than I thought. I wondered how I could survive in a jungle all alone filled with predators. But I realised that in fact I was quite self sufficient. I hid behind the human. And spent the better part of the day constructing a pint sized ant hill for one sole ant. I looked up at the human wondering if it was like me, did it leave it's colony to live the life it was destined to live?

I spent days doing nothing, it was what I needed after years of forcing myself to suffer for no good reason. I used to feel guilty when I wasn't constantly working for the queen, I feel that it's something ingrained inside me since birth. I hadn't taken time to *live*. Enjoy the true pleasures of life. I stood for hours admiring the squiggles and jagged arcs of tree bark until they formed patterns etched deep in my brain, a secret meaning no one else understood. Rivers played symphonies. The wind whispered ancient stories long ago. And when everything came together they created something wondrous. Life.

I wonder often if I'm just another part of a story. How do I know this is real. Am I made with black ink and white paper. Black and white. In stories people always have a clear objective. To fight a tyrant, to save the world. But what then? What is an ant scuffling another ant compared to humans cutting entire forests, draining entire rivers. I pity the queen. She doesn't have the ignorance of the workers latching on to the stories of the magi. I cannot kill her, an entire life filled with paintings inside the sky, sculptures hidden in forests gone. I will never do that. But everyday she steals this magic from others. The humanstorm gets up swirling away from me. I feel a few gusts of wind. I wonder if it is a worker doomed to serve a queen. Living inside it's own colony full of tiny problems clouding it from seeing the beauty right in front of its eyes. To them we are like tiny bacteria crawling in the dirt. And to the stars twinkling

in the sky they must seem like ants. Is the humanhurricane going towards it's colony or farther away? If we indeed are just particles of dust swept randomly by the wind. I was going to enjoy my ride, make my own meaning. I start by wandering towards my colony, I will make them see, if only they looked, the world is a museum of art. I wander beyond the lines that hold my story. Off the pages. Closer to blood than ink, I will write my own story with the earth as my page. And believe me I will leave my mark.