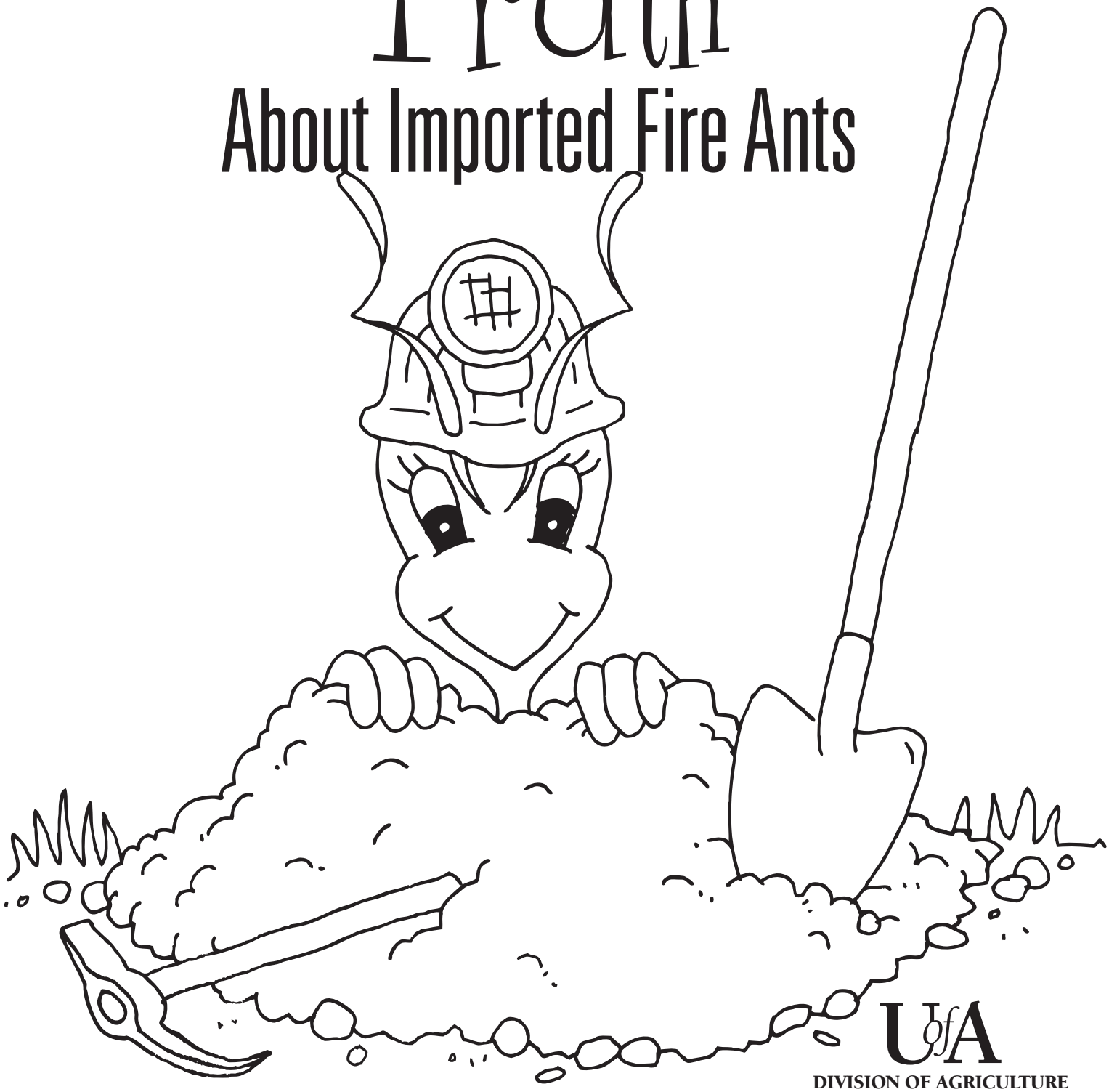
AG1061

The Hidden Truth

About Imported Fire Ants



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The Hidden Truth

About Imported Fire Ants

We hope after reading and coloring in this book you will have a better understanding about imported fire ants and how they live. Adults that would like to learn how to minimize the impact of fire ants using various management practices and pesticides may visit **www.extension.org /fire_ants** or contact their county Extension office for more information.

- This book was designed and illustrated by Brian Richardson. Additional illustrations are by Joe MacGown and Bruce Dupree.
- The copy was originally written by Donna Shanklin and Brian Richardson.
- Special thanks to Mary Jean Bowling for her contributions.
- Latest revisions were made by members of the Imported Fire Ant eXtension Community of Practice.

