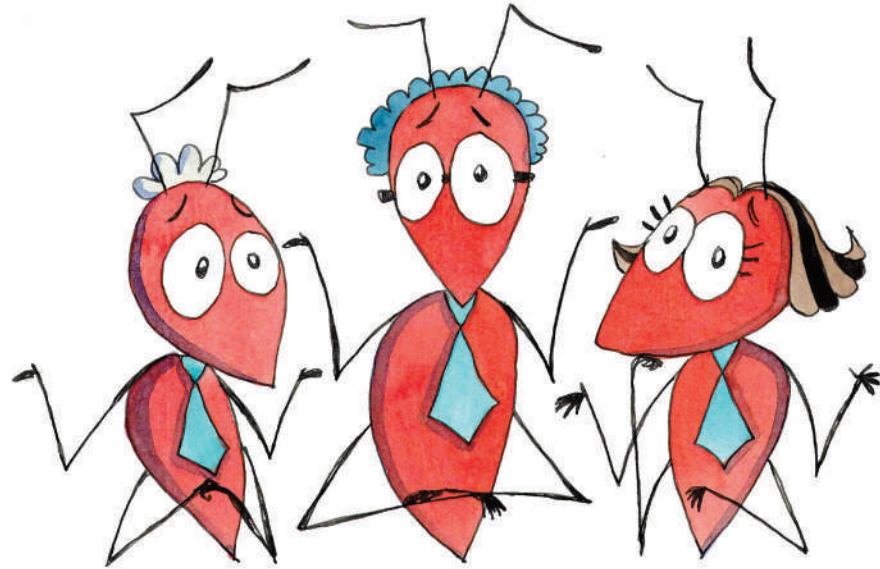


During his lifetime, Idries Shah published many hundreds of stories, drawn from the rich cultural heritage of Eastern lands. A great many of Shah's tales have their roots in his own homeland, Afghanistan. As with all great stories, they work on many levels — entertaining the listener, while imparting a teaching message, an element that is in itself of profound value.

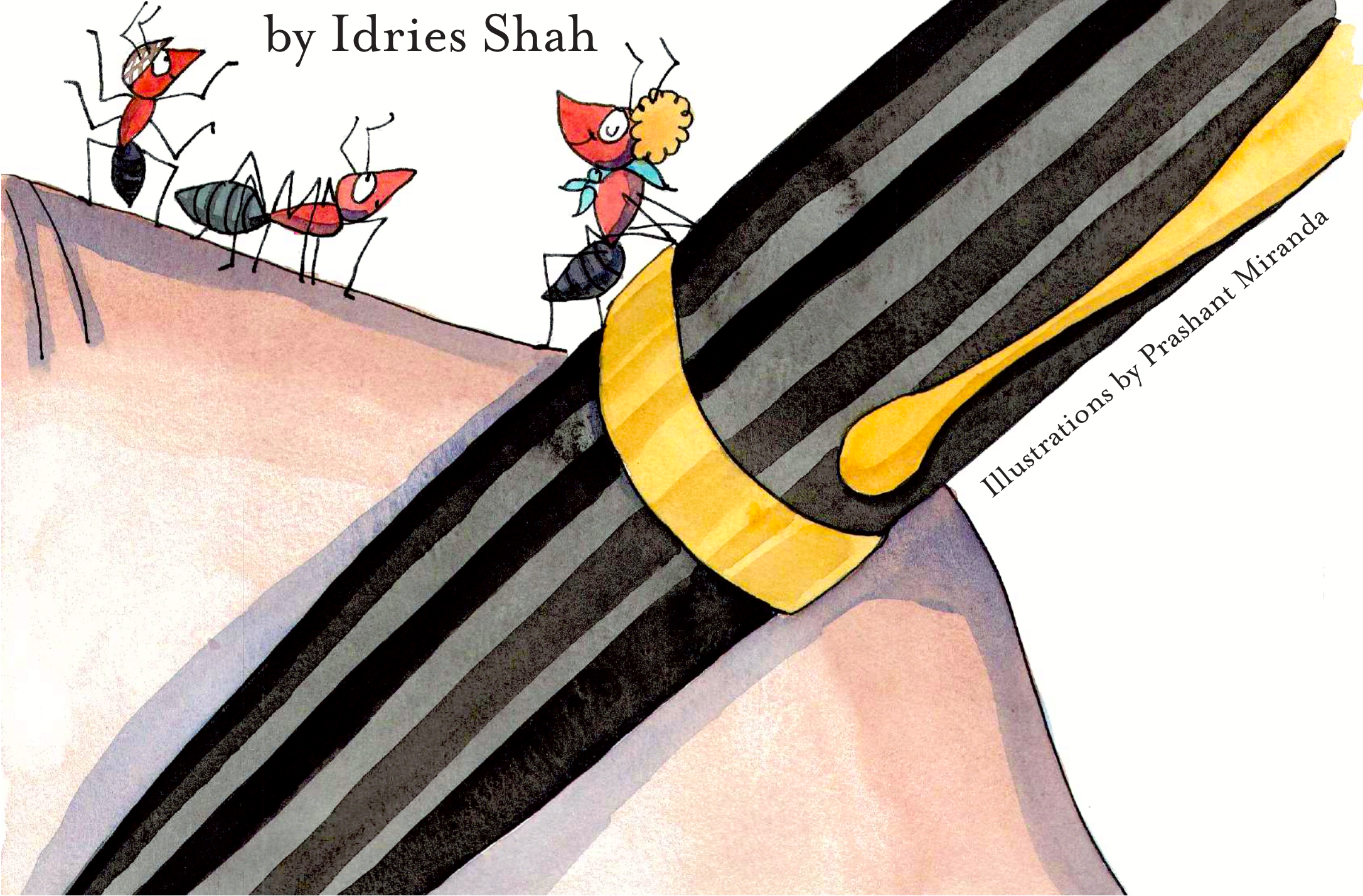
Shah used to say that a well-crafted tale is like a peach. Refreshing and tantalising to the senses, the delicious flesh is why we regard peaches so highly. But it is the stone that lies within the fruit that is the thing of real value — like the message of the story passed on by appreciating a piece of fruit's succulent flesh.

