

LEVELED BOOK • T

Ants in My Bed



Written by Deborah Ambroza
Illustrated by Marcy Ramsey

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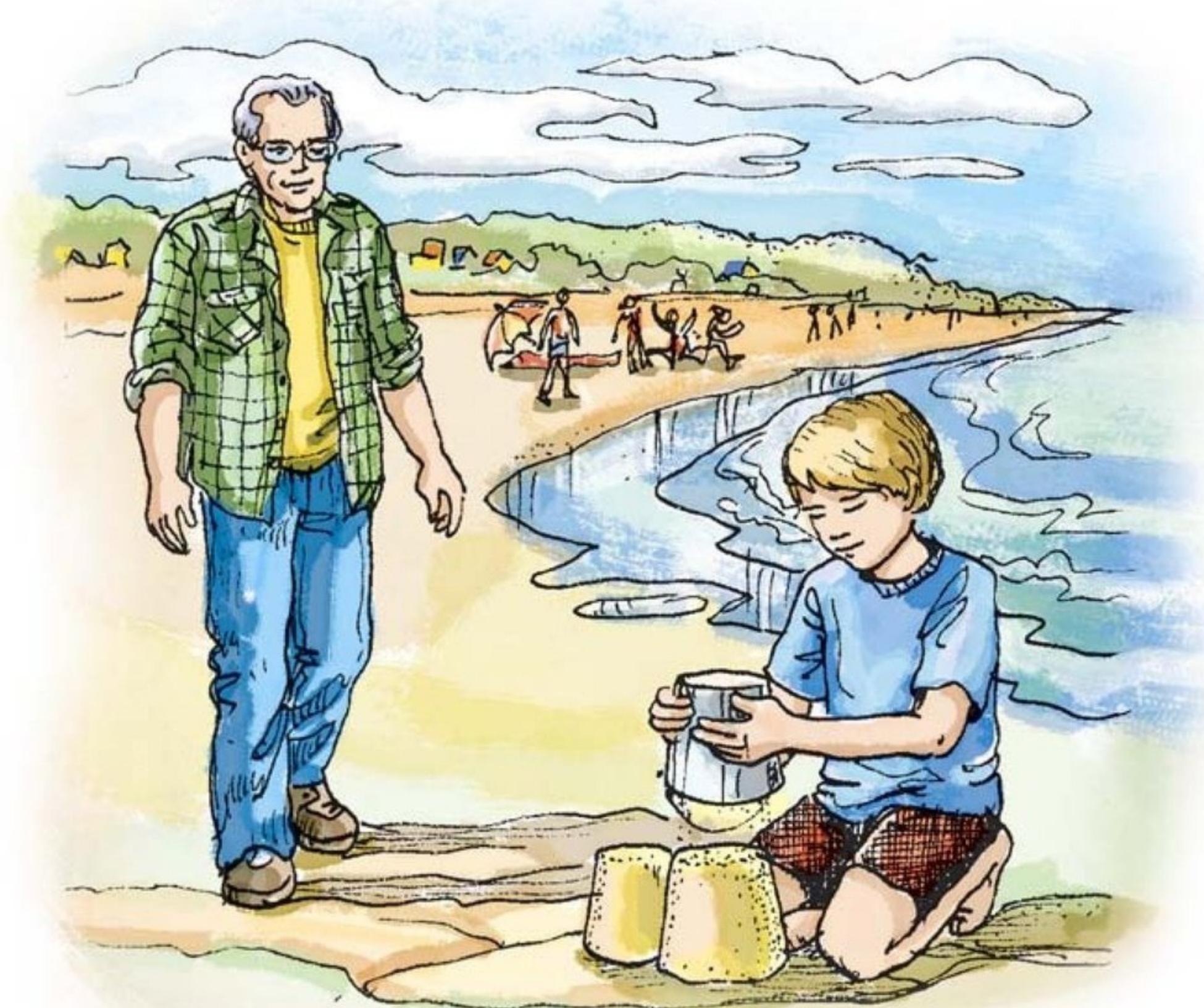
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Introduction

When I was nine years old, I spent the summer with my great-grandmother. Gram lived in a large, gray **cedar shakes** house at the seashore. I stayed in the yellow bedroom, where my father slept as a boy. The room's window faced the ocean, and the sound of the waves breaking against the shore always helped me sleep. At least it did until the ants showed up a few weeks into my visit.

I spent the first few weeks exploring the sea and saving the lives of some horseshoe crabs. I also had been busy riding the old bike Gram's friend, Jim, gave me. I was not allowed to ride very far on the weekends because the town and beach became crowded with tourists. During the week, I explored as I pleased.

Jim usually dropped by in the mornings to eat breakfast with Gram and me. Sometimes he'd stick around to help Gram with big chores around the house. Other times he would take me down to the shore and teach me how to make sand castles.