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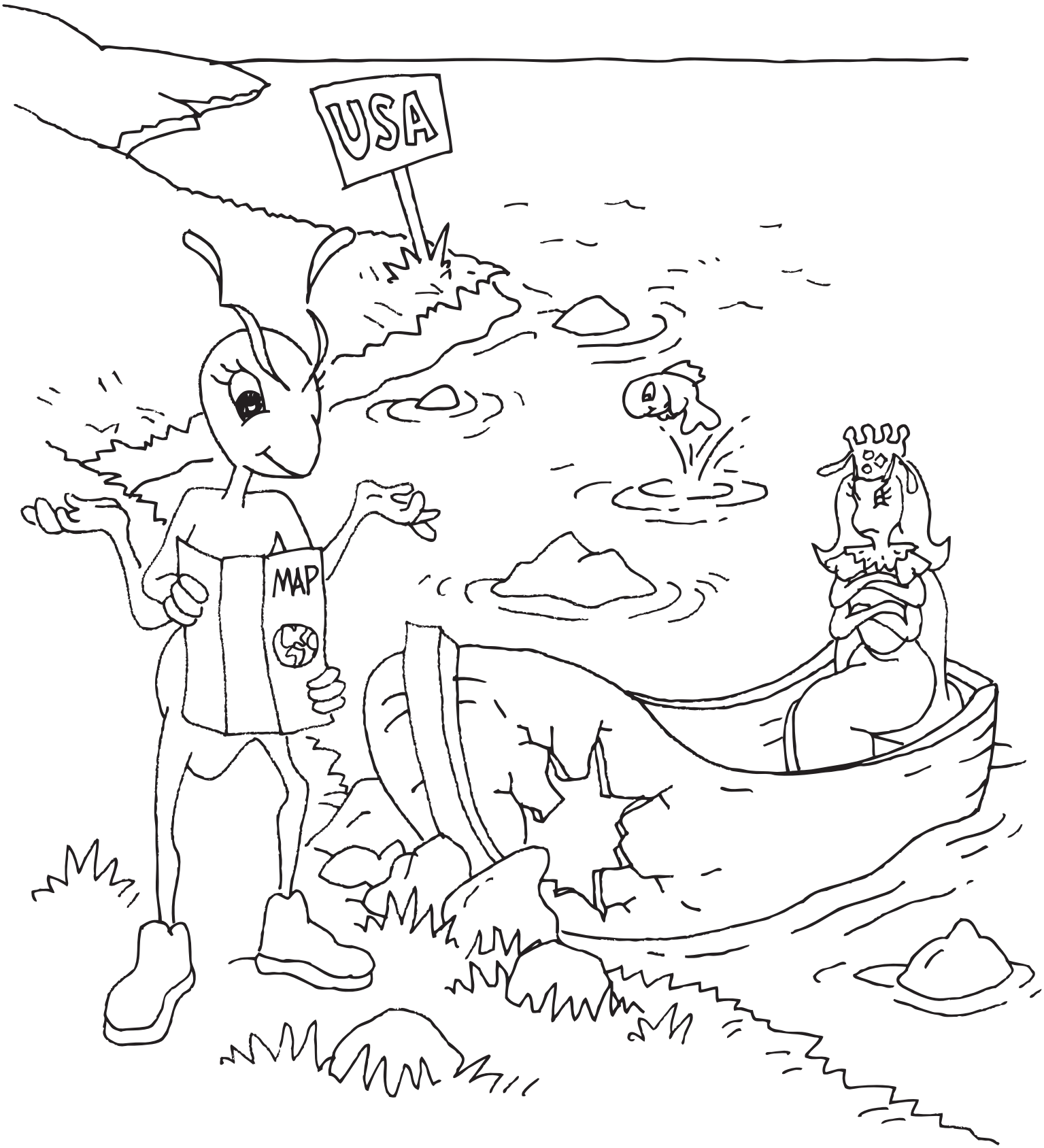
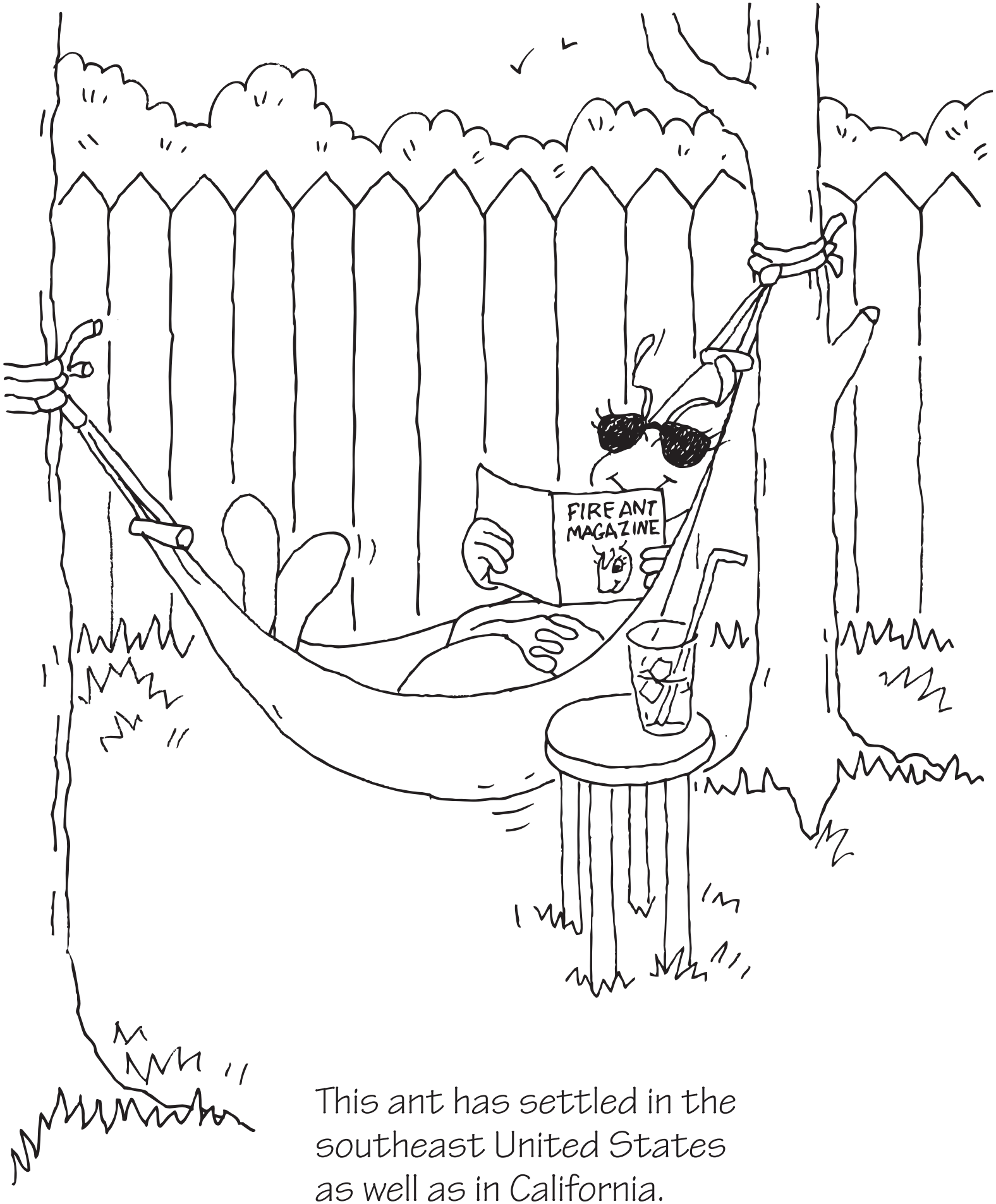
Imported fire ants are not from the United States. They are from South America and were accidentally brought to the United States on a ship.