Beautifully illustrated, *The Ants and the Pen* has been presented by The Idries Shah Foundation as a cornerstone in an important charitable and cultural project. This series of illustrated children's books has been made available in the West, with all proceeds from the sales going to provide free editions of the same books for children in Afghanistan.



# The Ants and the Pen

by Idries Shah



THE ANTS AND THE PEN  
IDRIES SHAH

Illustrations by Prashant Miranda





# The Ants and the Pen



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Speak First and Lose  
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The Horrible Dib Dib  
The Fisherman's Neighbour  
The Magic Potion of Oinkink  
The Rich Man and the Monkey  
The Boy With No Voice and the Men Who Couldn't Hear  
The Tale of Melon City

*The Ants and the Pen*

BY IDRIES SHAH



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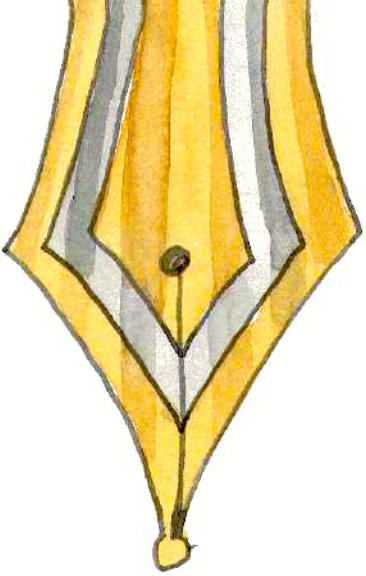
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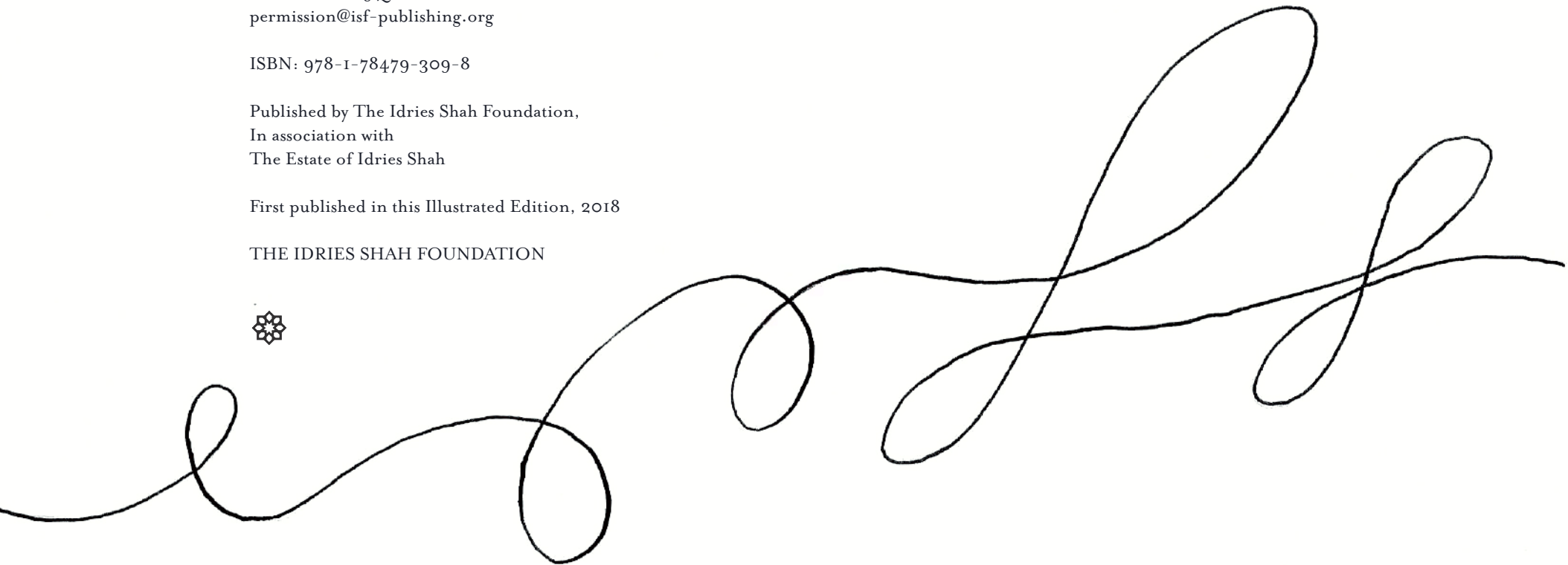
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THE IDRIES SHAH FOUNDATION



Dedicated to the sense of imagination which lives within us all.

