

## The Ant

In the last few years we have been waging a small war against little black ants that have been invading our house. In the warmer months we find small hoards of them invading our honey, or seeking moisture in the shower recess. They come into the bedrooms and cluster around any scraps they can find. One day, years ago, we found a nest they'd built behind the loosening tiles in our bathroom. We swiftly dispatched them with chemical warfare and other weapons of ant destruction.

Right now, it's winter, and we rarely see the blighters. But this morning, I felt the need – as you do - for a little quiet contemplation. I'm reading the newspaper – as you do – waiting for nature to take its course. Across the floor I see the ant, small and black. The first I've seen for a while, but I know in spring they'll be back in force. Foraging, no doubt on behalf of its nest-mates.

My first reaction is to squash the annoying so-and-so. It's just in front of my boot, and all it will take is an easy movement of my leg, and my overwhelming superiority will convert to a little mush of wriggling legs. But I am struck by the sight of this tiny Mawson struggling his way across the Antarctic wasteland of my bathroom floor; the bright, shiny faces of its poor children, waiting in vain for the next meal; the tearful eyes of his lady fearful for her 'man', and for the future of her children.

Okay, here I'm getting a little fanciful, but I could almost see our brave little ant toiling across the vast territory of my bathroom floor, towing a weighty sleigh of supplies, having survived his less hardy travellers.

The newspaper article's almost finished now, so I tidy up, lift my boot and squash him. Just like that. Heartless? Okay, not really. I let him go. Off he went and, I imagine, has now finished his great trek across the tiles. Presumably back to his nest where he can tell tall tales of daring deeds, and how he tricked the terrible ogre.

Hopefully, he will also tell of how clean our tiles are, and there'd be no point in returning next summer. But some how I doubt that, and soon it will be time again to deploy the WMD.