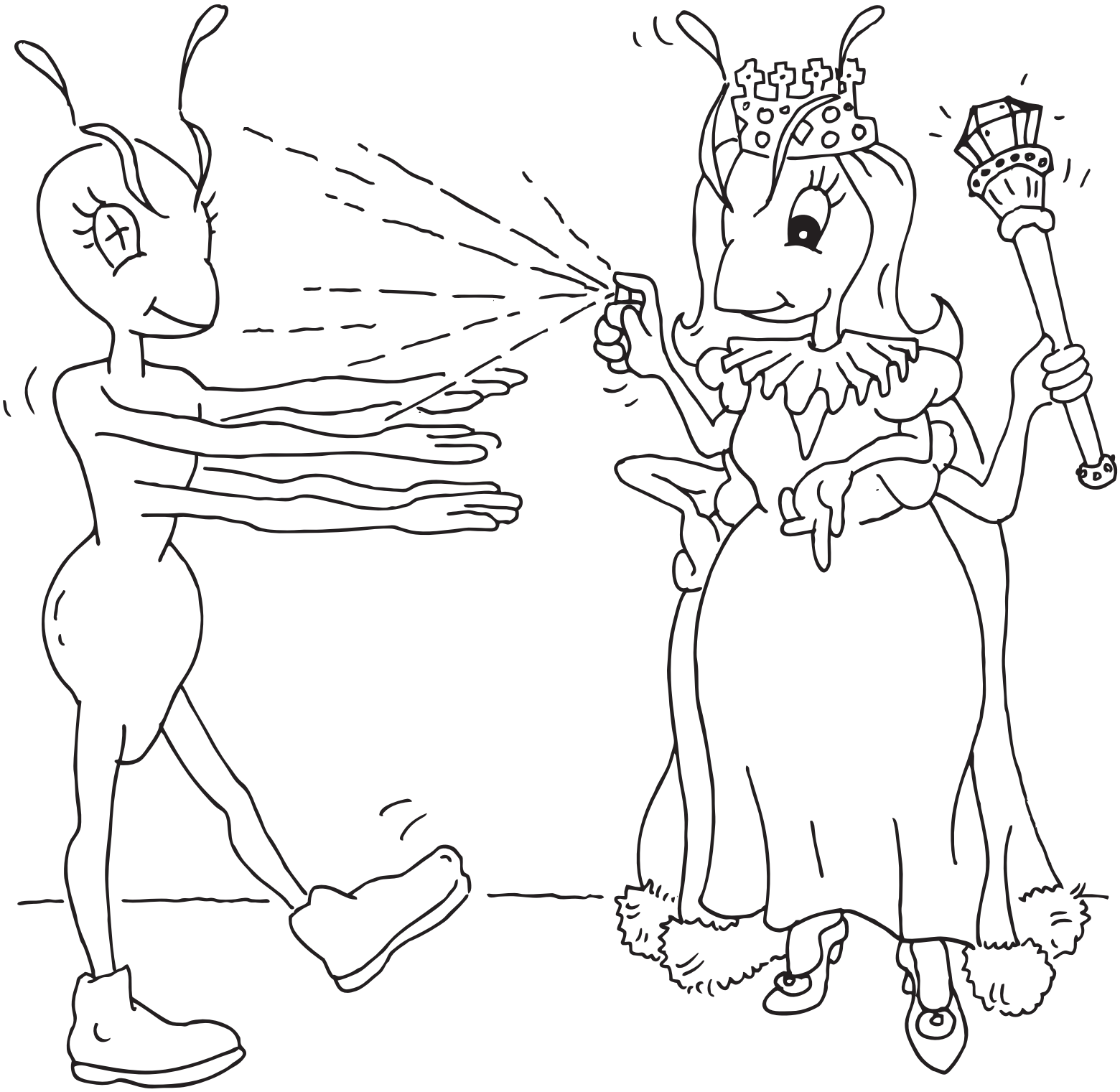




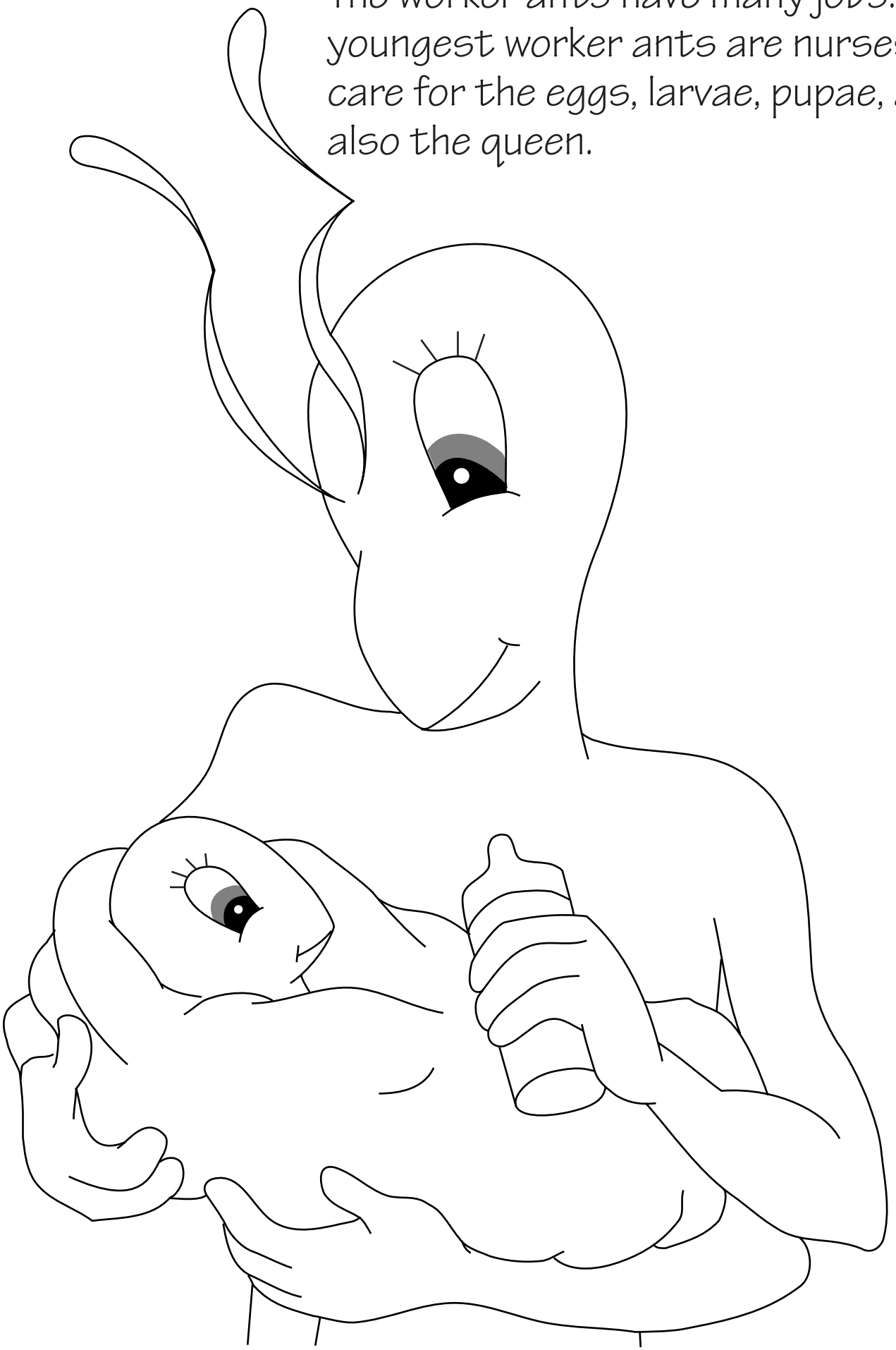
This ant has settled in the southeast United States as well as in California.

Fire ants protect their mound because it is their home. It is also where the queen is located.

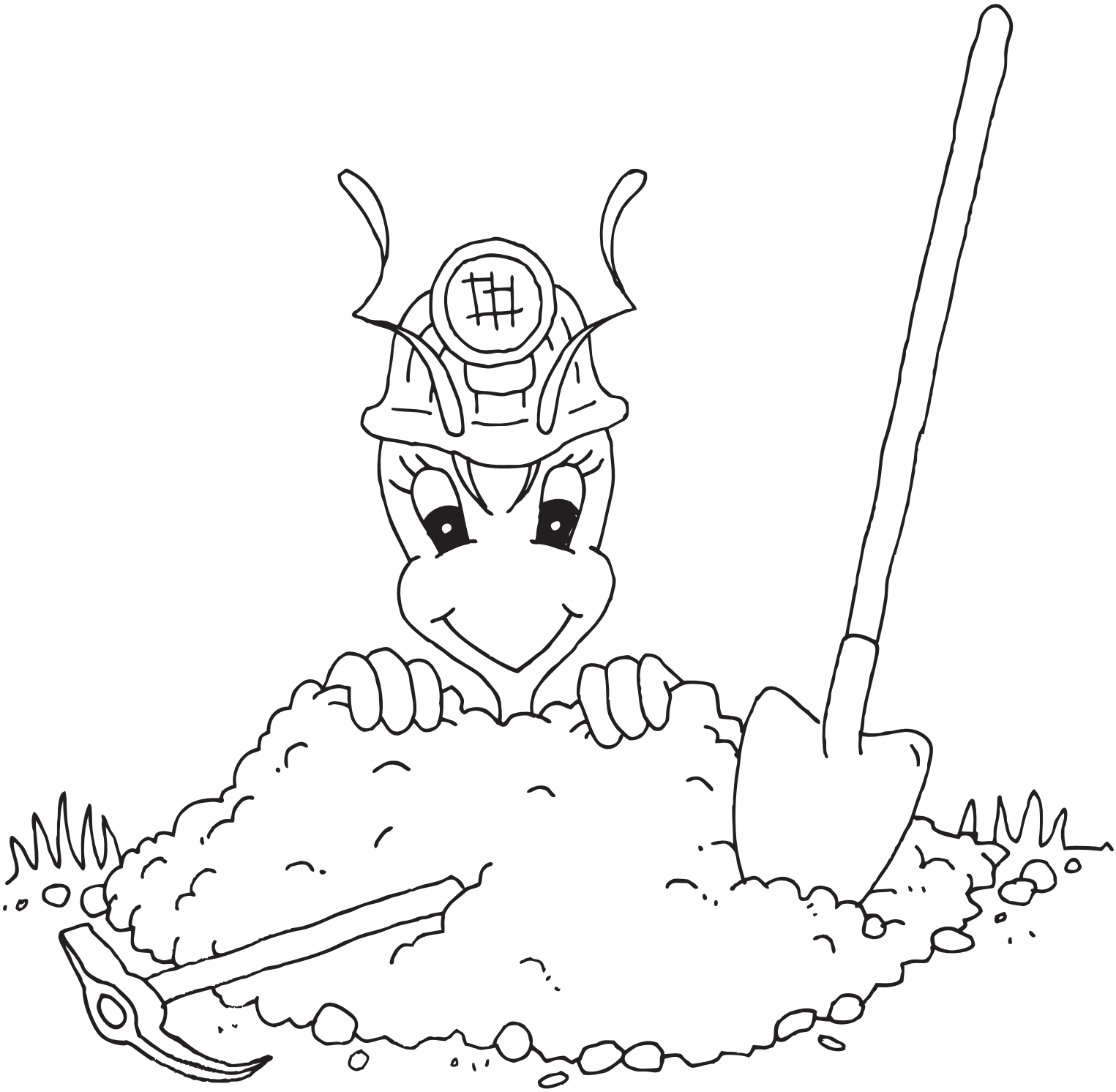
The queen's job is to lay eggs. She controls the colony by using special scents called pheromones. Her daughters, called worker ants, do not lay eggs of their own.



The worker ants have many jobs. The youngest worker ants are nurses who care for the eggs, larvae, pupae, and also the queen.