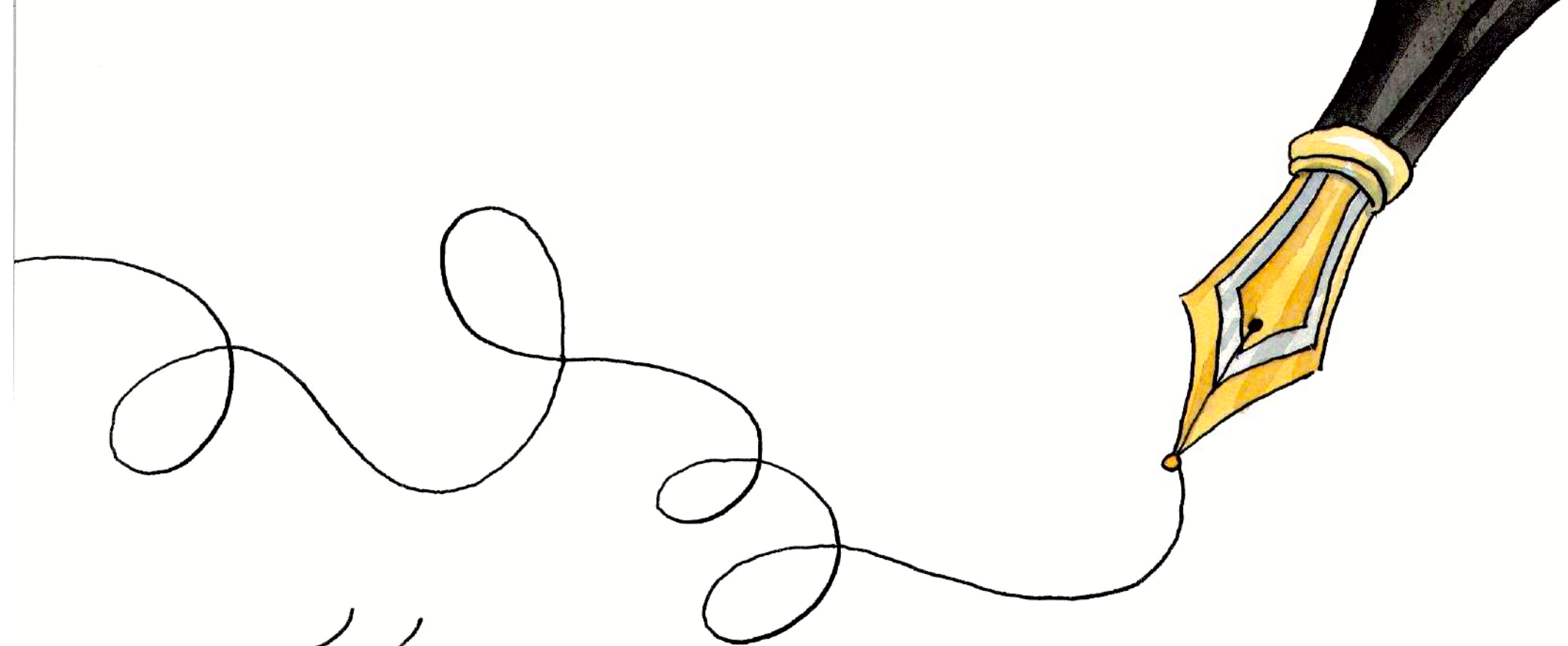


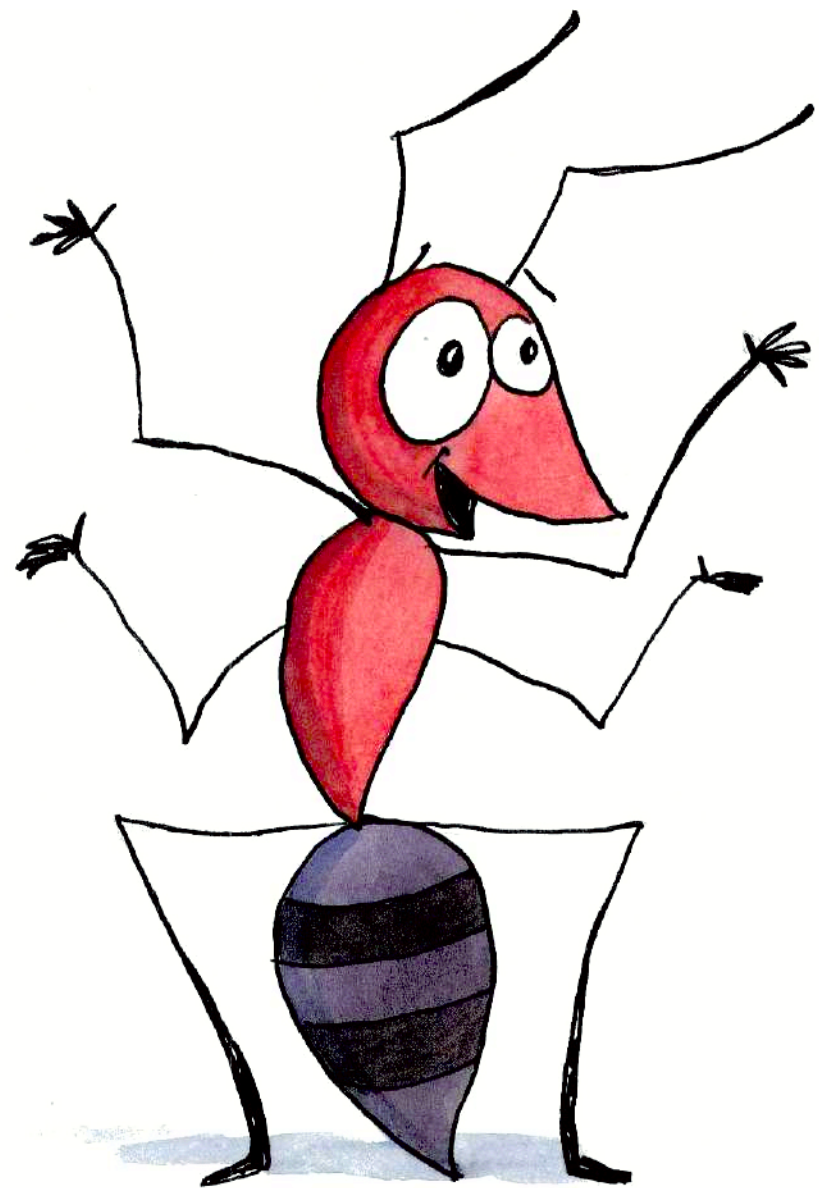


One day a lone ant strayed across a piece of paper



and saw a pen writing in fine, black strokes.