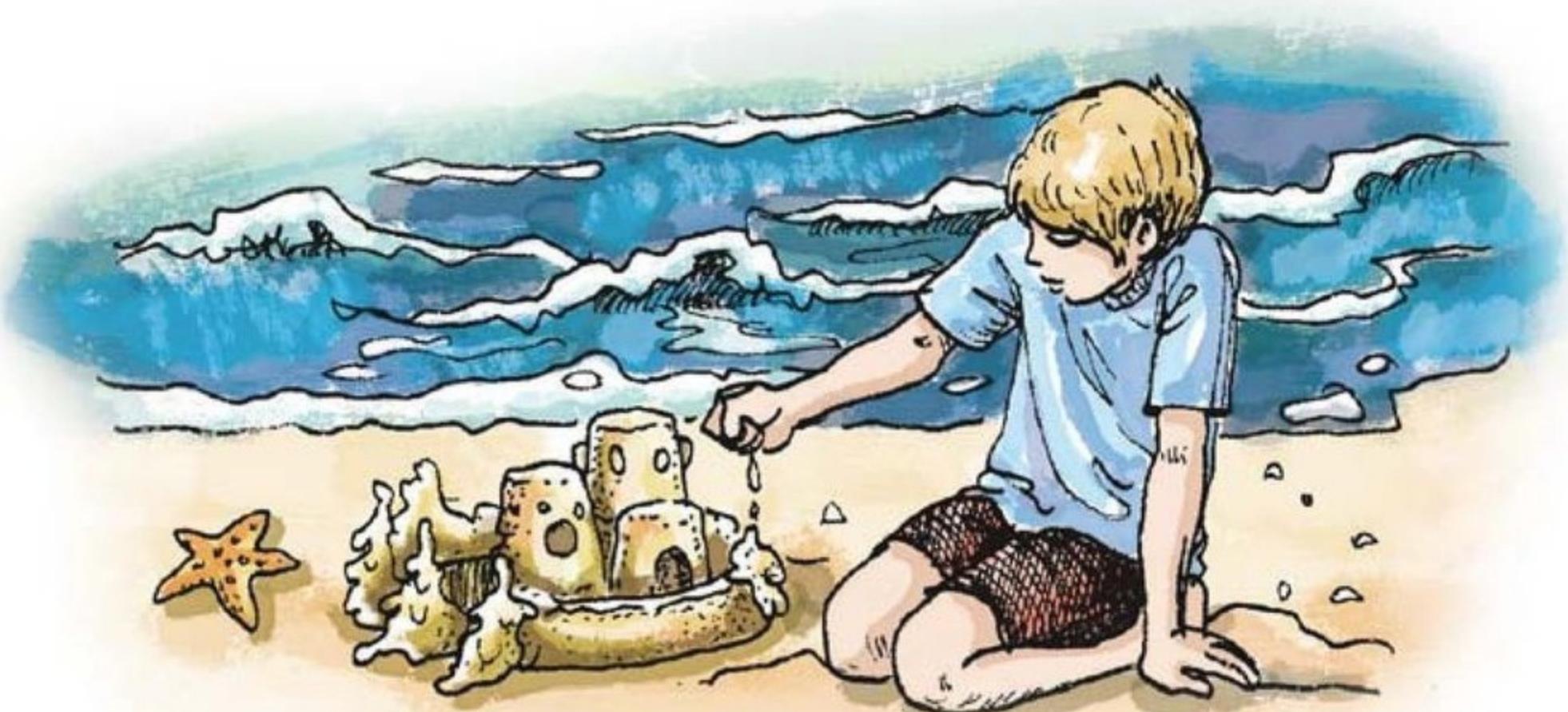


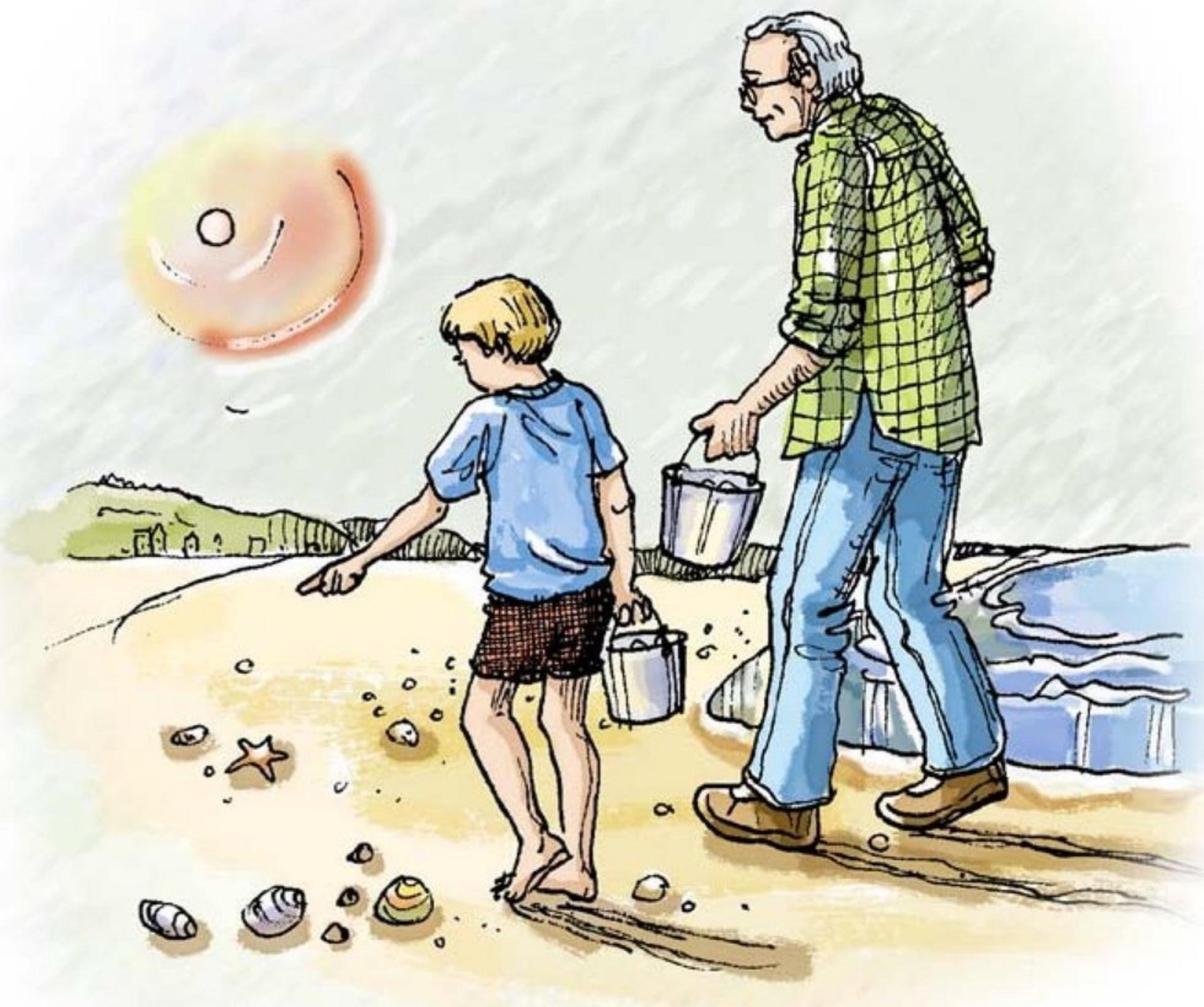
Sand Castles

I always looked for different ways to make my castles special. I used varying sizes of cups, buckets, spoons, shovels, garden tools, and toys to create wondrous castles big enough for seagulls or small enough for ants to march through. Sometimes I made castles, hoping the ants in my bed would make it their new home. I settled for placing toy people in and around the castle once it was finished.

To make a sand castle, first I would smooth out a flat surface to support it. Next, I would dig up very wet sand, but not dripping wet, and pack it tight into a bucket mold. Then I would gently tap the sand out to form the base of my castles.