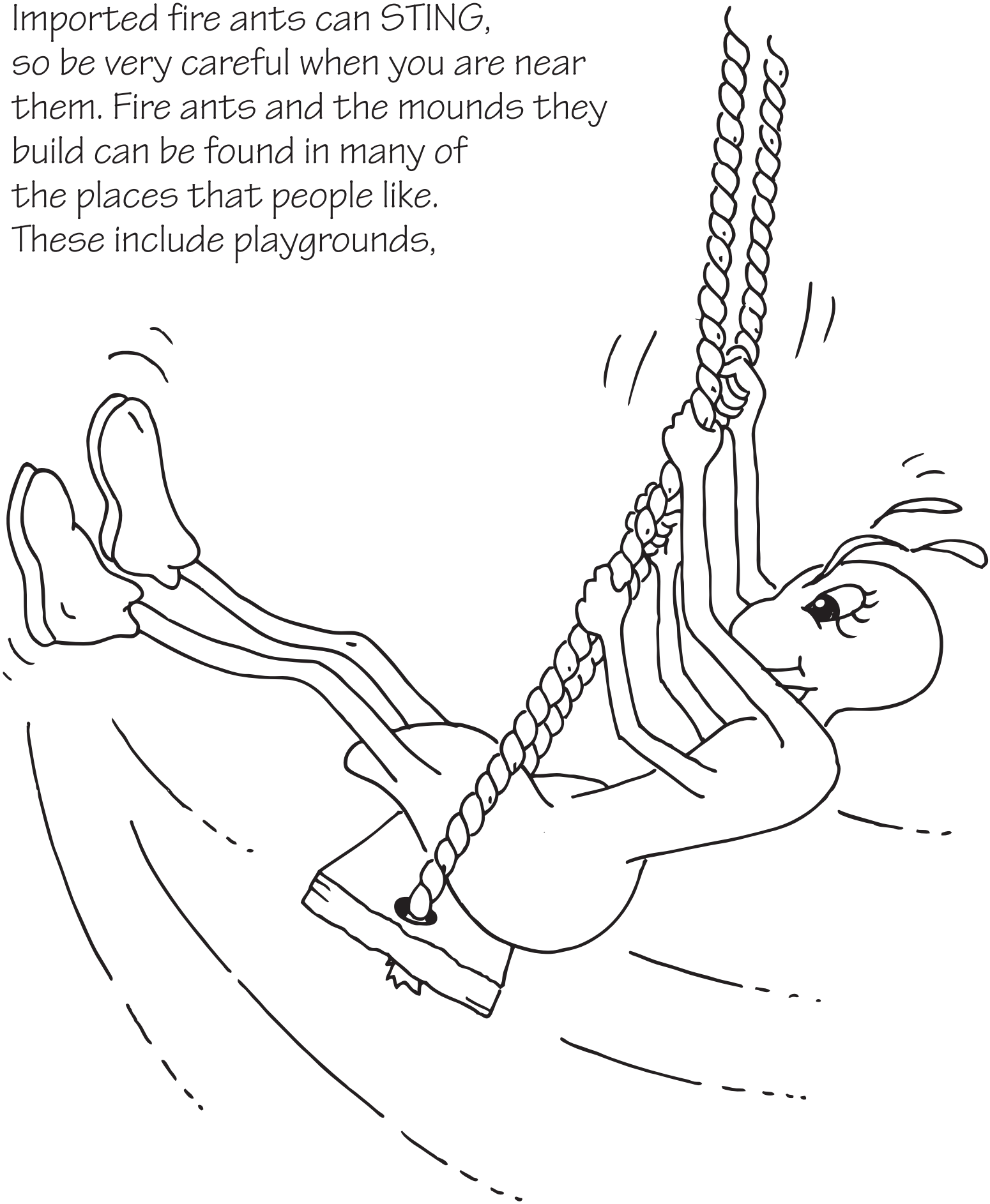


Middle-aged workers are reserve ants who protect the mound and build tunnels.

