

# THE CHECKERED WAR

*An Infested Story in Three Parts*



by

Aunt Haggis

The ants and events portrayed in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real ants living or dead is coincidental and not intended by the author.

The Ant Facts, however, are based on real and true science. Ask your teacher.

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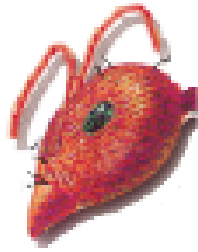
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***“To the ant, a few drops of rain are a flood.”***

– Japanese Proverb

## **PART I**



***Head'em Up and Move'em Out***

# CHAPTER ONE

*Wednesday July 1*

*0900 Hours*

*Camp Wheat*

*Harvester Colony*

The war raged between the three colonies. Although they had been fighting since the last year, this summer would secure a lasting victory for only one of them.

The Harvesters lived near the paved road beside a large and spacious wheat field. Their rival, the Carpenters, lived west of where the road splits into a bumpy and dusty path leading into the abandoned forest. The Blood Red Slave Hunters lived wherever they pleased. Everyone was afraid of them.

At Camp Wheat Queen Opal sat against the wall of her dark, dry chambers, glancing around the room. She watched her many advisors, most of whom had served her for years. She scratched her legs and listened as the Harvester soldiers discussed their strategy:

"We should attack from the rear," Ada recommended strongly. "It worked last year, it will work again." Ada was an average-sized soldier, average color, average strength and weight. Her outstanding quality was that she was more industrious than most. She prided herself on being dependable. Ada stood more erect to increase her height. "The rear attack always works," she repeated for emphasis.

"I disagree," Minolt retorted. Minolt flexed her forelegs. She marched up closer to the front of the group. "That's exactly what they're expecting us to do: attack from the rear. We need an element of surprise." Minolt's jaw tightened, and her eyes darted back and forth, seeking supporters.

"She's right," an advisor chimed. "Minolt is always right."

Minolt gloated and threw a victorious smirk toward Ada.

Ada's face felt hot and flushed. She could feel sixty bulging eyes staring at her. "Minolt says that every year," Ada countered, "but nobody ever thinks of what the surprise should be, so we always end up attacking from the rear."

The group began to grumble. Ada looked around the room for defenders of her plan. "And it always works," she added quickly.

"Not this year," said Minolt acidly. She moved in closer to Ada, breathing hotly on her face. "If you had a few brains, you would realize that this situation is different. We're not just dealing with the invasion and seizure of goods, but with an opposing army, a BIG army." Minolt thrust her front legs high into the air. "We have to get there first," she continued resolutely. "We have to encircle the battleground. We have to move swiftly. We have to approach unnoticed." Her eyes pierced Ada's entire being. "Get it?" Minolt backed away, shaking her head in disgust.

Some of the advisors were beaming at Minolt's forceful, sarcastic speech.

Ada knew everyone was staring at her. She could feel her throat tighten and the hair on her legs quiver. She thought she might faint from embarrassment until the Queen stepped down from her seat.

Queen Opal methodically paced around the chamber, each council member scurrying to get out of her way.

"I have an idea for the element of surprise," Queen Opal began slowly. "Remember the story of the Trojan Horse? You know, where the soldiers made a big horse and then crawled inside of it? When it was delivered to the enemy, it was wheeled inside the gates and SURPRISE!" She looked around the room at the colony's brightest and bravest soldiers. "We can do it!" she told them with conviction. "We will build our own Trojan horse!"

Whispers, murmuring, an increasing rustle began to crackle through the crowd.

"We don't have any wood," blurted out a soldier.

"It would be too heavy," called someone else.

"We're not Carpenters. We're Harvesters," another cried.

"I know, I know," answered the Queen, louder and more impatiently than she expected. "Not a *real* Trojan horse," she explained, "but an '*edible*' Trojan horse." She wrapped her front legs around her head and tried to calm herself. She paced back and

forth, then suddenly commanded, "Now everybody leave. I need to draw up the plans. Prepare your divisions for labor." The Queen pointed to the door. "Go! Go! Go!"

The advisory board left the Queen's chambers, mumbling among themselves that she'd lived too long, given birth to too many children, and now was slipping into insanity.

Queen Opal was also mumbling, but to herself, "Oh boy, oh boy, an edible Trojan horse! How ever will I do it?"

Willy sat huddled in a dark corner of the Queen's chambers. Unlike the rest of the colony, he was the only one who was from the Black-Haired Garden colony. He had been adopted last spring after he'd been swept off the bank of the Spanky River during a rainstorm. Miles downstream he had been washed up onto a log. After drying out, he had crawled into the cattle barn of the Harvester colony and had become one of them.

Willy had immediately gone to work milking the herd. Unlike the other males in the colony who were lazy and useless, Willy was a solid worker who did his share. Although his co-workers called him overly enthusiastic, Willy considered it a compliment. No one seemed to notice he was Black.

Willy wanted so badly to help his new colony. Like an enemy spy, Willy had squeezed into a dim nook of the Queen's chambers, straining to hear the words of the advisory board. As an outsider to the council as well as the colony, the advisory board would never have invited Willy to the meeting. Only he wasn't a spy; he was just a lowly worker who wanted to make a difference.

Now as he contemplated the upcoming battle, his dream of being a war hero kicked into gear. He wanted to help his colony win the war. He knew he would have to use brains, not strength, to assist his Queen. Try as he might, Willy didn't know how to make an edible Trojan horse. He wanted to come up with a solution for the Queen. He thought, and thought, and thought until his mind became tired. His tiny legs were weak from being scrunched up for so long in the dingy corner. Then he fell asleep.

## ***Ant Facts 1***

Ants are a wonderful People. They belong to the order of insects called *Hymenoptera*. There are billions of them upon the earth, and there are over 12,000 known species. If you carefully study them, you will see that they have some of the virtues and many of the vices of human beings. They have surprising talents and can perform many different tasks. Because they live in organized communities with a highly specialized division of labor, they are known as social insects.

Ants live, work, and sleep just like other peoples. But they are not as industrious as you might think. Some species never work, wandering around like parasites feeding off other colonies. Some are thieves and robbers, while others are killers and cannibals. Just like the human race, ants can be their own worst enemy.

Ants live in a caste system where there are three distinct groups: the queen, the workers, and the males. Like human queens, the queen ant is in charge; she has servants that take care of her. The workers are not so lucky; they work their entire lives. All of the workers are sterile females. Males don't work at all, and only live in the nest at mating time. After mating, the males soon die. In most species, the males have the best vision, the females have eyes that don't work very well, and the workers have the poorest eyes. In some species, the workers are even blind because there is no optic nerve. Still, some have no physical eyes at all. The brain, however, is another matter. Generally, it is barely developed in the males, improved in the females, and the most well-developed in the workers.



