

The ant was terrified. He knew that if he didn't climb up the tall tree at once, that awful bird might very well eat his friend. So without a second thought, he did just that. One trembling little leg right after another, up, and up, and up, he climbed all the way to the top. Higher than he'd ever been. He arrived on the caterpillar's branch just as the corvid did.

"G-good morning, Ms. Corvid. How are you?" the ant said.

"Lost, separated from my family, and very hungry," the corvid responded.

"Well, I fear the glade has been picked clean, but I have a knothole full of leaves that you are welcome to," the ant muttered nervously.

"But I don't eat leaves," Ms. Corvid responded. "However, I do eat the things that eat the leaves. Like bugs and beetles and such. Might there be something to eat inside this sack?" Ms. Corvid pointed her sharp beak at the pillowcase.

"Oh, no, Ms. Corvid, th-that is simply my bag of leaves. You wouldn't like that."

"Hmm," Ms. Corvid said. "Well, it doesn't smell to me like leaves. Maybe I could take a peek inside to be sure there's nothing worth a bite." Ms. Corvid pecked at the pillowcase.

The ant ran forward, standing between the bird and his friend.

"Stop that!" he said. "If you're so hungry, wh-why don't you eat me instead?"

Ms. Corvid huffed. "You're barely big enough for a single bite, and besides, fire ants are the most bitter and vile of ants to eat. You sting and pinch the whole way down."

Now the ant, not having been raised by other ants, had not known that he himself was a fire ant.

"I sting and pinch the whole way down?" he asked.

Ms. Corvid replied venomously, “You know very well that one bite from your pinchers is terribly painful. Now move out of my way and let me inspect your ‘bag of leaves.’”

Just then the pillowcase wiggled. Ms. Corvid, hungry and curious, batted away the distracted ant with her wing, knocking him off the branch! Then she grabbed the pillowcase in her sharp claws and pulled at it, snapping the thread that held the caterpillow to the limb.

High into the sky Ms. Corvid took the caterpillow, who was finally waking up. He peeked out from his pillowcase, his puffy, little eyes squinting in the sunlight. He looked down and saw the glade far below. He was astonished, until he realized the trouble he was in.

“Excuse me, Ms. Corvid? Where are we going?” the caterpillow asked.

Ms. Corvid ignored him, clenching him ever tighter as she made for a cliff in the distance, and the trees atop the cliff. The caterpillow could see his pillowcase tearing apart in her grip.

Just then, something began to tickle the caterpillow’s back. It was the little red ant! The ant held a finger to his mouth, shushing the happy caterpillow.

“What are you doing way up here, ant?” the caterpillow whispered.

“I mean to keep you from being eaten,” the ant responded.

“My pillowcase has been torn in her claw. If we can convince her to loosen her grip, I can get free,” the caterpillow explained.

“But you’ll still fall to the ground,” the ant lamented.

“Trust me, dear friend. Get me free and I’ll be fine,” the caterpillow answered, confidently.