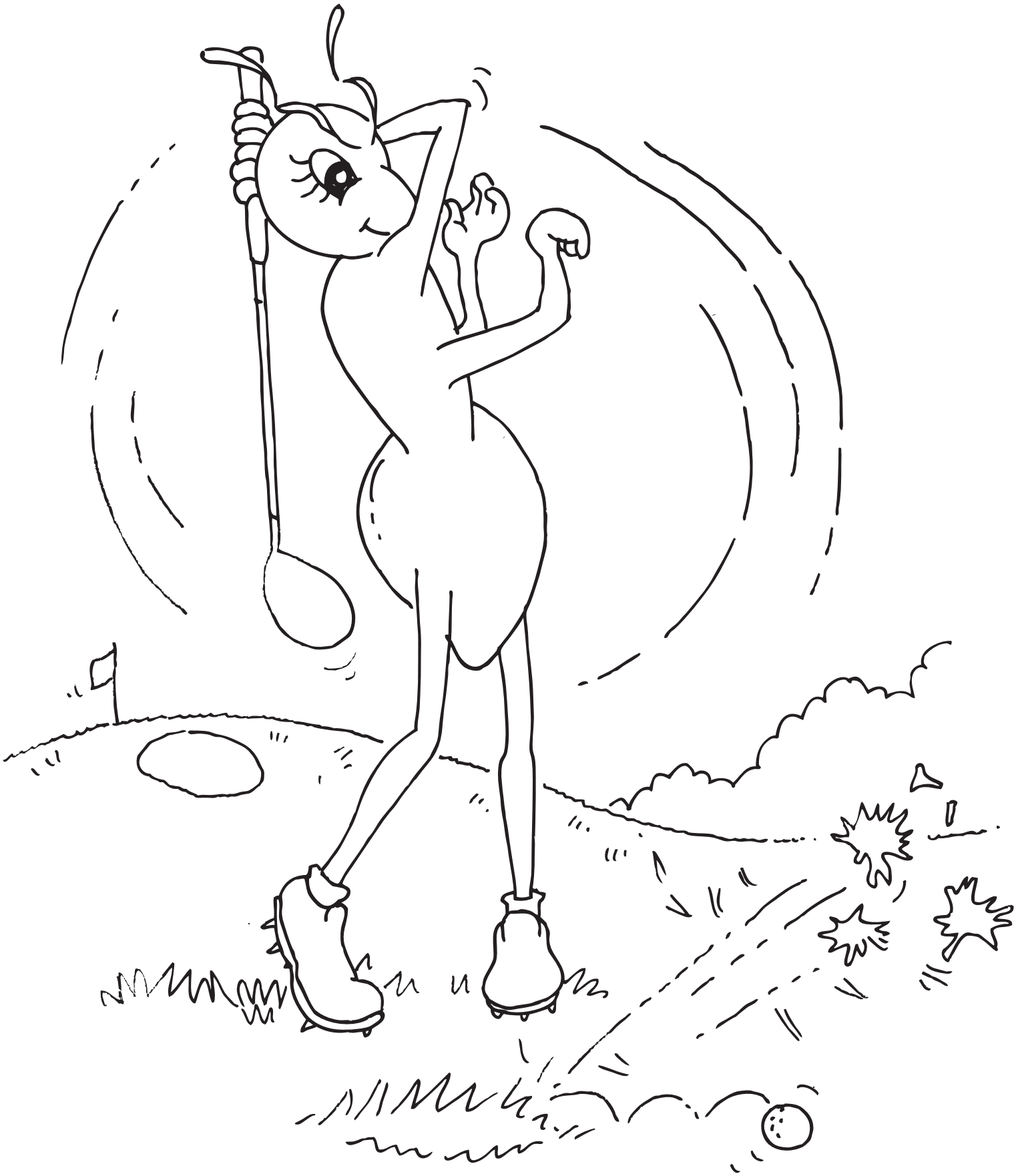


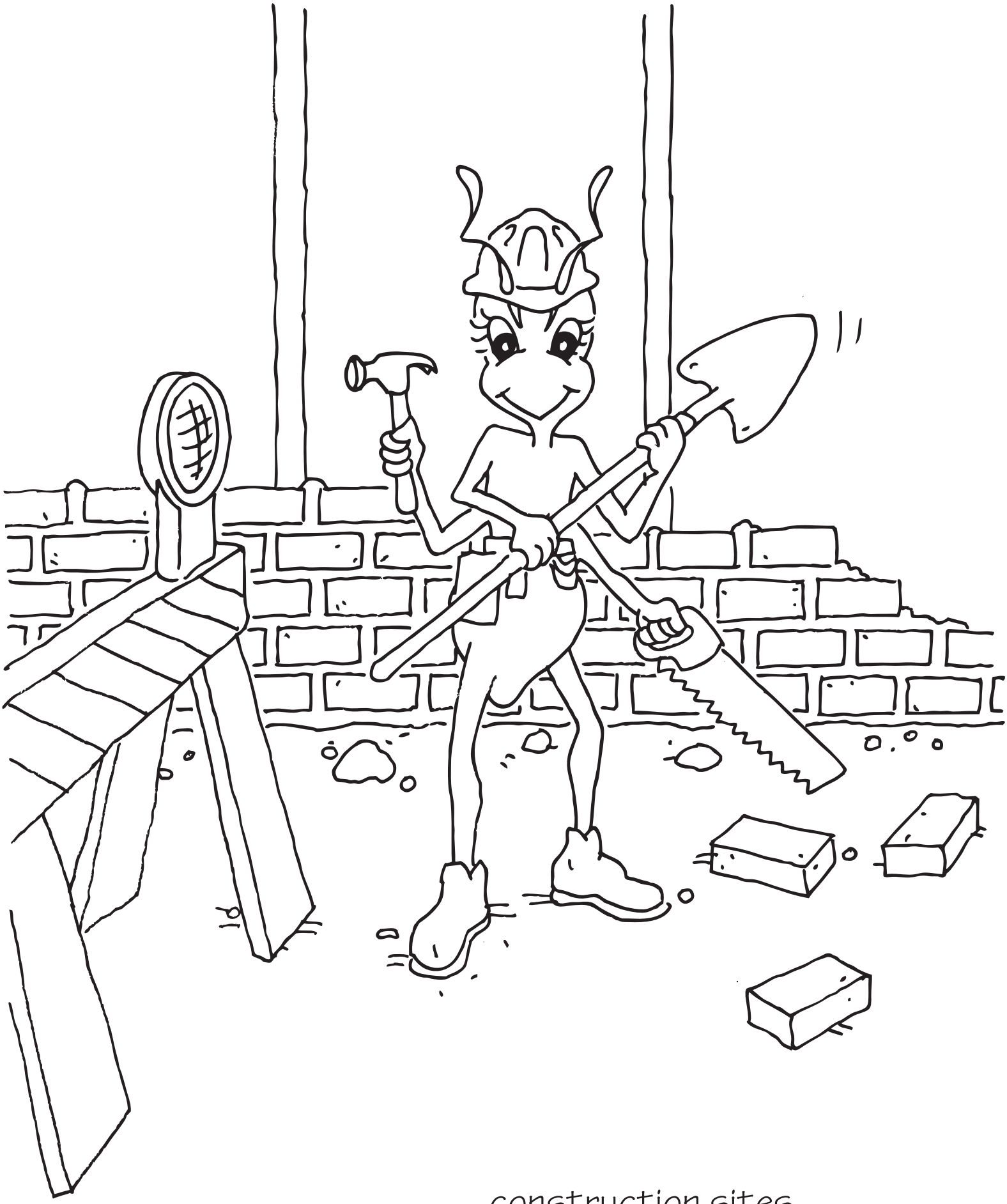
The oldest worker ants are foragers who collect food for the colony.

Imported fire ants can STING, so be very careful when you are near them. Fire ants and the mounds they build can be found in many of the places that people like. These include playgrounds,



