

MARA PARASCHIV

THE CUTTLEFISH AND THE ELEPHANT

Children's Stories

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ANOTHER KIND OF CRICKET AND ANOTHER KIND OF ANT

I



nce upon a time, far back in the past it was well known that the cricket had fallen in the disgrace of the ant from whom, people say, he would often beg and lend food. Not only did his neighbor refuse giving him food but she would also mock at him in so many different ways that the cricket, lacking the courage of facing the world, made up his mind to leave as far as he could see so that he would never meet the ant.

Many years after, when their story had been forgotten, near a wheat field, among weeds, leaves and dandelions and not so far from a grove, the passers-by could see another sort of a cricket and another sort of an ant.

This is how the story goes...

In a late afternoon a little ant was sent by her mother to bring back the grain that she had abandoned on her way home since she had carried far too many and her strength drew in comparing to her youth days. The little ant, which was well-known for her diligence, did not wait for her mother to ask twice and left in a hurry to please her.

She kept on going when suddenly a clod hove in her sight. In vain did she strive to get over it. It was beyond her strength. Although it was not in her, the little ant started to wail.

“What shall I do? It is getting dark; the anthill is so far away. How can I get back, what shall my mum say?”

In the shade of a dandelion leaf, a little cricket, which had come there with no purpose, was lying. When hearing the voice of the ant, he asked partly in jest, partly in earnest.

“Who is wailing over there? If someone needs help, let me know for I am the one who can help.”

At hearing a strange voice, the little ant thought she had better not answer and tried again to pass over the clod.

“I must succeed this time; I have gone through more difficult hardships. I must break even this time too!”

But the clod would not move. The little ant wiped the sweat from her forehead and lay down with a sigh of woe.

“Oh, dear me! I am so sad that I cannot move the clod by myself, I feel so disappointed. On no account do I want to ask for somebody’s help! She was exhausted. It was getting dark and she had to get out of this trouble by all means. What should she do?”

“If I keep thinking over and over, the only solution would be to give an answer to the one who offered to give me a helping hand. I won’t tell anything to my mum.”

“Not so sure about the offered help,” she answered to the stranger in a whimpering voice.

“I am a poor ant. I cannot go farther... I’ve got stuck because of a clod.”

The cricket, on hearing the ant’s lovely voice and words, landed on the spot with one leap. Then he kept whirling around her and thought to himself: *“Hmm, she is a stunner!”*

He looked at the clod stuck in the road then said as a true connoisseur:

“Wait a minute, my dear lady! You've just uttered that you cannot get over this clod? It's a piece of cake for me. One jump and here I am. Look! Can you see?”

And he jumped over the clod in order to prove his words. You were right to ask for my help.

The little ant got amazed at the stranger's skill.

“It's so easy for you! If only I could jump like that...!”

“You don't have to do it; I'll help you; that's why I am here!”

He held out his arm, lifted her as a poppy seed and jumped over the clod. The little ant was at a loss with her words. She swallowed hard for several times then asked him:

“Who are you and what are you doing here, around my path?”

“I haven't seen you around these parts before.”

“I bet you could not have seen me before since I come from afar. I was tired so I lay down in the shade. I am called Cricket but my parents call me Little Cricket. All the ants are familiar with crickets so it is impossible that you should not have heard of us. Ants hate and gossip about us to each and every one all over the world. Well, I've escaped my lips and have spilt the beans without allowing you to talk too. What's your name?”

“My name is Little Ant. I haven't heard of you in my native anthill!”

“Really? That's good news for today!”

He span around her once again staring at her up and down, measuring her with his eyes from head to toes.

“Come on, tell me where you were going so late and... all alone?!”

“My mother asked me to go after a grain that she couldn't carry any longer. You know, she is a bit ill. I promised her that I would bring it home and that I would come back home quickly but this clod...!”

“Well, I understand your despair. Do you know something, Little Ant? My hearts is telling that you won't be able to manage by



yourself, moreover you have told me that the grain is quite big so let me accompany you.”

“What should I think? Ask me another? Nobody has ever helped me with anything so far, maybe your help is not a good thing.”

“Tell me where the grain lies. I shall carry it nearer to your house and from there... Nobody will ever know, upon my cricket-like word!”

“The grain is a bit too far, I don't think you can find it on your own, I must go with you. And it is so late... The time has been passing in a tick-tack!”

“That can be solved in a flash. Lift upon my back and with a few leaps we'll be there. You just follow the road.”

“If you are so kind to help, Little Cricket, who knows, maybe one day I will be grateful to you.”

“Yes, I am definitely sure you will. But make sure you won't forget!”

“You don't know me, when I make a promise, I keep it...!”

The two reached the grain so quickly that Little Cricket's presence made Little Ant be thrilled. She looked at the grain and uttered in enthusiasm:

“Here it is, right here, just as mom has told me.”

Little Cricket asked Little Ant to wait for him there. He raised the grain upon his back and carried it near the house then came back in a hurry to Little Ant.

She asked him in excitement:

“Have you managed to carry it? Has no one seen you?”

“Yes, I have. I have managed very well. Let's go so that you can get home in time. Climb up here and hold tight to my wing. We'll get there in a flash.”

Little Ant was very happy. After she bid goodbye to Little Cricket, she took the grain and carried it right in front of the anthill. Her mother was waiting for her and was worried. When she saw her daughter,