



drama by george

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The Grasshoppers and the Ants

By George Halitzka

Freely adapted from Aesop's fable

Cast of Characters

THE GRASSHOPPERS
Michelle and Mindy

THE BIG ANTS
Hans and Thor

THE LI'L ANTS
Molly, Holly, and Pauly

The Time

Part I: A warm day in June

Part II and Conclusion: A cold day in October

The Place

An anthill in your yard and the grass around it

***To Howard, Will, and Jackie:
the original Grasshopper and the Ants,
who helped me write better insects.***

The Grasshoppers and the Ants

PART I

(The GRASSHOPPERS, MICHELLE and MINDY, enter to energetic music. They're both talking on cell phones and licking ice cream cones.)

MINDY

I'm tellin' ya, this is the life!

MICHELLE

Prepaid wireless and Chocolate-Chip Cookie Dough.

MINDY

(sighing)

And the Grasshopper guys are *dreamy*!

(The GRASSHOPPERS dissolve into giggles. Meanwhile, two BIG ANTS, HANS and THOR, march onstage. They are overseeing HOLLY, MOLLY, and PAULY--LI'L ANTS who are marching and carrying a large tree on their backs.)

THOR

I don't know but I've been told--

LI'L ANTS

I don't know but I've been told--

THOR

Work keeps me out of the cold!

LI'L ANTS

Work keeps me out of the cold!

THOR

I don't know but it's been said--

(MINDY gets bumped by the tree as it goes by.)

MINDY

Hey! Watch where you're goin'!

HOLLY

Sorry, Ms. Grasshopper.

MOLLY

Can we take an ice cream break?

(MOLLY lets go of the tree and stares wistfully at the GRASSHOPPERS. The other LI'L ANTS try to hold on, but eventually drop their load.)

HANS

Not till all our winter food is ready! Back to work, Li'l Ants.

MICHELLE

Awww . . . look at those poor kids. Working all day long.

MINDY

You want some, little buddy?

(She holds out her cone towards MOLLY, but quickly jerks it back.)

Ohhh, no--ants wait till somebody drops it on the sidewalk!

MICHELLE

Too much work for ice cream! Tomorrow, I'm having Moose Tracks®!

MINDY

Chocolate-covered ants are good too.

(The GRASSHOPPERS laugh.)

PAULY

(to HANS)

We're tired, sir!

MOLLY

Can we take a break like the Grasshoppers?

HANS

Winter is coming, Li'l Ants! When the snow comes down and the drifts pile up, you'll be glad we stored this food.

MICHELLE

Winter, shminter! Feel the sun!

MINDY

There's plenty of time to work *later*.

THOR

Why don't you girls make like Michael Jackson and beat it?

MICHELLE

Do you know what the Pink Panther said when he stepped on a bug?

MICHELLE and MINDY

(to the tune of the "Pink Panther" theme)

Dead Ant, Dead Ant, Dead Ant Dead Ant Dead Ant Dead Ant Dead Ant
. . . .

(MICHELLE and MINDY laugh and high-five--until they notice the BIG ANTS pushing up their sleeves, getting ready to kick some Grasshopper butt.)

MINDY

Hey Michelle, I have an idea.

MICHELLE

Let's beat it?

THOR

Good idea.

(The GRASSHOPPERS begin to hop offstage, singing.)

MICHELLE and MINDY

These boots were made for hoppin',
And that's just what they'll do.
One of these days these boots
Are gonna hop all over you!

(Once they're out of range, the GRASSHOPPERS stick out their tongues. The BIG ANTS ignore them and turn back to their charges, who are staring longingly after the ice cream.)

HANS

Now, Li'l Ants, I know how appealing a Grasshopper's life looks. But they won't be eating ice cream when winter comes!

THOR

Do you know what happens to Grasshoppers in the cold?

HANS

They turn into green popsicles!

THOR

It's only the Ants' hard work that saves us winter after winter!
Am I right?

HANS

Darned tootin'!

(The LI'L ANTS, sensing a lecture coming, sit down and begin to paint their nails, read magazines, and otherwise ignore the BIG ANTS.)

THOR

Last winter the spiders were dropping like flies. But the Ants were safe underground, enjoying the food we stored all summer.

HANS

And why? Because--

HANS and THOR

Hard work pays off!

(HANS clears his throat.)

LI'L ANTS

(dutifully, with much eye-rolling)

Hard work pays off.

THOR

Two years ago a snot-nosed little brat stomped all over our Anthill. But did we give up?

HOLLY

(sigh)

Probably not.

HANS

That's right! We came out and bit that kid's toes till he went cryin' home to Mama! And then do you know what we did?

PAULY

Rebuilt the Anthill?

THOR

No . . . first, we got fried by his magnifying glass. *Then* we rebuilt the Anthill! And do you know why?

MOLLY

(sarcastically)

Because wood frame construction was too expensive?

THOR

No! Because--

HANS *and* THOR

Hard work pays off!

HANS

You young Ants have it so easy!

(PAULY rolls his eyes and yawns; calls for a huddle with the other LI'L ANTS. They slowly begin to sneak offstage.)

Back in my day, we used to carry twelve times our own body weight, two miles--uphill both ways, with only a hot aphid in our pockets to stay warm.

THOR

And we liked it! You know why?

MOLLY

(as she exits)

Because hard work pays off?

THOR

(reluctantly)

No . . . because we were idiots.

HANS

Year after year, the Mighty Ant triumphs over all odds! Neither rain, nor snow, nor spray of insecticide, nor size ten of sneakers, shall keep this Anthill from invading picnics everywhere! Because--

HANS *and* THOR

Hard work pays off!

HANS

Now, let's get this tree home. Back to work, Li'l Ants!