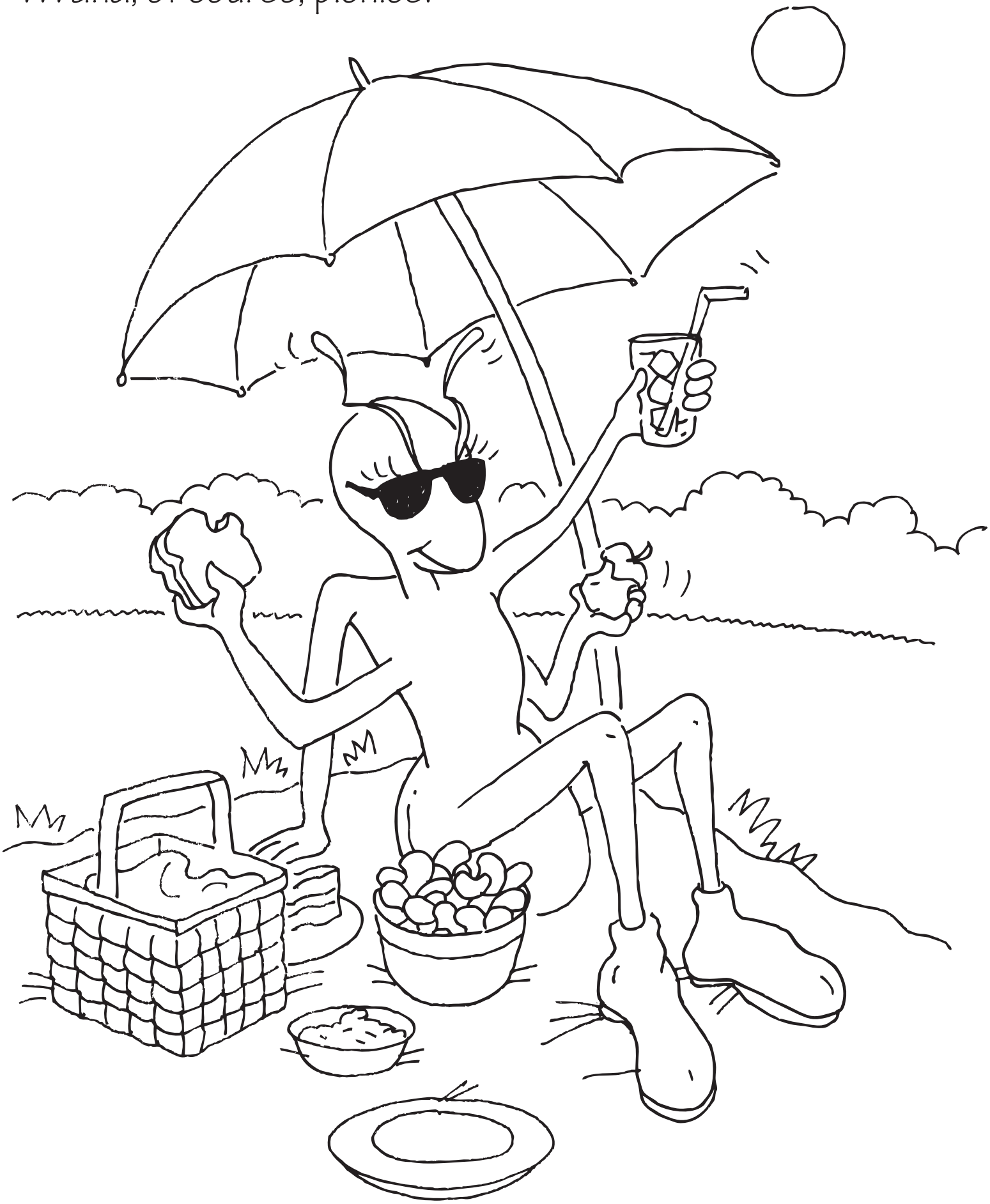
. . . golf courses,



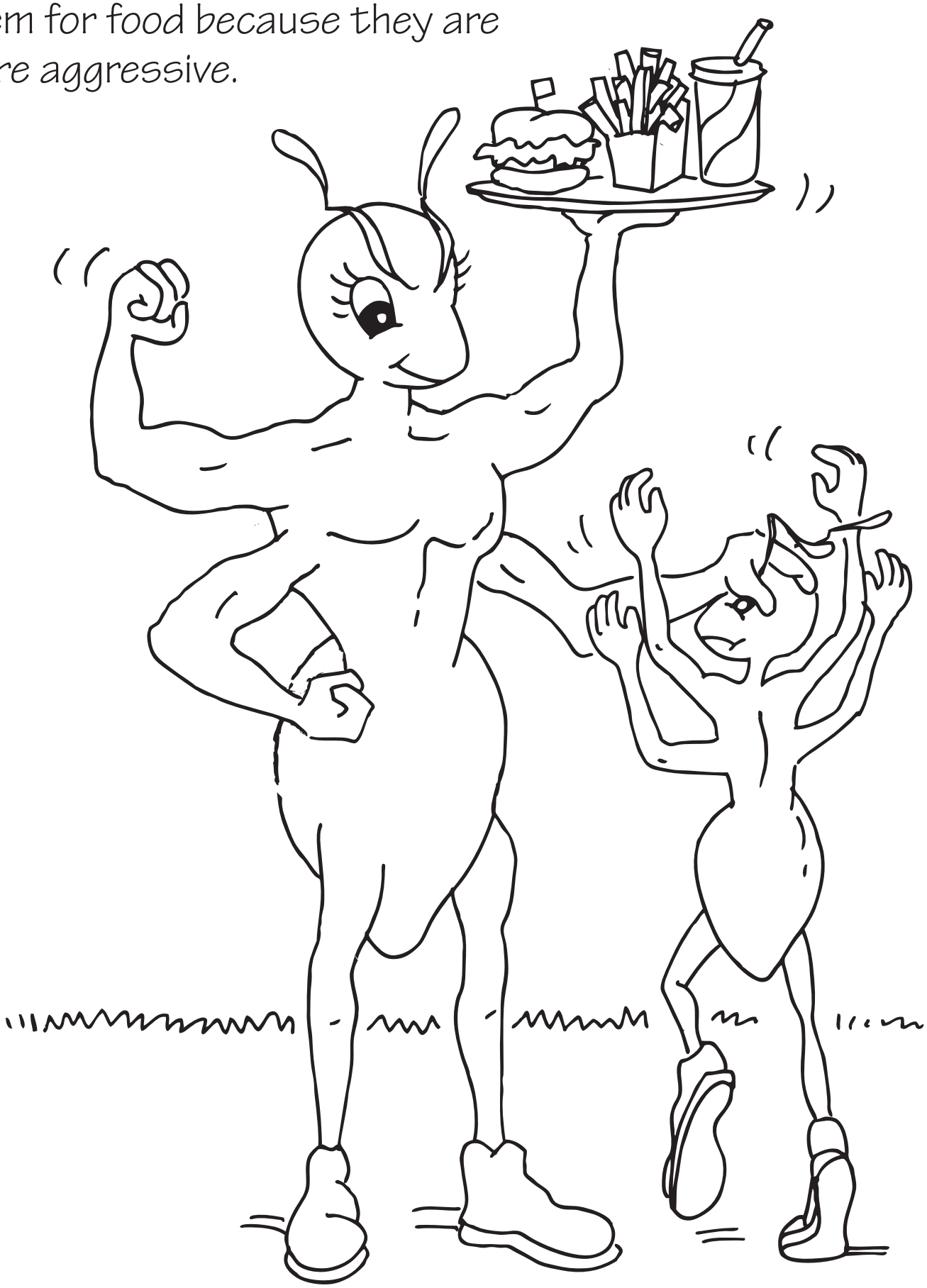


. . . construction sites,

. . . and, of course, picnics.



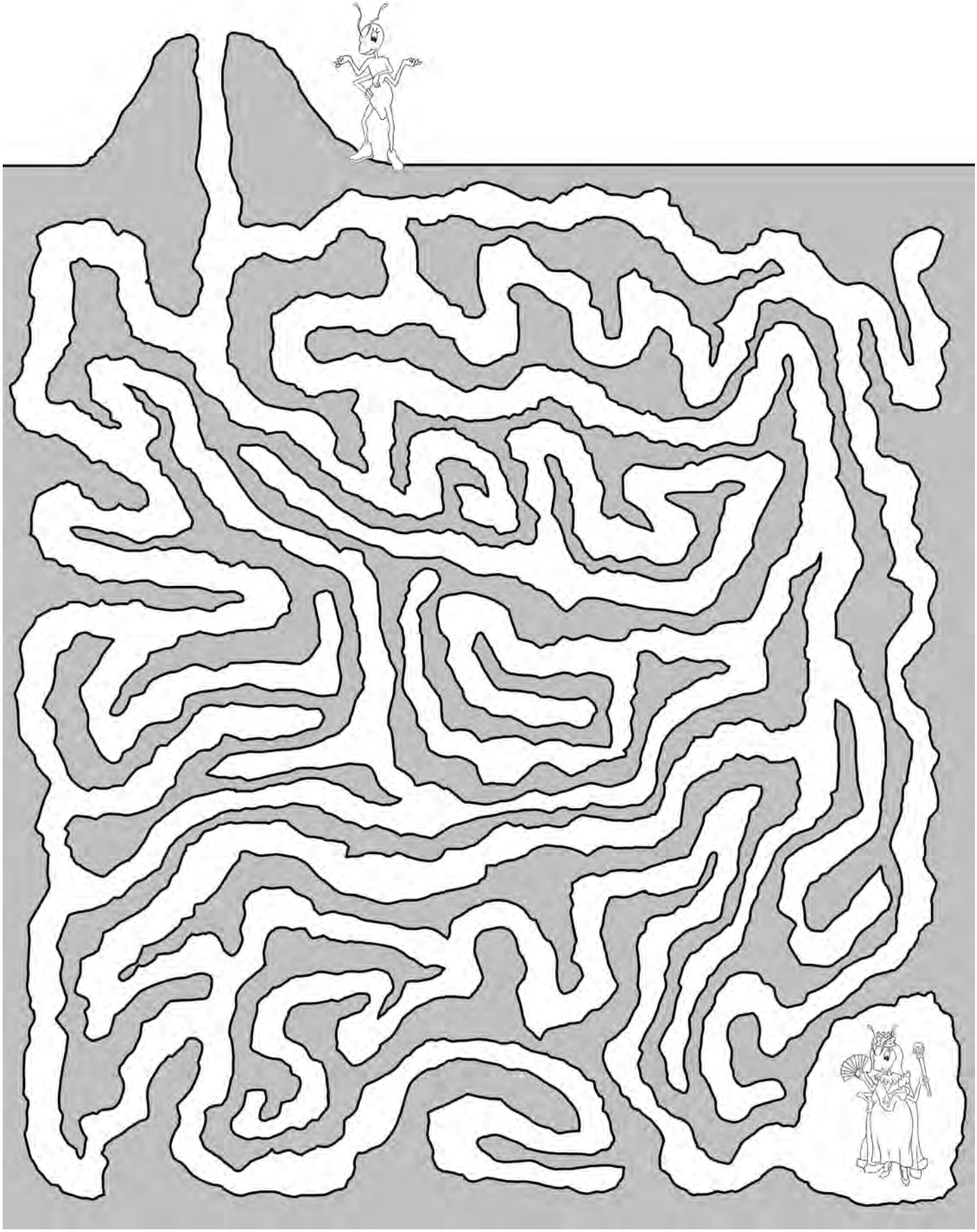
Native ants don't like imported fire ants. Fire ants can out compete them for food because they are more aggressive.



For a long time, the imported fire ant didn't have a lot of natural enemies in the United States. Other insects didn't like to eat them and the ants didn't get sick from diseases very often.

They do now! Natural enemies from the ant's South American home are now here. From flies that make the ant's head fall off to pathogens that make ants sick, we now have help controlling imported fire ants.

"Help me find my way to the queen!"