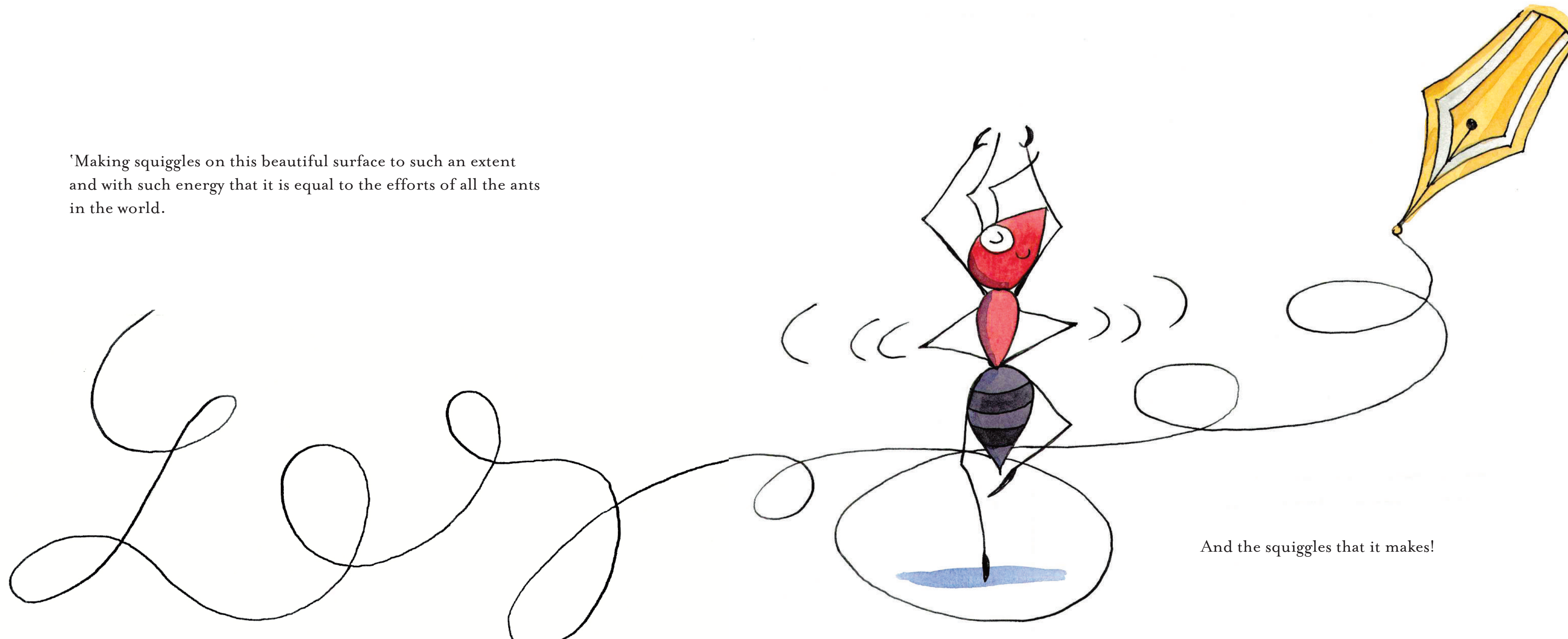




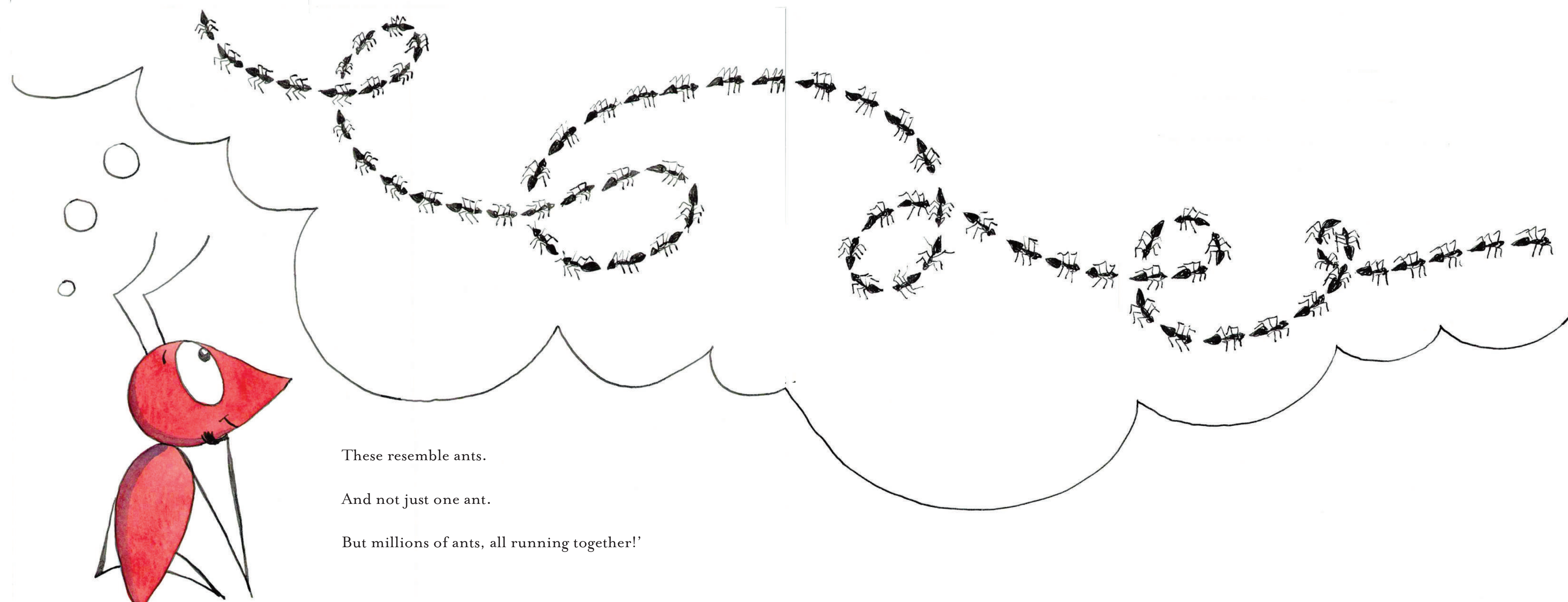
'This remarkable thing, with a life of its own,' cried the ant.



'Making squiggles on this beautiful surface to such an extent  