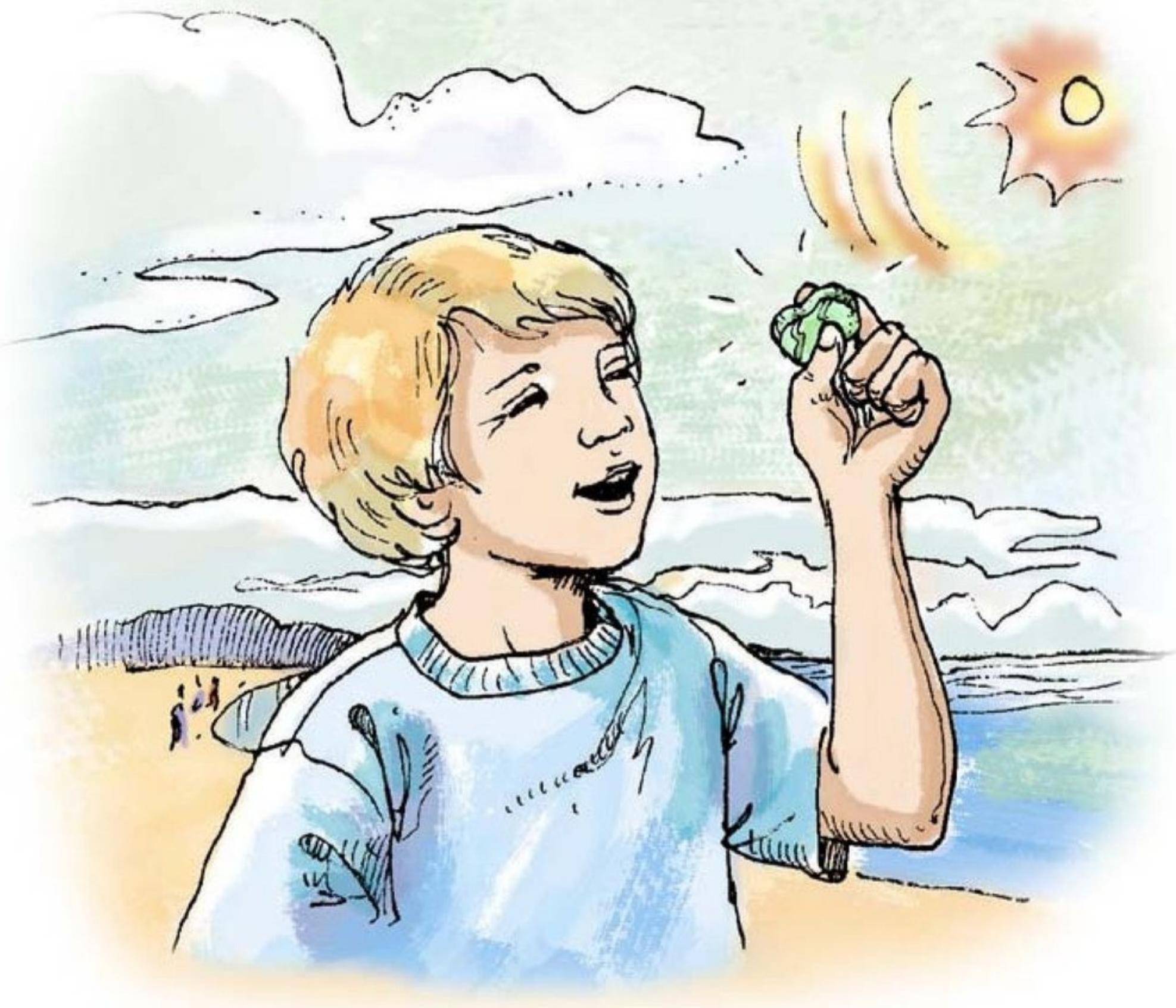
I added details by pressing wet sand together in my hands and smoothing it up into lookout towers, balconies, and protective walls. Sometimes I dug a deep **moat**, or ditch, around the castle and filled it with water. I often dripped watery sand on the edges to make fancy designs along the roof and down the walls. As a final touch, I would add shells, driftwood, seaweed, and sea glass that I had collected with Jim earlier in the morning.





Sea Glass

Sometimes Jim took me with him to walk down the beach and look for gifts from the sea. Jim called the treasures we found “gifts” because once in a great while he would find something very interesting. He had found pieces of metal or wood from ships, teeth from a big fish, and even coins. Jim especially liked to find sea glass, which he collected.



Jim told me sea glass is broken glass that has been worn smooth over time by the wind, waves, and sand. This makes the sharp edges rounded so they feel nice to hold. The little pieces of glass glowed brilliantly when the sun shined into them. Jim found most of his sea glass during low **tide** after a storm churned up the ocean. He said most of what washed in with the tide was from the early 1900s when people threw glass overboard from **steamboats**.

When I went with Jim to look for gifts we would sort through what we had collected before I built my sand castle that day.

Early in my visit, I had learned to ask Gram for the local tide reports in the mornings. She explained how I could listen for them on the radio, or read them in the local newspaper, too. I wanted to find out the best times for finding sea glass and for building my castles.

Much to my **dismay**, during high tide the incoming waves destroyed my castles—washed them right into the sea. Gram said that the tides, or the ebb and flow of seawater, is caused by the attraction, or pull, of the sun and moon. About every 12 hours I would say goodbye to that day's castle. Then I could start all over again, building different castles and trying out new ways to shape and decorate them.





