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The Last Ant

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The Last Ant

— Emilio Iodice, Rome, Italy



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I watched it limp across my patio.

I wanted to help.

The ant was in search of sustenance, and anything to parch its withering torso as it dealt with the ravages of a hell hole of heat and sun on the island of Ponza.

I dropped a few beads of water in its path.

They evaporated.

Late July, in the Mediterranean, is a time of feasting for ants and other insects as they assault succulent grapes, figs, and flowers to drink their sweet juices and bring nourishment to their colonies.

Not this year.

The summer is a glowing inferno, burning the soil and drying anything in its path.



Courtesy, Alex Pearson

we need.

The ground is hot. Very hot.

Temperatures are over 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit).

The land seems to be dying and unable to raise itself to give us what



Plant and food at home.

Skins of tomatoes and eggplant are thick and hard and offer little in the way of nutrition.

A farmer told me he found dried out hives with thousands of shriveled bees strewn across the landscape.

I went to my garden.

I searched for bugs.

There were none.

The terrain was a griddle of fire.

Any miniscule thing that crawled over it would die.

Usually, endless armies of red and black ants would be cutting leaves and hauling seeds, parts of insects and whatever they could carry to take into their settlement to feed the queen and its thousands of inhabitants.



Courtesy, Al Jazeera English, CC BY-SA 2.0

Now their metropolis was tunneled deep underground into a lightless, subterranean cavern.

It was cool but without food.

The colossal excavation was to save the colony from the torrid temperatures.

Their warehouse of rations for the winter was gone.

They might survive the summer of 2022.

Would they and we make it through the freezing months ahead and the heat of next year?

Perhaps.

Soon we will know.



Emilio Iodice is Director Emeritus of Loyola University Chicago's Rome Center, Professor of Leadership, and author of "The Return of Mussolini: The Rise of Modern-Day Tyranny" and "Liberation." See iodicebooks.com.