M	H	B	C	K	S	O	U	T	H	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	U	Z
A	F	O	O	D	N	L	N	J	Q	X	S	D	V	O	X	Y	G	L
K	S	J	N	I	F	M	O	I	K	D	A	N	G	E	R	O	U	S
P	F	Y	S	W	P	H	E	R	O	M	O	N	E	S	Z	O	B	T
C	A	O	T	S	X	L	G	M	Y	I	K	R	Q	J	D	G	W	H
I	Q	N	R	V	G	W	A	Q	J	M	P	D	A	I	C	N	O	S
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C	E	Z	C	K	G	D	B	L	G	O	K	Z	C	O	N	E	N	M
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G	N	P	I	U	X	G	R	K	V	T	O	P	D	A	I	O	W	N
O	H	K	O	A	S	D	O	R	J	E	F	U	E	E	N	C	D	I
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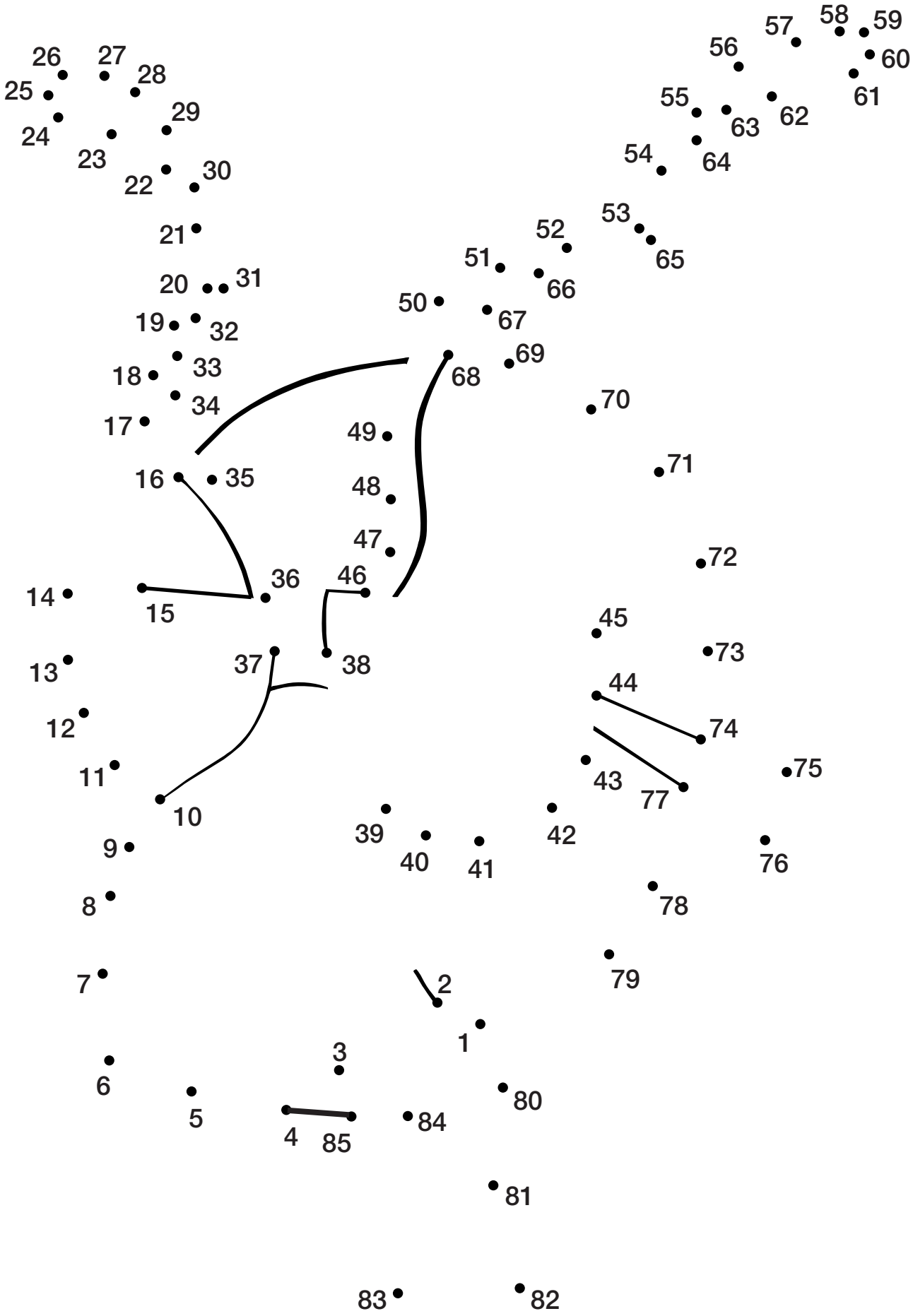
S	P	A	L	B	R	S	C	I	A	P	L	J	W	D	Q	I	N	S

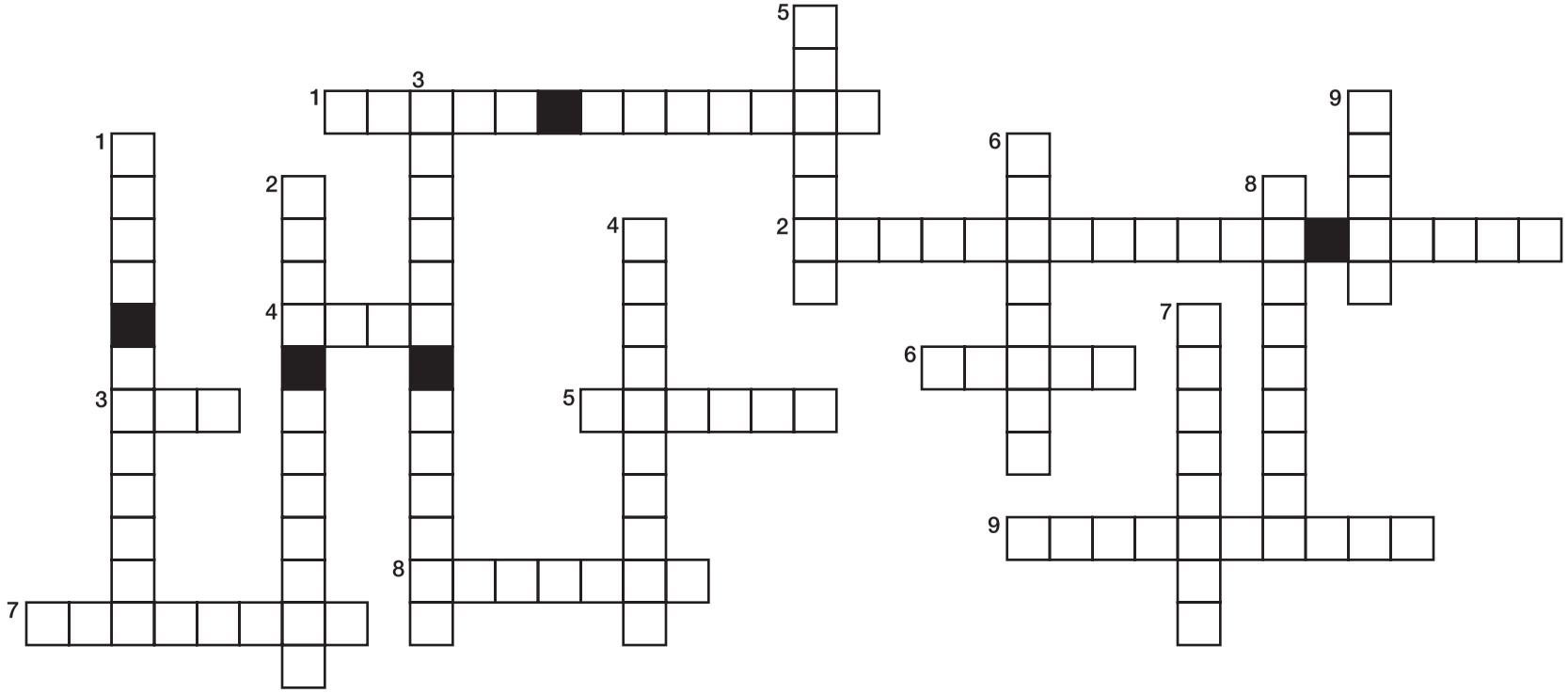
FIND THESE WORDS HIDDEN ABOVE:

Accidental
Aggressive
Ants
Anteaters
Construction
Sites
Dangerous
Enemies
Food
Fire
Forager
Golf Courses
Imported
Mound
Nurse
Pheromones
Picnics
Playgrounds
Queen
Red
Reserve
South
America
United States