Visitors

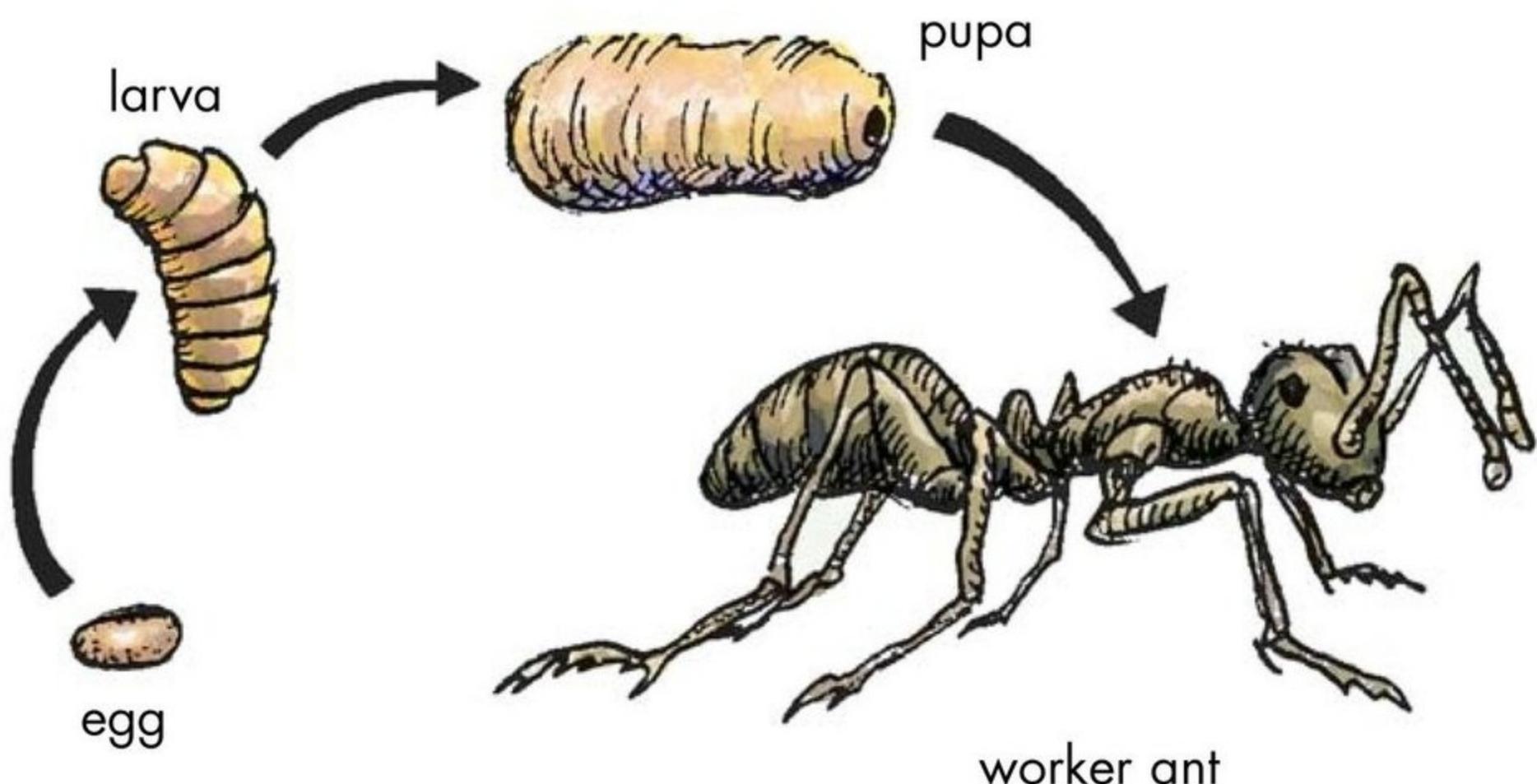
I was having a terrific summer. Gram gave me easy chores like making my bed, washing the dishes, and sweeping her porches. I was usually free to roam my part of the beach between two jetties, ride my bicycle, read books, make friends with visiting children, or explore the shops in town.

I had just one problem, and I didn't know how to solve it. I had ants in my bed. The ants didn't actually live in my bed. They just crawled across it. I seemed to be an **obstacle** in their path. Instead of going around me, they climbed over me! I wasn't sleeping well thinking of creepy, crawly ants skittering across me in the night.

I didn't want to smash or stomp or spray the ants. I just wanted them to crawl somewhere else. I went to the town's library and asked the librarian where I could check out books about ants to find a solution to my dilemma. I looked through many, checked out four, and headed back to Gram's house.



