

THE ANT & THE GRASSHOPPER

An Updated Fable for a New
Generation of Informed Insects

by Meredith Byrne

The grasshopper emerged from the soil of an abandoned community garden bed behind a dollar store on the east side of the city. She stretched her legs—one of them still a little stiff from last winter—and blinked into the sunlight with the hazy joy of someone who just woke up from a ten-month nap and remembered she’s fabulous.



Her name was G.G. (“short for Gorgeous Grasshopper,” she’d tell you, even though no one had asked). She had stripes on her thighs and glitter in her soul. And like many grasshoppers, she was a seasonal worker—if by “work” you mean “inspiring joy through movement, rhythm, and interpretive dance with trash-bag tutus.” You know, art.

Meanwhile, two alleyways over, the ant—Ms. Andoria K. Formicidae, Block Captain and Spreadsheet Enforcer—was triple-checking her supply crates, reorganizing her calendar by task color, and sending off polite-but-firm emails about appropriate leaf pile usage. She ran logistics for the entire East-Side Ant Co-op and could carry eighteen times her emotional load without complaint. (Unless you counted the group text, which she did.)

Now, last year, the Ant and the Grasshopper had met. It was not... a smooth encounter.

G.G. had been tap-dancing on a recycled pizza box to what she thought was a catchy remix of street sounds, but what turned out to be the Ant Co-op’s emergency broadcast channel. The ants lost three whole minutes rerouting their pollen shipment, and Andoria had personally tripped over a glittery shoelace, spraining her tiny thorax.



There were words.

Mostly from Andoria. G.G. had bowed, apologized, and offered her a sticker that said “YOU ARE ENOUGH,” which Andoria found deeply confusing.

This spring, though, something felt different.

G.G. wandered over to the Co-op Commons, where the ants were holding their Annual Planning Picnic. The vibe was brisk. Structured. Color-coded.

Andoria spotted her from across the tarp.

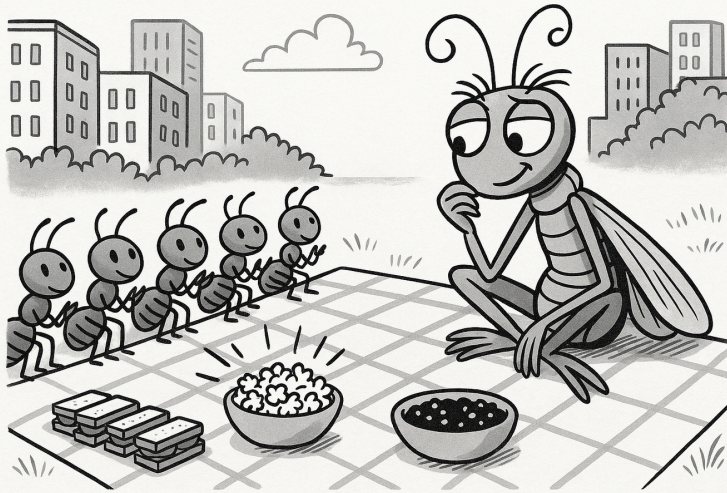
“Oh no,” she muttered. “Not her again.”

But this time, instead of dancing on the pollen crates, G.G. sat on the edge of the picnic tarp and quietly began humming. Just a little tune. The kind of tune that reminded even the most efficient ant that she used to doodle in the dirt before she had deadlines.

And one by one, the younger ants started tapping their antennae. A few shuffled their feet.

“Don’t encourage her,” Andoria hissed, but even she felt her shoulders relaxing.

“Hey,” said G.G., not moving from her corner, “I brought snacks.”



It was two acorn caps full of raspberry jelly and something she called “firecracker popcorn.” Nobody knew how she’d made it. But it was good.

After the picnic, one young ant mustered the courage to ask G.G. how she survived the winter. “We all thought you, you know,” he said, making a cutting motion below his pronotum with a tiny foot, “because you didn’t store enough food.

“I sleep,” she said, shrugging. “Deep in the dirt. I slow everything down. My body rests. My soul remembers.”

Andoria stared. “You...hibernate?”

“Technically, it’s called diapause,” said G.G., who’d read a pamphlet once. “But yeah. I go still. The world keeps turning without me.”

Andoria sat down, hard. “I can’t imagine the world turning without me.”

“That’s why you’re you,” said G.G., kindly. “And thank you for that. No one organizes like you. Seriously, I saw your color key—it’s art.”

They sat in silence a moment. The wind stirred an empty snack wrapper. A pigeon flew by with purpose and no sense of spatial awareness.

“I’m not saying you need to dance,” said G.G. “But maybe... next time you schedule a community planning session, you leave room for a nap. Or a weird song. Or a popsicle.”

Andoria sighed.

Then she stood, dusted herself off, and said, “Okay. But I’m bringing the spreadsheet.”

“Of course,” said G.G. “I’ll bring the glitter.”

And so they did.

That year, the Co-op ran smoother and brighter. There were fewer burnout incidents. A record number of acorn jelly donations. And—this part is important—a six-minute interpretive dance about resilience, pollen, and the importance of asking for help.

It brought the house down.

No moral needed. Just this:

Some of us build the future. Some of us remind you what it’s for.

And if you’re lucky?

You’ll learn to do a little of both.



**Some of us build the future.
Some of us remind you what it’s for.**