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Rebellion on a Kitchen Floor

By: Hedy Pajonk

An uncharacteristically heavy rain is falling one winter morning. An entire ant colony is in danger of being washed away; the labyrinth of passageways in the colony is already almost completely filled. The alarm bell had sounded earlier and the ants are now finding their way to the nearest dwelling post haste. Andrew and Arlo are bringing up the rear. Andrew is visibly nervous and carrying soggy soil on his back. At Arlo's direction, the two ants are headed up to the kitchen when Andrew breaks the silence, "Do you think we'll be safe here?"

"It's dry and smells like food; that's good enough for me. I'm Arlo. What's your name?"

"Andrew and I'm really worried..."

"Well, Andy the way I see it, we're gonna be in great..."

"Please, it's Andrew. 'Andy' is so...so pedestrian." Andrew unloads his soggy dirt. "The way I see it, if every ant makes 187 trips for dirt, we can rebuild the colony between the foundation and the wallboard in three days."

"Is that why you dragged that sloppy mess in here?"

"Mother said, it always pays to be prepared."

"Well, boy scout, we're inside now. We don't need to build a colony. We own a house. Doncha' get it? It's easy street from here on in."

"But how will we function? Where will we eat and sleep?"

"Put up your olfactory receptors, buddy. What do you pick up?"

"I'm not really sure. It kinda reminds me of bread, but..."

"Righto. That's the scent of toast and where there's toast, there's crumbs, and where there's crumbs, there's breakfast."

"But you don't know what else is out there."

"Listen to me, kid. The only things we've got to worry about here are humans and spiders. Now, spiders we know about. Stay away from the web, keep your eyes open and you won't have any trouble. Am I right?"

"Well, yeah, I guess so. I don't know." He pulls out soggy blue prints. "I've got these plans here that I've worked on for years and they're really very intricate. If you just..."

“...And humans? You want to understand humans, you gotta know a little psychology. What’s the biggest threat from humans?”

“Huh? Umm..., being stepped on?”

“Nah, it’s poison. One shot from a Raid can and it’s the ant colony in the sky for you. And when do they pull out the Raid?”

“I don’t know.”

“When they see a whole bunch of us together, that’s when. They panic, think they’re under attack and haul out the big green can. Then were nothin’ but lambs to the slaughter. All lined up and ready to be fumigated.”

“Yikes, I don’t wanna be fumigated, Arlo. That’s why we should rebuild the colony inside and develop an organization chart. We should set up perimeters, identify scouts and set up a system for tracking and...”

“And work like dogs to put a roof under the roof that’s already over our heads? No thanks.”

“I don’t hear you coming up with anything better.”

“Au contraire, my little wound up friend. The solution is simple. We become renegades, outcasts, anarchist ants!”

“Are you nuts?”

“Naw, just smart. Listen to me. If we go out on our own, we won’t get fumigated with the bunch.”

“But how will we live?”

“What do you mean, how will we live? Open your eyes, this is the garden of Eden. We’ll find a little corner to sleep, we’ll chow down on crumbs from the toaster during the day and hang out under the kitchen cabinet or behind the walls at night. Nothin’ could be easier.”

“Oh, I don’t like that at all. There’s no plan, no benchmarks, no goal, no progress review.”

“Suit yourself. I’m going to get myself a little breakfast.”

“Don’t go out there, Arlo. I’ve got a bad feeling about this.”

When last seen, Andrew and Arlo had gone their separate ways. Andrew was visibly thinner and working feverishly on redrafting his plans for a new indoor colony. Arlo had become the unwitting play toy of Muffy, the resident feline. The colony had moved on.