Ant Life Cycle

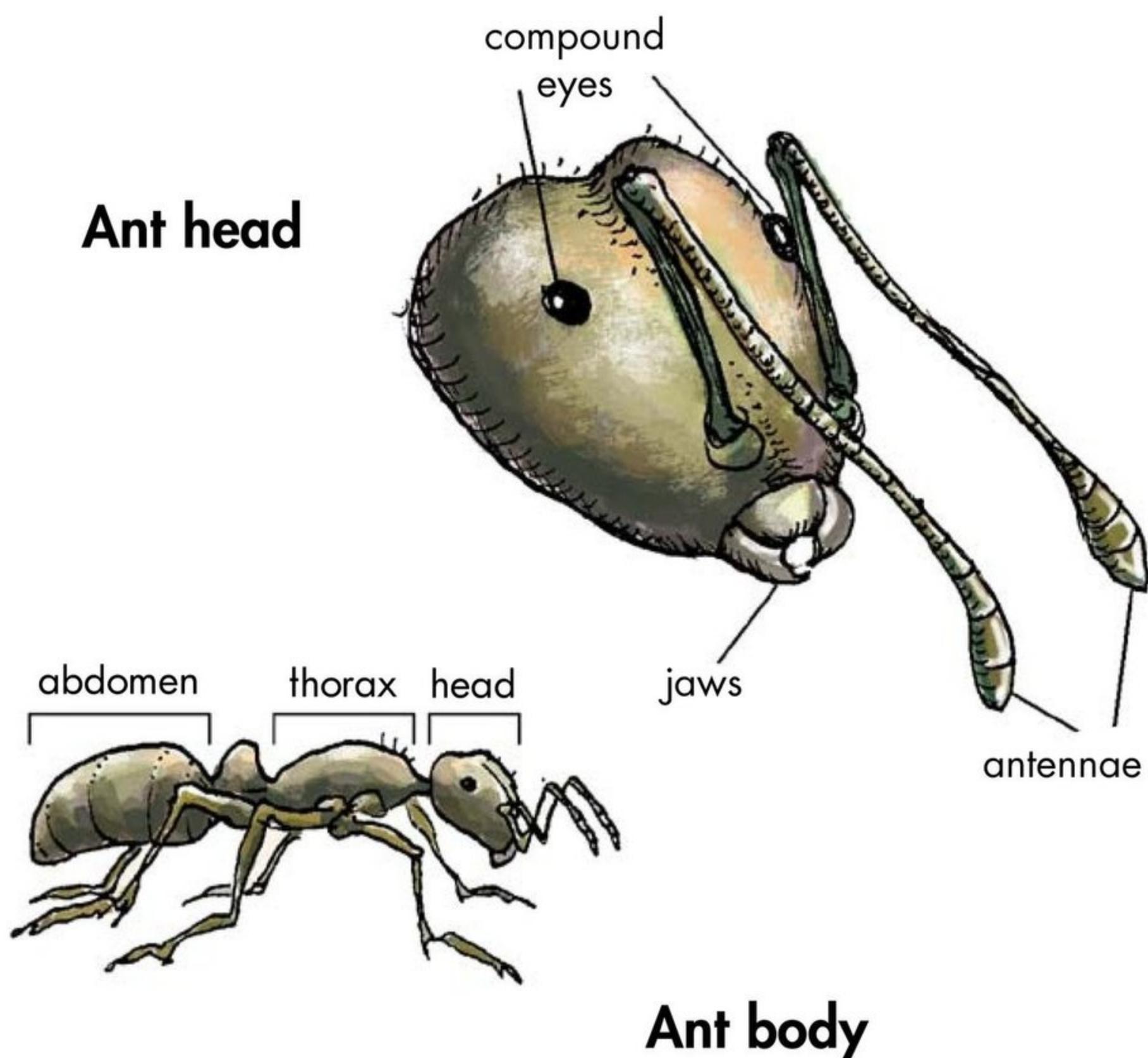


Ants

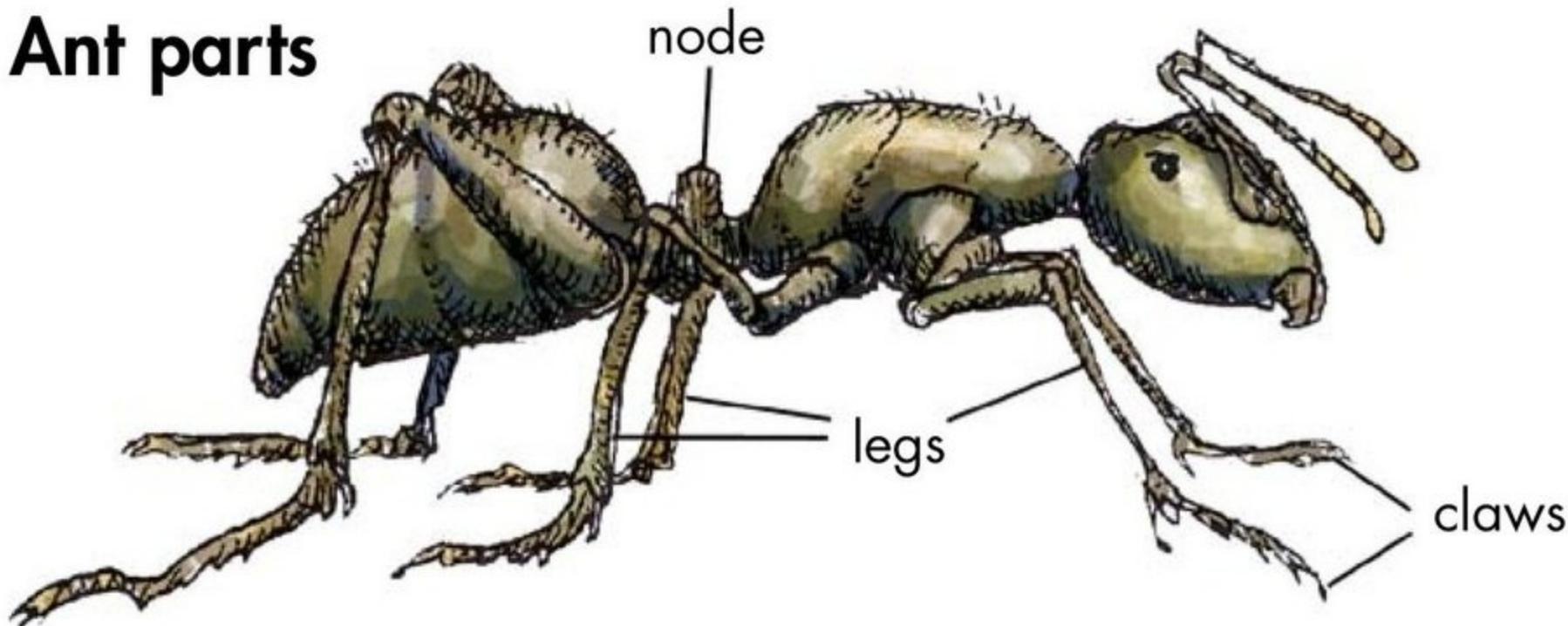
As I read, I learned that ants live in colonies, which may exist for many years. Each **colony** has at least one queen that lays eggs. In about 25 days, the eggs turn into **larvae**. In another 10 days, the larvae make white **cocoons** to cover themselves. Inside the cocoons, the larvae turn into ant-shaped **pupae**. Altogether, it takes almost 60 days for a new worker ant to be born. In just one colony, thousands of worker ants find food, build nests, and take care of the queen and her young. The book said ants eat a variety of food such as insects, seeds, and nectar, which is the sweet juice plants produce.

