

2. THE ANTS AND THE ELEPHANT

And this is the story of how the ants and the elephants became friends for life.

A long time ago, a family of ants lived near a river in the forest. They had to collect water from the river. It was a problem hauling every day. The family name of the ants was called “Leaf-carriers”. The gods of names called them that, because the ants were known for carrying whole leaves to their homes. The ants loved to eat leaves and they stored them way down in their kitchens, five or six feet below the ground. There were some leaves that they didn’t eat because these leaves were medicinal and chewed slightly would heal the wounds of the ants. They also stored small seeds of onions, dandelion, radishes and wild cucumbers, which were also good for healing.

Now, the ants lived safely underground from all the anteaters and other large animals that might step on them.

One day, the family was enjoying storytelling time by grandpa and grandma. As grandpa was telling his story there was a large, large, shaking of the earth, followed by large, and loud trumpet noises.

Grandma said, “Son, go there and see what’s the matter.”

The shaking was very strong and breaking dishes and cups.

“Almost like an earthquake”, grandpa said.

Quickly, Sonny went up and outside to see what was going on. And what he saw surprised him.

Two large elephants stood near the door. One of the elephants would stand up on her hind legs, shake her head, and come slamming down on her two front legs. The other one was using his trunk to blow into the ear of the elder.

“What’s going on?”, asked Sonny. And they couldn’t hear him.

“What’s going on?”, he yelled. They still didn’t hear him.

Finally, he crawled up a tree to where he was near the ear.

“What’s going on?!” he screamed. This time the elephants heard him.

“Our queen is very sick”, said the younger one.

“So sick she might die. I am a doctor, but I don’t think we can save her. Her temperature is very, very high.”

As he was telling Sonny, the queen elephant fell to her knees, then she laid down on her side.

She was, as the doctor said, dying.

“How long has she been sick?”, asked Sonny.

“About one week”, the doctor replied.

“Seems something is infecting her from her ear.”

“Can I look inside her ear?”, Sonny asked.

“Of course,” said the doctor.

“Lift me to her ear.”

“Yes.”

And the doctor held out his trunk to get on and he lifted Sonny. Sonny started walking inside and suddenly realized he was in trouble. Staring at him was a large black spider with a red dot on her back.

The black widow!

He froze where he stood, not daring to make a single move.

He looked around and knew why the queen was very ill.

Inside the ear, the black widow had inserted five or six drops of her eggs, into the elephant.

This is why the spider would not let him go any further. And the spider wove a web all around the opening so that nothing could disturb the spider’s pods from hatching.

“She will surely die,” Sonny thought.

Then just as the spider blinked, Sonny jumped out of the ear, onto the trunk.

“Raise me up fast!” he yelled.

Safely out of the way of the black widow, Sonny told the young doctor what he saw.

“What can we do?” he asked. Sonny said he would ask his grandpa.

After explaining to grandpa what he saw, grandpa decided to see what must be done. So, he asked the doctor to carry him close to the ear but a safe distance from the spider.

From the distance he observed and then told the doctor,

“Here is what we must do. immediately.”

“We need some ropes, lots of ropes, spears, lots of firewood, some planks.”

“Also, all of the elephants in your group must be here to help. And one last favor, I need a ride to go after our doctor and my relatives.”

Sonny goes downstairs and tells grandma, and all the women, to start cooking the seeds and make five large bowls of sauce from the seeds.

“And to get all our family and friends to come here, we will need hundreds of us to win against the spider, her web and her bad medicine.”

“And doctor,” grandpa said, “You must tell all the elephants, bring lots of coconut leaves. That is very important. And straw. Yes, we will need lots of straw. We must work quickly, very quickly. We have only two days to stop the infection from reaching her brain.”

The doctor assigned one of the younger elephants to carry grandpa to where he needed to go.

Then he told the other elephants to bring the coconut leaves and lots of straw, quickly!

While grandpa was gone, the ants made a large platform and put all the firewood under the platform and made lots of rope from the hair of the elephants, and spears from the wood. Then everyone waited for grandpa to return.

When the elephant and grandpa arrived at his cousins’ place, grandpa quickly told his cousins and the ant doctor, why he needs their help. The main leader of his cousins said,

“Yes. They would help but needed a whole day to get there.”

Grandpa said, “That would be fine, and not to worry about getting back, as the elephants would carry all of them back in one trip.”

He then left back for home.

At home, he made sure the special sauce from the seeds was done. And the platform was complete. He told the doctor that his cousins would arrive the next morning and that a scaffold would have to be built by the queen elephant’s ear.

He told all the nurses that there might be casualties when the fight begins between them and the black widow.

What grandpa didn’t tell them was that the pods were ready to be hatched and once the hatching starts, there might be hundreds of black widows and the ants would lose the battle.

It was truly a case of life or death for the queen elephant. . The elephants and the ants visited into the night.

As the night began to turn to early dawn, the queen elephant called upon her family and told them her suffering would not last til noon. She knew she was ready to pass on as the pain could no longer be tolerated.

All the elephants gathered to wait the end of queen’s life.

