



The Fire Ant 5497

This book does not have a full English translation.

火蟻 5497

Author: Chia-Hsiu Chen **Illustrator:** Jo-Shin Lee **Publisher:** The Eastern Publishing

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BFT2.0 Translator: Hanling Wu

To survive, a fire ant army marches onto Uncle A-Wang's farmland, eating the crops and sparking a campaign of eradication. Just as a war between humans and ants is about to begin, Fire Ant 5497 is separated from his troop and captured, setting off a chain of unexpected events.

Captured, Fire Ant 5497 faces difficult choices. Should he reveal the plans of the humans to his fellow ants, with whom he can still communicate? Or should he stay silent and risk even greater danger? What decision could stop the disaster—and save his own life?



Author **Chia-Hsiu Chen**

Originally from Penghu, Chia-Hsiu Chen holds a master's degree in children's literature from National Taitung University and is currently a doctoral student in language education at the National Taichung University of Education. Proud to call herself a children's book author, Chen has been fortunate to receive several awards.

Her works include *Sail On! Gale Force Eight*, *How Much Does Mom's Love Weigh?*, *My Dad Is on TV*, as well as picture books such as *Afro Hair and Meatball Head* and *The Magician's Magic Pot*. Chen continues to pursue her own dreams while embracing a simple lifestyle. She wishes for every child and adult to hold onto their inner child, and to find ease and joy in everyday life.



Illustrator **Jo-Shin Lee**

Jo-Shin Lee is a children's books author and illustrator from Taipei, Taiwan, currently based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her stories and illustrations carry a warm, lighthearted tone, often drawing inspiration from everyday life, travel, and nature. From her experiences of printmaking, she enjoys using limited colors in some projects and also loves to create a joyful vibe with whimsical characters.

She primarily works with mixed media, including gouache and colored pencils, as well as printmaking techniques such as screen printing, collagraph intaglio, and risograph printing.

One Afternoon, the Ants Arrived: A Note from the Author

by Chia-Hsiu Chen

My editor asked me to share a bit about how this story came to be.

To be honest, I've always been a bit scatterbrained, and my memory isn't particularly good. As the things I forget pile up, I often joke that having a bad memory isn't all bad—at least it means I don't hold grudges. But when it comes to this story, I'm surprised by how clearly I remember its beginnings.

One afternoon, I was reading at my desk in the dormitory. Perhaps some lingering scent left by a former resident had attracted them, but an entire trail of ants kept moving back and forth. At first, I didn't mind. I thought: *As long as we stay out of each other's way, it's fine.*

But gradually, after they repeatedly crawled onto my book and across my hands, I began to feel irritated. You've certainly had ants crawl on you before, right? That ticklish, itchy feeling—annoying but not enough to make you

want to kill them. Still, each time a little tickle broke my train of thought, I finally put down my pen, leaned back in my chair, and surrendered: *Fine. Go ahead—crawl all you want.*

So I sat quietly and watched them. And unexpectedly, the longer I observed, the more interesting they became. I studied which leg they used first when they walked. I watched what happened when two ants bumped into each other. I noticed how they liked to form a neat line, yet there was always one mischievous ant who refused to stay in formation. I wondered where that little rebel was headed and what it planned to do.

Time slipped by with a soft tick-tock, and in the careful observing of these tiny creatures, I found myself quietly delighted.

Of course, ants are not fire ants—I know that. But the magic of fairy tales lies in the boundless connections and

imagination they invite. Because I often pay attention to environmental issues, fire ants naturally came to mind. The subtle “fierceness” and ardent temperament intrigued me. To humans, fire ants have a terrible reputation—aggressive, dangerous, something to be eradicated. But I wanted to ask: *Do they really want this? Are they active invaders? Can a creature truly change the instincts it was born with?* Through the lens of a fairy tale, I hoped to shift perspectives. And from that impulse, a new storyline began to sprout like bamboo shoots after the rain.

My initial irritation eventually bore fruit. The next time you feel frustrated, try letting your thoughts take a different turn. Just as I gave up my desk space and allowed the ants to wander for a while, I discovered unexpected joy in the ordinary. When we pause to contemplate quietly, everything can become a source of delight. If you ever find yourself alone,

don't be afraid. Take the opportunity to talk to yourself and observe your surroundings with greater sensitivity. You may discover something quietly surprising hidden in everyday life.

This story has won the Wu Cho-liu Literary Award, and I'm delighted that it now has the opportunity to meet more readers. To enrich the story, the anteater boss makes an appearance, along with his delightfully long-named company—details I find especially charming and hope you'll enjoy as well.

When you finish the story, you may of course set it aside and go on with your day. But I hope it leaves you a little more inclined to cherish the environment, to show greater respect and tolerance toward the people around you, and—perhaps most of all—to spend a moment reflecting on what it means to “exist.” If it inspires even that much, I would consider you truly remarkable.

Don't be fooled by how peaceful this land looks now—earth-shattering events once took place here...



The Invasion of the Fire Ant Army Corps

“All soldiers, ready in your battle positions.”

“Ready! Charge!”

Two hours ago, the fire ant general had already climbed atop the streetlamp to conduct an inspection of his troops. Now, he showed not the slightest hint of fatigue.

At his cry, a total of 60,000 red fire ants immediately split into three divisions, advancing at full speed from the east, south, and west. Their target: the farmland straight ahead.

Left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot...

The army corps was composed of sixty thousand fire ants. Though their footsteps were not very well organized, their feet made no sound. They followed the scent signal, moving in remarkable unison—like a giant red carpet floating just above the ground.

Each soldier ant marched with pride and purpose. From time to time, one would halt with alert precision, sweeping its sharp antennae from side to side as if scouting for enemies—exuding a faint, chilling aura of menace.



“Here... They’re coming...”

Perched on a branch, the guavas trembled as they stared into the distance, too frightened to speak clearly. Beneath the scorching sun, their heads spun and their bodies swayed, teetering on the verge of collapse.

“Oh dear, I’m dizzy. I can’t take this anymore,” one guava groaned, turning pale with shock, then suddenly flushing bright red.

“Hang in there! Don’t you dare fall off!” shouted the scallion nearby, wracked with worry. Whenever he got emotional, his whole body gave off a sharp, choking odor.

“Are they really that terrifying? Come on—I don’t believe they’ve got three heads and six arms.”