

The Ants and the Grasshopper

by Aesop

Original version

THE ANTS were spending a fine winter's day drying grain collected in the summertime. A grasshopper, perishing with famine, passed by and earnestly begged for a little food. The ants inquired of him, "Why did you not treasure up food during the summer?" He replied, "I had not leisure enough. I passed the days in singing." They then said in derision: "If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter."

Study the following versions of the story, noting differences in point of view, tense, type of discourse, etc.

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Weary in every limb, a solitary ant tugged over the snow a piece of corn he had stored up last summer. It would taste might good at dinner tonight. It was then that he noticed a grasshopper, looking cold and hungry, standing beside the path.

"Please, friend ant, may I have a bite of your corn?" asked the grasshopper.

The ant looked the grasshopper up and down. "What were you doing all last summer?" He asked. He knew its kind.

"I sang from dawn to dark," replied the grasshopper.

"Well," said the ant, hardly bothering to conceal his contempt, "since you sang all summer, you can dance all winter."

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Weary in every limb, the ant tugged over the snow the piece of corn he had stored up last summer. It would taste mighty good at dinner tonight.

A grasshopper, feeling very cold and hungry, looked on from beside the path. Finally he could bear it no longer.

"Please, friend ant, may I have a bite of your corn?" he asked.

The ant looked the grasshopper up and down. "What where you doing all last summer?" he asked. He knew its kind.

"I sang from dawn to dark," replied the grasshopper, fondly remembering the warm sun and the tall, golden grass.

"Well," said the ant, hardly bothering to conceal his contempt, "since you sang all summer, you can dance all winter."

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Cold and hungry, I watched the fat ant tugging a huge piece of corn over the snow. My feelers twitched, and I was conscious of a tic in my left hind leg. My stomach churned and my mouth watered at the sight of that succulent piece of corn. Finally I could bear it no longer. "Please, friend ant," I asked politely, "may I have a bite of your corn?"

He glared at me. "What were you doing all last summer?" he asked, rather smugly it seemed to

me.

"I sang from dawn to dark," I said innocently," remembering the happy times.

"Well," he said with a priggish sneer, since you sang all summer, you can dance all winter."

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An ant tugged a large piece of corn over the soft, new fallen snow. He was perspiring in spite of the cold. Beside the path stood a grasshopper, its feelers twitching. He watched the ant for some time. "Please, friend ant," he said, "may I have a bite of your corn?"

The ant seemed to study the grasshopper for a moment. "What where you doing all last summer?" he snapped.

"I sang from dawn to dark."

"Well," said the ant, as a faint smile crept over his face, "since you sang all summer, you can dance all winter."

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It was a beastly cold afternoon. I always seem to get guard duty on the coldest days. A little after three o'clock MacPherson came over the hill, lugging a piece of that corn from storeroom B over in Swan Creek Valley. He was mumbling to himself. "What's the matter, Laddie?" I asked him.

"The cold numb your brain?"

"Huh? Oh, it's you, Angus. I just had a run in with one of those good-for-nothing grasshoppers. May they all rot. There I was, bringing home this bit of corn for tonight's dinner, thinking how good it would go with a bit of ale, when this ragged bum comes up and puts the bite on me for my corn. 'Please,' he says, as sweet as honey, 'could you spare a bit of corn?' I tell you, Angus, he absolutely reeked. He probably drinks up every penny he gets. So I asked him, 'What'd you do all last summer?' I knew the type. Real proud like he says, 'I'm a musician. I sang and played the whole summer, from dawn to dark.' Hah! A Musician! You might have known it! 'Well,' I said to him, 'since you're such a talented fellow, you can just dance away the winter.'"

"You really put him in his place, Mac. They're all a useless bunch."

"They certainly are, Laddie," he said. "Say, I better get this corn inside now. Time is money you know."

"Right you are," I said, and I held the door open for him as carried the corn inside

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Grasshopper: Please, friend ant, may I have a bite of your corn?

Ant: What where you doing all last summer?

Grasshopper: I sang from dawn to dark.

Ant: Well, since you sang all summer, you can dance all winter.

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Scene 12

[note to costume department: Ant should have ragged, working class clothing with a slight eastern European flavor suggesting the oppressed proletariat. Ant should be slightly over

dressed in a heavy coat. Clothing should be dark, conservative, and new.]

[note to properties department: provide a stolen shopping cart, full of papers and cans for grasshopper]

(open: wide angle lens from tree top, looking down through bare branches. Wind machine on low, swirling snow softly to emphasize barrenness of landscape. Camera: Narrow focus down through branches to a grasshopper behind a screen of brush beside a path. Close up on face. Shift to medium length to show grasshopper's ragged clothing. Close up shot on feet to show ragged, inadequate shoes. Shift to wide angle behind the grasshopper to show an ant approaching, carrying corn.)

(Close up on grasshopper's face)

Grasshopper: **Please, friend ant, may I have a bite of your corn?**

(Shift to medium length lens to show all of ant, emphasizing his sturdy winter clothing, heavy snow boots, and generally healthy, well fed appearance.)

(Close up on ant's face)

Ant: **What where you doing all last summer?**

(Close up on Grasshopper's face)

Grasshopper: **I sang from dawn to dark.**

(Close up on ant's face)

Ant: **Well, since you sang all summer, you can dance all winter.**

(Close up on grasshopper's face, alternating with wide angle as the ant walks away. End with widening shot of grasshopper, pulling the camera back up in the reverse of the opening shot)

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Formicae Gryllique

Once through the winter's wind trudged a black ant in the snow where the blizzard's blast
Hard from the Northland blew, cutting his soul's fire, while grim with resolve he
Bore up his burden, a great piece of corn he had stored for the winter's feast,
Safe from the specter of death by starvation, a river of bounty for
All of his children till Spring with her blessings should break forth with blossoms.
There by the roadside stood a wayfarer, a singer of songs and a
Chanter of Odes to the bounty of summer, now wracked with despair and
Twisted with hunger pangs. Oh, how his soul burned with memories of tall grass and
Winds that were warm, scented sweetly like fine wine, like perfumes from Asia.
"Please," he implored the laboring insect, "I beg you for mercy, the
Smallest of crumbs, which you in your great wealth surely could spare me, for
I am an artist, a singer of sweet songs, now fallen on hard times and
Dying of hunger." The ant looked him over and sneered with contempt,
"Go dance for your supper you free-thinking liberal. I'll not give a dime to a
Bum who won't work. It is people of your type who screw up the country, who
Don't understand the least thing about money. You're useless. You're hopeless; you
Ought to be shot." And the ant turned his back on the grieving grasshopper and
Went on his way without any remorseful thoughts, sure of his judgment