CONNECT THE DOTS



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

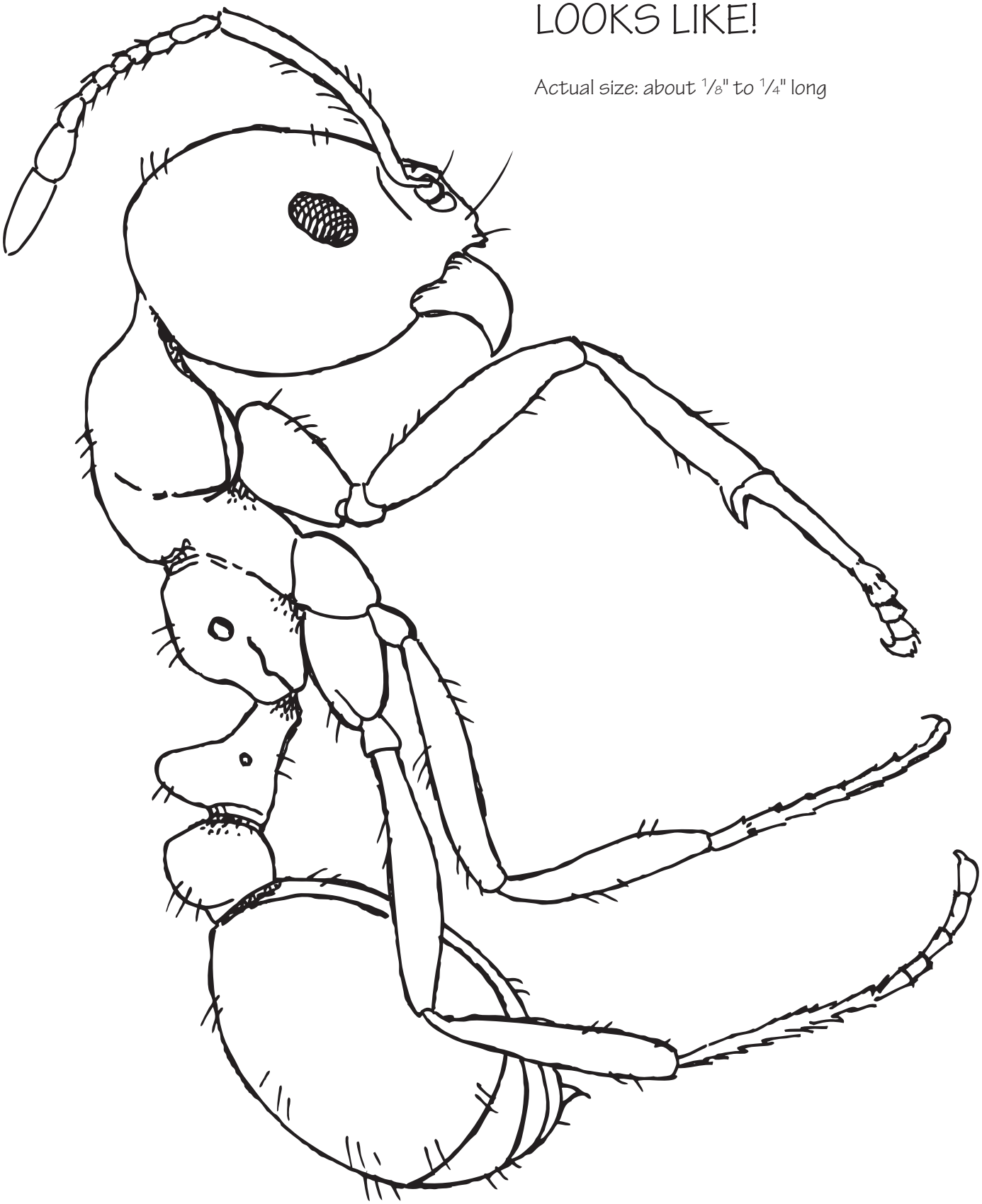
1. Imported fire ants come from _____.
2. Places fire ants like or where things are built.
3. Color of fire ants.
4. Fire ants out compete other ants for _____.
5. Fire ants live in _____.
6. Fire ant that controls the colony.
7. Fire ants that make tunnels and guard the mound.
8. Fire ants have no _____.
9. Fire ants are more _____ than other ants.

DOWN

1. Places fire ants like or where kids play.
2. Places fire ants like or where a certain sport is played.
3. Imported fire ants have settled in the _____.
4. Scents the queen releases to control other ants.
5. Places fire ants like or when people eat outdoors.
6. Fire ants that gather food.
7. Fire ants came here on a ship, but it was an _____.
8. Animals that eat ants.
9. Type of fire ant that cares for the queen, larvae, and pupae.

THIS IS WHAT A REAL IMPORTED FIRE ANT LOOKS LIKE!

Actual size: about 1/8" to 1/4" long



SKETCH YOUR FIRE ANT

What do you like about ants?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

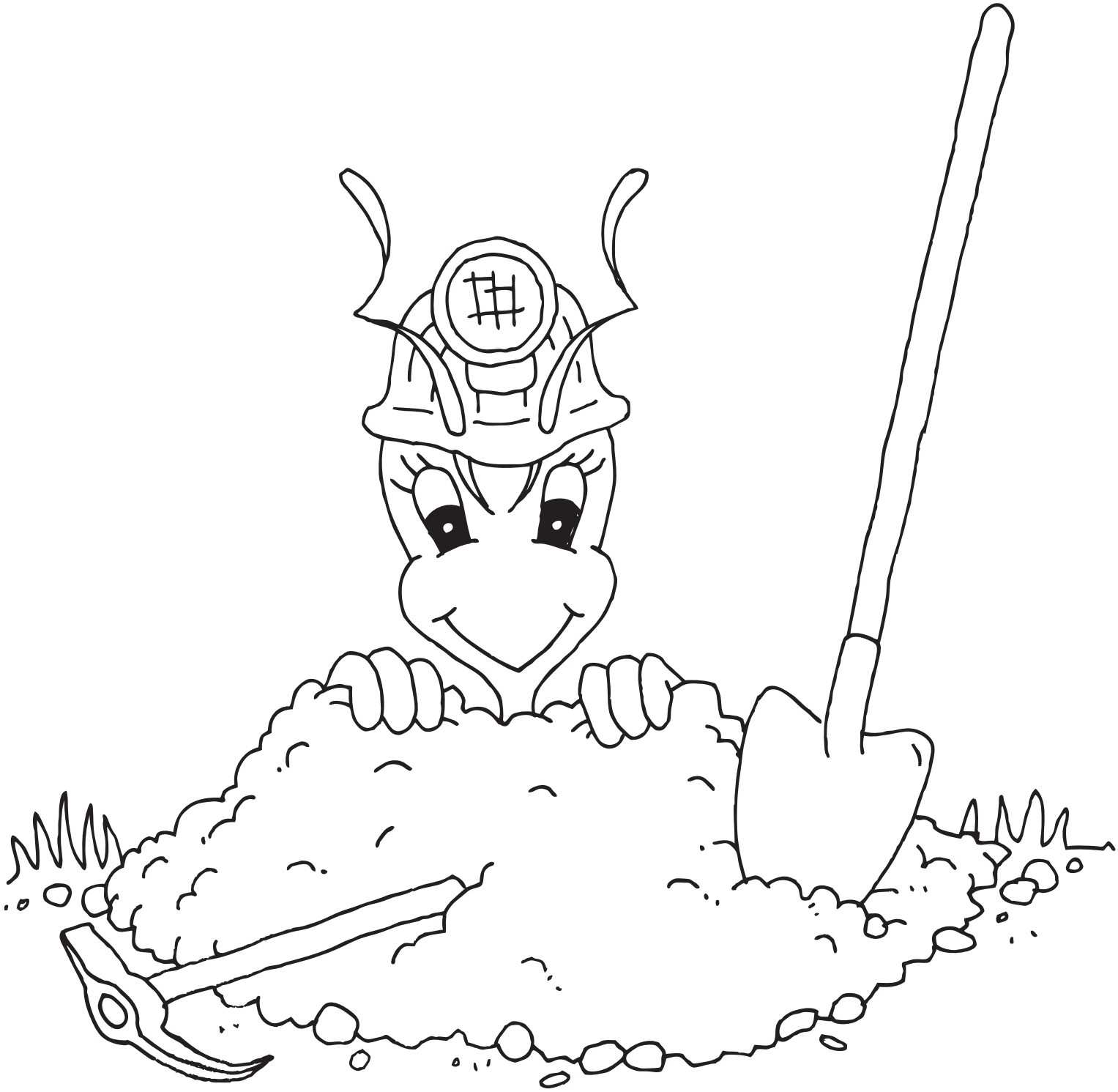
Accidental - an unintentional and unfortunate happening, something that happens unexpectedly, chance, fortune.
Aggressive - using daring or forceful methods, vigorously energetic.
Ant - any of a family of colonial hymenopterous insects, that live in highly organized colonies, various castes performing special duties.
Colony - a group of like organisms living or growing in close association.
Compete - to strive for an objective (a prize, position).
Construction - the act of constructing (building by putting together parts).
Dangerous - full of danger or risk, able or likely to cause injury.
Enemy - an opposing military force, one seeking to injure, overthrow or confound an opponent.
Forager - one who wanders or goes in search of food.
Imported - brought in from a foreign country or other source.
Imported fire ant - either of two mound building South American fire ants (*Solenopsis richteri* and *Solenopsis invicta*) introduced into the United States that are agricultural pests and can produce sting requiring medical attention.
Mound - slightly raised ground.
Native - originating naturally in a particular region.
Nurse - one that looks after, advises; a member of an insect society that belongs to the worker caste and cares for the young.
Pathogen - an agent that causes a disease.
Pheromone - any chemical substance released by an animal that influences the physiology or behavior of other members of the species.
Protect - to defend from attack, loss.
Queen - a female sovereign or monarch, a fertile ant, bee, termite, or wasp.
Release - to free from confinement, to let go.
Reserve - a military force held in readiness; something kept for future use.
Scent - a distinctive odor, smell.
Sites - a position or location, as of a town or building.
Species - a distinct sort or kind, composed of related individuals that are able to breed among themselves.
Workers - female fire ants that help their mother, the queen, in the colony.

Use your dictionary to find other unknown words in this book!

You now know

THE HIDDEN TRUTH

about imported fire ants



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