I found out that ants have three parts—the head, the **thorax**, and the **abdomen**. The head contains the brain, two eyes, the jaws, and the antennae. The eyes of an ant are called compound eyes because each eye is actually made up of many eyes. The jaws of an ant open and close like scissors. Ants use their antennae to hear, taste, smell, and communicate by touching each other.

This was all pretty interesting, but I still didn't know how to get the ants off my bed.



Ant parts



As I kept reading, I learned the thorax contains three pairs of legs. At the end of each leg is a sharp claw that helps the ant to climb up walls. An ant has such strong legs that if a man could run as fast as an ant, he'd be able to keep up with a racehorse.

The abdomen contains the stomach. Between the thorax and the abdomen are one or two bumps called **nodes**. Ants do not breathe as we do because they do not have lungs. They have holes all over their body, which take in oxygen and send out carbon dioxide.

Finally, I came to a part in one book that talked about how ants lay scented trails to find the way from their nest to food and back. I decided that the ants in my room must have laid a scented trail that went across my bed.

I knew I had to find their nest. I'd read it could be under a stone, under a log, or in a garden. Worker ants often come into houses looking for crumbs of food, especially sweet things. I thought I had been careful eating in my room, but Gram's yummy cookies, especially her peanut butter ones, did crumble. Ants carry food, such as cookies, to the nest after softening it with **saliva** and biting off a piece. I read that an ant can carry 20 to 50 times its body weight. I weighed 75 pounds. That meant if I were as strong as an ant, I could carry from 1,500 to 3,750 pounds!

