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Chilean Spring

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Chilean Spring

With my cold I have taken to herbal tea—
anise and mint—laced with honey to keep
it sweet. Tomorrow the thread where the honey
dripped will be a file of ants, grateful
for any morsel left behind. They promise
(given time) to keep my kitchen clean.
For me that's o.k.—a symbiotic
relationship to improve the planet
we share, crossing rivers, mountains, oceans,
one hymenopterous footfall at a time.

When he was young, my son captured ants,
imprisoned them in sand between panes of glass.
A few sweetened drops of water were enough
to keep them busy excavating tunnels—
a crosshatch of intersections—to make
everything ready for the advent
of the queen. She never came. They wouldn't
concede that fact until old age—how long
might that be for an ant?—one by one did
them in, and my son turned to other things.

Someone, I think Lear, said, "Ripeness is all."
I look at new leaves this spring. Their brightness
may not yet be everything, since they are
far from ripe, but they sing of hope, of life,
even an afterlife, and my heart keeps
pace with quick pulse each morning when I walk.
Thrushes respond. The sun sends white rays high
into the blue of dawn, and shadows find
a place to hide. I love light, the freshness
of clean air where echoes answer me
from where I may not see but know is there.

—Donnell Hunter

This poem won first place in the *BYU Studies* poetry contest for 2002.