(The BIG ANTS look around and realize their charges have flown the coop!)

THOR

Li'l Ants?

HANS

I knew those kids were gonna be trouble. They'll be sorry when winter comes!

THOR

Help me with this.

(They struggle to pick up the tree.)

HANS

This must be ten times my body weight.

THOR

Maybe twenty.

HANS

Twenty? Hmm . . .

THOR

Wait till the Queen sees this! We still got it.

(Chortling to themselves, HANS and THOR exit into the Anthill with the tree. Blackout.)

PART II

(A cold winter wind is blowing. The GRASSHOPPER and LI'L ANTS enter, shivering.)

MICHELLE

--So then the Worker says to the Drone, "If it's okay with the Queen, it's okay with me!"

(MICHELLE and MINDY crack up; the LI'L ANTS groan.)

MOLLY

We're cold, Ms. Grasshopper.

MICHELLE

Whatsa matter, you eat too much ice cream?

MINDY

Don't worry, little buddy. Once in a while it gets cold at night. It'll be better tomorrow.

PAULY

But it's two in the afternoon!

HOLLY

And I'm hungry.

MICHELLE

Good eatin' got harder when the soft serve stands closed.

HOLLY

Both my stomachs are empty!

MINDY

So let's look for an Ant Farm!

(Once again, the GRASSHOPPERS laugh and the LI'L ANTS groan.)

MOLLY

I miss the Anthill.

PAULY

But we had to work every day!

MOLLY

Yeah, and we got to eat every day.

MICHELLE

Don't you think about those Drones! There's always food if you know where to look. Up in the trees--

MINDY

The leaves fell a month ago.

MICHELLE

Okay, the picnics--

MINDY
Gone till May.

MICHELLE
But the fields--

MINDY
Mmm . . . frozen dirt.

MOLLY
I'm cold! And tired! And hungry!

HOLLY
We never should've left the Anthill. It's like the Big Ants
always said--

LI'L ANTS
(together)
Hard work pays off!

MINDY
Hey, I have an idea!

MICHELLE
It better involve ice cream.

MINDY
What's our chances of three hots and a cot at the Anthill?

(The LI'L ANTS laugh.)

PAULY
Yeah, right!

HOLLY
After what we did?

MOLLY
Uh, guys . . . what've we got to lose?

(For a long moment, the INSECTS look at each
other. Then suddenly, they begin shoving to make
the other species go first.)

MICHELLE
Okay, Ants first!

PAULY
Age before beauty!

MINDY
Pearls before swine!

HOLLY
You're taller!

MINDY
Wrong species!

MOLLY
But Ants love Grasshoppers!

MICHELLE
Frozen on a stick!

MOLLY
Rock-paper-scissors.

(MOLLY and MICHELLE play. MICHELLE loses. She reluctantly advances towards the Anthill and knocks. All of the other INSECTS make themselves as small as possible.)

HANS
(from inside the Anthill)
We don't want any!

(MICHELLE reluctantly knocks again. HANS finally comes to the door.)

This better be good . . . well, well, well. Look what the cockroach dragged in!

MOLLY
Sir, we're very cold and hungry.

HOLLY
We'd really like to come home to the Anthill.

PAULY
Pretty please with sugar on top?

HANS

I warned you what happens to Li'l Ants who play with Grasshoppers all summer. If you don't work, you don't eat!

(HANS is about to disappear inside the Anthill.
MICHELLE and MINDY jump forward.)

MICHELLE

Wait; you don't understand! We were blinded by ice cream--

MINDY

But we've seen the error of our ways!

MICHELLE

This Grasshopping sinner will walk the Sawdust Trail!

MINDY

Repent and turn from her wicked ways! Walk the straight and narrow!

MICHELLE

I have learned that hard work pays off!

(MICHELLE elbows MINDY, and they repeat the Ants' mantra together.)

MICHELLE and MINDY

Hard work pays off!

(A short pause.)

HANS

Have you *really* learned your lesson?

MICHELLE

(with a clumsy salute)

Yessir!

HANS

Well . . . come inside and I'll see what I can do.

MICHELLE

Have I told you how much I love Ants?

HANS

This is going to mean *work*.

MINDY

I'm allergic to that--

HANS

Hard work!

MICHELLE

Did I mention my back problems?

(We go to blackout as Hawaiian music begins to play . . .)

CONCLUSION

(When the lights return, HANS and THOR are lying on chaise lounges. The GRASSHOPPERS are fanning THOR with palm branches; the LI'L ANTS are standing by to feed HANS grapes.)

THOR

Grasshoppers, I can't feel that.

(The GRASSHOPPERS look at him with murder in their eyes, but fan harder.)

HANS

I told you, I only want the juicy ones, Li'l Ants.

THOR

So, why are you kids doing this again?

MOLLY

So we don't freeze and starve, sir.

HANS

And why do we get to relax?

MICHELLE

(mockingly)

Because you worked all summer.

HANS

Because I worked all summer WHAT?

MICHELLE

Because you worked all summer, *SIR*.

THOR

That's right. And *why* did we work all summer?

MICHELLE

(grudgingly)

Because hard work pays off.

THOR

I can't hear you!

LI'L ANTS *and* GRASSHOPPERS

Hard work pays off!

HANS

Louder!

LI'L ANTS *and* GRASSHOPPERS

Hard work pays off!

THOR

Fan harder!

LI'L ANTS *and* GRASSHOPPERS

Hard work pays off!

HANS

More grapes!

LI'L ANTS *and* GRASSHOPPERS

Hard work pays off! Hard work pays off! Hard work pays off!

(The GRASSHOPPERS and LI'L ANTS continue repeating the mantra as the BIG ANTS gloat. The music swells as we go to a final blackout.)

THE END

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