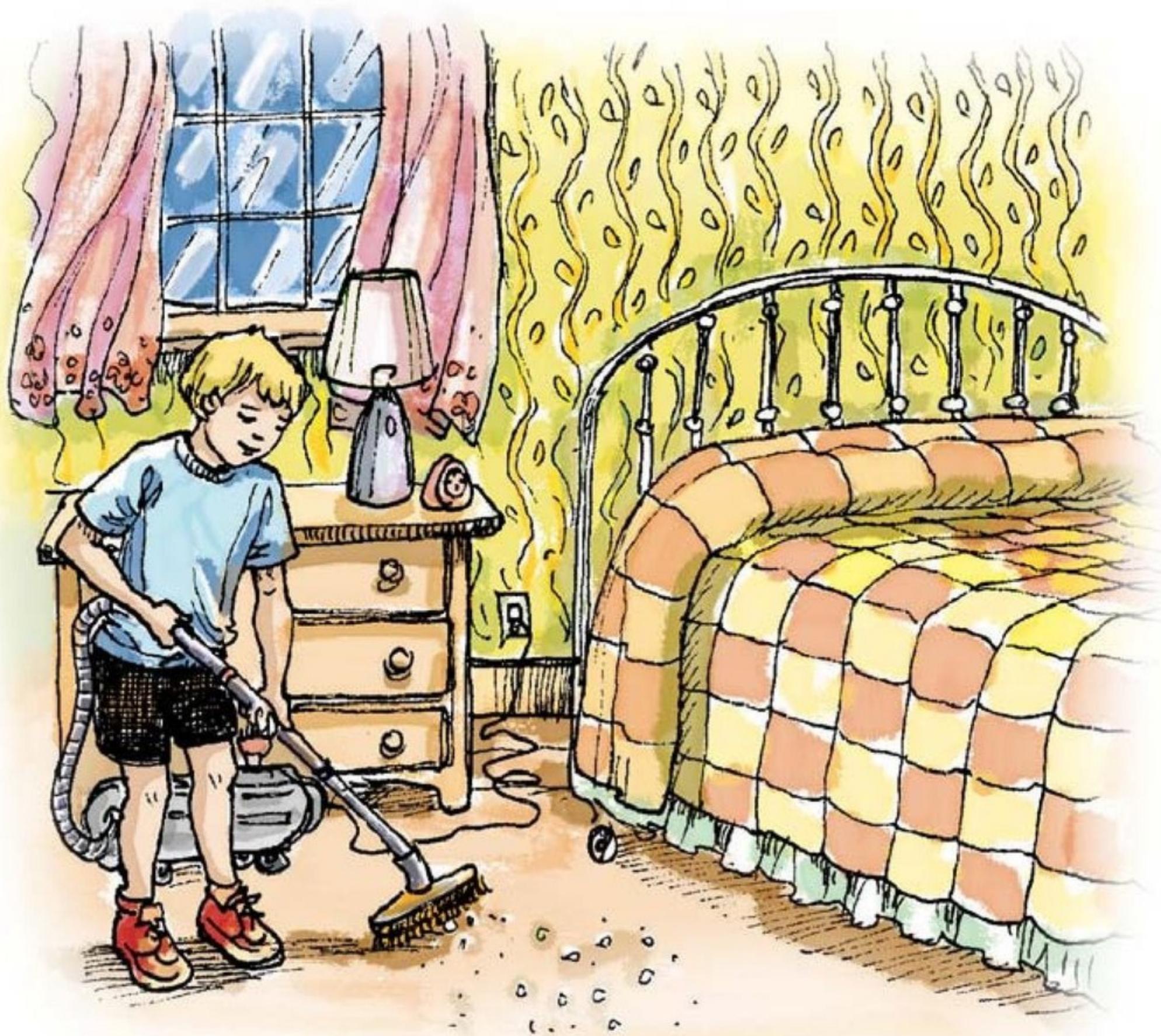




The Search

I tried to follow the ants that were crawling into my room, to find where they were coming from and where they were going. I discovered they were finding crumbs on my floor and in my bed. Then, they were carrying the crumbs near the window, where they escaped between the woodwork and the wall. I went outside and tried to find them coming out of the house. I saw many ants, but none were carrying crumbs of cookies. Maybe they lived under the house! Maybe they lived in the walls! I decided I needed to confess to Gram.

I told Gram about the ants and even about the cookie crumbs. I also said that I did not want to hurt them, I just wanted to get them off my bed. I asked Gram if I could use her vacuum to sweep up the crumbs in my room. I also asked if I could move the bed. I cleaned my room, changed the sheets, and scooted my bed closer to the window. I vowed not to eat cookies in my room anymore. I wondered if this would end my ant problems.



As I lay in my bed that night, I thought about all of the ants that had been crawling in my room. I decided to ask Gram if I could put some honey on the ground under my bedroom window to feed the ants since I'd taken away their food source. I closed my eyes with a smile on my face. Then I heard some strange noises outside my window. I looked out and saw winged things flying around in the moonlight. These black, flying things seemed to swoop back and forth from the house. Oh, no! We have *Bats in the Attic!*



Glossary

abdomen (n.)	the rear part of an ant's body (p. 13)
cedar shakes (n.)	wood shingles cut from red cedar trees (p. 4)
cocoons (n.) (kah-KOONS)	the silky coverings around larvae during their change into adults (p. 12)
colony (n.)	a large group of creatures that live together (p. 12)
dismay (n.)	disappointment or sadness (p. 9)
larvae (n.) (LAHR-vee)	the first growth stage of ants and other arthropods (p. 12)
moat (n.)	a water-filled ditch protecting a castle (p. 6)
nodes (n.)	bumps or lumps (p. 14)
obstacle (n.) (OB-steh-kehl)	something that gets in the way, preventing progress or movement (p. 11)
pupae (n.) (PYOO-pee)	insects in the life stage between larva and adult, during which they are in cocoons (p. 12)
saliva (n.)	clear mouth fluid; spit (p. 15)
steamboats (n.)	boats with steam engines (p. 8)
thorax (n.) (THOR-aks)	the middle section of an ant's body between the head and the abdomen (p. 13)
tide (n.)	the rise and fall of the ocean produced by the gravity of the moon and sun (p. 8)

Appendix

Gram's Peanut Butter Cookies

Ingredients:

1 cup brown sugar	1 cup shortening or butter
¾ cup white sugar	1 cup peanut butter
2 eggs	1 teaspoon vanilla
¼ teaspoon salt	2 teaspoons baking soda
2 cups flour	¼ cup sugar (to dip fork)

Instructions:

- ① Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- ② Mix together the brown and white sugars, butter or shortening, and peanut butter until creamy.
- ③ Stir in the 2 eggs and mix well.
- ④ Stir in the vanilla.
- ⑤ Mix the salt and baking soda into the flour. Slowly add the flour mixture to the peanut butter mixture, stirring as you add it.
- ⑥ Roll into golf ball-sized balls.
- ⑦ Press onto a cookie sheet with a sugar-coated fork. (Dip a fork into white sugar and press down on the cookie.)
- ⑧ Bake at 350 degrees for 8 to 10 minutes.
- ⑨ Cool on a rack. Yields about three dozen cookies.

NOTE: Please have an adult help you any time you use an electric mixer or the oven.

Note about the series: *Ants in My Bed* is the second book in a three-part series written by Deborah Ambroza. The first book in the series is *Horseshoes Aren't Just for Good Luck*, and the last book is *Bats in the Attic*.

Ants in My Bed
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Illustrated by Marcy Ramsey

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