They all stood in formation ready to trumpet her end.

The ants also gathered, but were not ready to give up.

Then, they heard the steps of marching boots coming closer and closer and louder and louder.

Suddenly, they came marching in formation.

“Here come our cousins!”, the ants yelled.

“Here they come!”

“Yes! They were coming, the army ants!”

All the army ants were dressed in camo clothing, ready for battle. And the general of the ants quickly ordered his men to observe the situation, and to determine the course of action.

The elephants placed several on their trunks and brought them up to view the battle station.

“It seems one of the pods are hatching!,” yelled the captain, “And there are four more!”

The captain realized when a spider is born they are equipped for battle, the moment they are born. And the black widows were the deadliest of all spiders. So that one bite was enough to kill instantly.

“General, sir! We must move immediately to combat stations and mount a ‘Death Stand’ course of action”, reported the captain. The general ordered the scaffold in place and gave the order for a full scale ‘Death Stand’.

The army ants understood that order, that some of them may not make it.

But this order was what all ants look forward to. It was the ‘Geronimo’ of all orders. The ultimate battle cry that all ants are trained for.

“Yes, sir!”, responded all 400 ants.

First, the special forces moved in with strong smoke hoses and filled the entire area with acid smoke, that the spiders were unprepared for.

The second group of soldiers moved in and catapulted ropes into the spider’s web so the ants could walk around without stepping on the sticky strands. As the air started to clear the spiders began to see the ants and quickly began to create more sticky strands to halt the ants.

“More smoke! More smoke!,” the squad leader yelled.

This time the acid smoke was replaced with tear gas and as the hatchling spiders began running outside unable to breathe, the third force threw ropes around them, pulled them down below and tied them to the platform.

So far, there were no casualties and two prisoners.

Again, the smoke was clearing and the mother black widow ordered her two remaining children to guard the pods as she would launch her last effort to hold off the ants until the remaining pods hatched.

But, the army ants were getting control of the battle. The last of her web was now dismantled and now the tear gas was replaced with a heavier smoke that was making the spiders sleepy and finally the ants surrounded the spiders tied them all up, lowered them on top of the platform and tied them to the posts.

However, all of the remaining pods were seconds away from hatching, which would mean hundreds of black widows would be born.

“Quickly!”, the ant doctor ordered. “Bring up the seed sauce!”

As the doctor prayed, he poured the seed sauce on the remaining unhatched pods, preventing the hatch from taking place. Then he injected a special leaf serum into the infected area.

“I hope and pray I wasn’t too late”, he thought.

The nurses then cleaned the infected area, as well as the entire inner ear.

“We did all we could do. Now, it’s all up to the Great Spirit,” the doctor said.

Down below all the army ants and elephants waited quietly for any response from the elephant queen.

“We should gather in a circle and pray,” said grandpa.

They made one large circle of both ants and elephants and into the night they prayed.

Early that morning, the nurse woke the tired doctor.

“What is it nurse?”

“Come see doctor! Come on and see!”

Quickly, they ran to see the infected area.

“The infection is going away! She’s going to live!”

The doctor and nurses hurried down to tell the news.

With all still in the circle the happy looking doctor yelled as loud as he could,

“The queen elephant is going to live! The queen is going to live!”

The elephants trumpeted their trunks until the whole jungle shook with the victory signals. All morning the celebration lasted, then about noon the queen elephant rose to her feet and there was more cheering.

The general of the ants then prepared the platform to be lit. The black widow and her four children would be burned at the stake for threatening the queen’s life.

“General, I ask that my life and four children be spared.”

“Why should we spare your life!”, asked the general.

“A few hours ago you were threatening to kill all my soldiers.”

“I was never threatening to kill your soldiers. I was defending myself and my children’s life.”

The general thought of the mother spider’s argument and that no casualties occurred on either side. He decided to have council with the elephants.

After consulting with the elephants, he also noted that no casualties occurred. The general approached the mother spider with an agreement between the three nations.

“Number one; that the lives of the mother spider, and her four children, shall be spared. And two; that the mother spider promises never to enter the ears of the elephants again, to plant her pods.

And three; that the black widow nation vows never to bring hostilities against the ant nation.

The mother spider agreed to the agreement and was allowed to go free with her four children.

Then the elephant doctor asked of the ant doctor,

“For saving the life of our queen, what do we owe you?”

“For starters, how about some new dishes and cups”, laughed grandpa.

“Seriously, you can pull those four large boulders over there and place them near our entrance.

That way, no large animal can come and ruin our home with all that thunder like jumping.”

And so the elephants did what was requested.

“Can we go home now?”, asked the general, as he and four hundred ants sat aboard a large elephant with a bale of coconut leaves.

“Yes, you may go now”, replied grandpa.

As the elephants were leaving, the elephant doctor turned one last time and asked, “Oh, by the way grandpa, what was the coconut leaves and straw for?”

“Well”, grandpa said, “ The straw is for my new irrigation project that I’m testing out. You see the straw is hollow and it will carry water to our homes for running water. And, the coconut leaves are like apple pie to my cousins”.

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