

AS GOOD A JOB AS ANY
from Song of the Child

Once upon a time there were no nickels for popsicles at the corner store. So children did not leave their popsicle sticks on the sidewalks downtown, in front of stores and in the alley going home. And the ants, the working ants, were very unhappy. This was the times when people ate onion sandwiches so you should always be happy with your peanut butter and not spill your milk at the big people's table. Really. It was a hard time to be an ant. Well then, it came upon somebody's midnight clear when all was tired in the house, no one was stirring except one pouty grasshopper who could not sleep because his big brothers wouldn't let him watch his program and there were guns and soldiers dying inside everybody's heads. Inside his pillow were feathers that wanted to be on a bird but the mother said too late for that so sleep already, sleep. Anyway, everyone everywhere was hungry. His belly grumbled so loud he couldn't sleep and his brown spit wasn't very brown anymore. That's when he decided to take up the fiddle and began to fiddle around with himself. It was as good a job as any. And that was good. Very good, because everywhere he went grasshoppers got happy again. They listened to him playing and they forgot to be hungry. One by one they looked in their everyday purses and under their hats and found the baked goods they were hiding. There was baloney sandwiches and kool-aid and little fish sticks and government cheese. Yeah. Lots of government cheese. And so that day there was enough to eat and the mammas and the daddies didn't fight about who could have new shoes. That day the Grasshoppers were okay. But the ants were still worried. There were no popsicle drips or sticks left on the sidewalk and the grasshopper left no crumbs. "Hark," the red ant hills sing, "we will find us some sweet things". So everyday they worked and looked and looked and worked. Then one day they found a path to the house of god. "Wow," they said, "this is one big house". Somebody was practicing the organ. Maybe. Anyway that's where it happened. They were in God's pantry helping themselves to cookie crumbs left from Bible School when the janitor, Mr. Johnson, sprayed them with something awful in a can and they all fell over dead. "We cannot yell at Mr. Johnson". The organist said. " He was just doing his job." Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, coming for to carry ants home...

Some stories are sad stories. That's a fact. And God's janitor just doesn't give away crumbs to anyone and we are old enough to know better than to sass them, aren't we? Besides ants have their own gods anyway. Probably. And they are lessor gods. From Canada or Africa or India or someplace our people haven't been yet. I don't know, but the moral of this story is fiddling around may get you baloney but a wise ant always knows whose cookies she's eating, and in the beginning is the end, so...popsicles are more important than you might think. Be good to the ants -- give your nickels, all your nickels, to the children.

Karen A. Snider
2002