

The Ant Who Drew Maps



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In a sunny corner of the garden, under a tall sunflower, lived a little ant named Anty Maple. She had a glossy chestnut-brown body, big round amber eyes, and two thin curved antennae that wiggled when she was thinking. Around her neck she wore a red scarf with white polka dots. A tiny pencil sat tucked behind one antenna, and her dark satchel was full of rolled-up paper maps.



Anty loved to draw maps more than anything else in the world. Every morning she walked along the garden paths and drew every stone, every puddle, and every flowerbed she found. She drew the winding path to the old oak tree, and the shortcut past the sleepy snails. She drew the garden as carefully as a tiny artist could.



All the garden bugs knew Anty's maps. The ladybugs used them to find the best rose leaves. The grasshoppers used them to hop to the sunny grass. Anty smiled and said, "A good map is a little friend you can carry in your pocket." She kept her maps tidy and safe, rolled up in her satchel, ready for anyone who needed help.



One afternoon, dark clouds rolled over the garden like a big gray blanket. The wind shook the sunflowers, and the first fat raindrops plopped down. Anty hurried under a mushroom and watched the rain fall. It rained and rained and rained. The little streams in the garden grew wider and faster, and the puddles grew into pools.



Down by the flowerbed, a beetle family was heading home. Bertie Beetle led the way in his brown woven vest and tiny green cap, holding a small lantern. Lily Beetle followed in her pale yellow shawl, carrying a woven basket of flower petals. Their little one, Pip, wore a blue ribbon and a tiny leaf backpack, hopping along behind them.



Suddenly Bertie stopped. "Oh no," he said. The rain had flooded the flowerbed. Water covered the path home, shining and deep. Bertie's round eyes grew worried. Lily pulled the children close and wrapped her shawl around them. Pip peeked out and asked, "How will we ever get home now? The water is everywhere!"



Bertie looked left and right, but every way he tried was wet and muddy. The beetles did not know the garden as well as Anty did. They stood under a wet leaf, shivering and waiting. Bertie held up his little lantern, but it could not show them a dry way through the flood. The beetle family needed help.



Just then, Pip spotted something red and polka-dotted moving under a mushroom. "Look! It's Anty Maple!" Pip called, waving all six stubby legs. Anty hurried over, her scarf fluttering in the wet wind. "Are you all right?" she asked kindly. Bertie pointed at the flooded flowerbed and said, "We cannot find a safe way home."



Anty opened her satchel and unrolled her maps. She looked at the garden paths she had drawn so carefully. Her antennae wiggled as she studied every line. "The old stone path is flooded," she said, "but here is a route around the water. We can go past the big pebble, then along the dry ridge behind the tulips."



Anty used her tiny pencil to point at the map. "See? First we go around that big puddle. Then we climb the dry stones. Then we follow the ridge past the tulips, and home is just beyond." The beetle family leaned in to look. Lily smiled. "You have drawn the whole garden!" she said. "You planned a dry path for us." Pip said, "Let's go!"



Anty rolled up her map and tucked it away. "Stay close together," she said. "I will lead, and we will go step by step." Bertie nodded and held up his lantern. Lily held Pip's little leg, and they followed Anty in a careful line. The water splashed softly beside them. The rain had almost stopped, and the garden smelled fresh.



Step by step, Anty led the way. "Careful, here is a puddle," she said, and everyone hopped over it. "Now we climb the dry stones," she said, and Bertie helped Lily and Pip up. They passed the tulips and followed the ridge. Anty checked her map at every turn, patient and sure. The beetles stayed together, trusting her plan.



At last the water was behind them. Anty stopped and pointed ahead with one thin leg. There, under a broad green leaf, was the beetle family's cozy home. Pip cheered and ran ahead, hopping happily on the dry ground. Bertie set down his lantern and said, "We made it! Your careful planning saved us, Anty."



Lily hugged her family and thanked Anty warmly. "You drew the right map," she said, "and we all worked together." Word spread through the garden, and soon the ladybugs and grasshoppers came to cheer. Everyone clapped and waved, and the garden filled with happy buzzing. Anty smiled so wide that her antennae bounced. It was a very good day.



That evening Anty sat under the sunflower and looked at her maps. She added a new line in her careful pencil: the dry path past the tulips. Bertie, Lily, and Pip waved goodnight from their cozy home. Anty thought about the day. Good maps were wonderful, but planning together and helping friends was even better.



From then on, Anty drew even more maps of the garden, and her friends helped her check them. Everyone knew that careful planning, kind hearts, and teamwork could guide the whole community home. And if you ever get lost in the garden, just look for a little ant with a red polka-dot scarf, a tiny pencil, and a satchel full of helpful maps.