and with such energy that it is equal to the efforts of all the ants  
in the world.



And the squiggles that it makes!



These resemble ants.

And not just one ant.

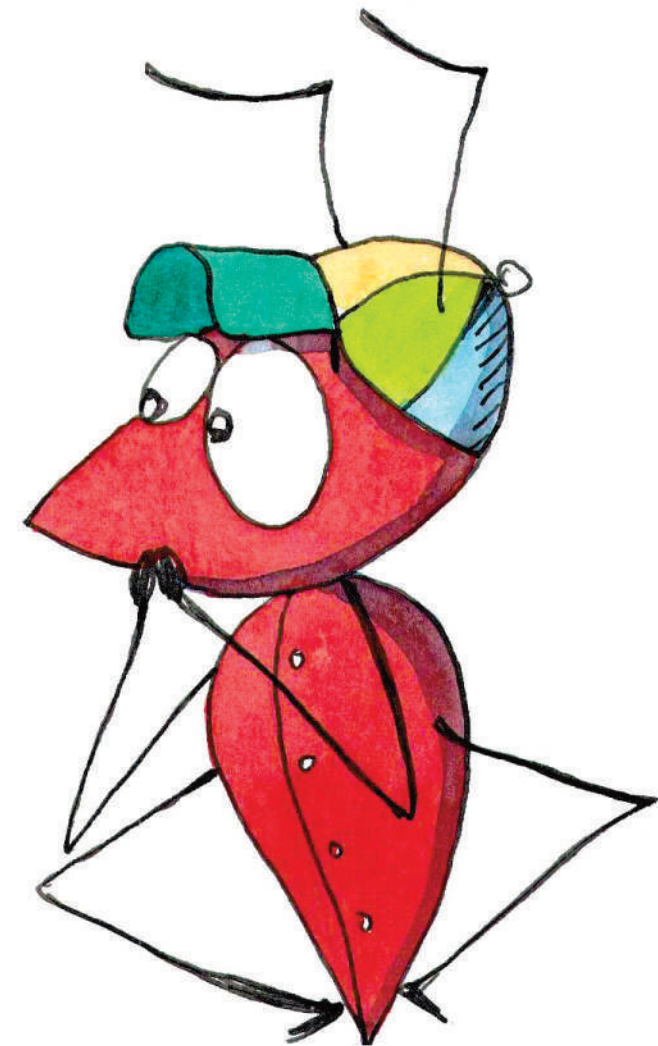
But millions of ants, all running together!



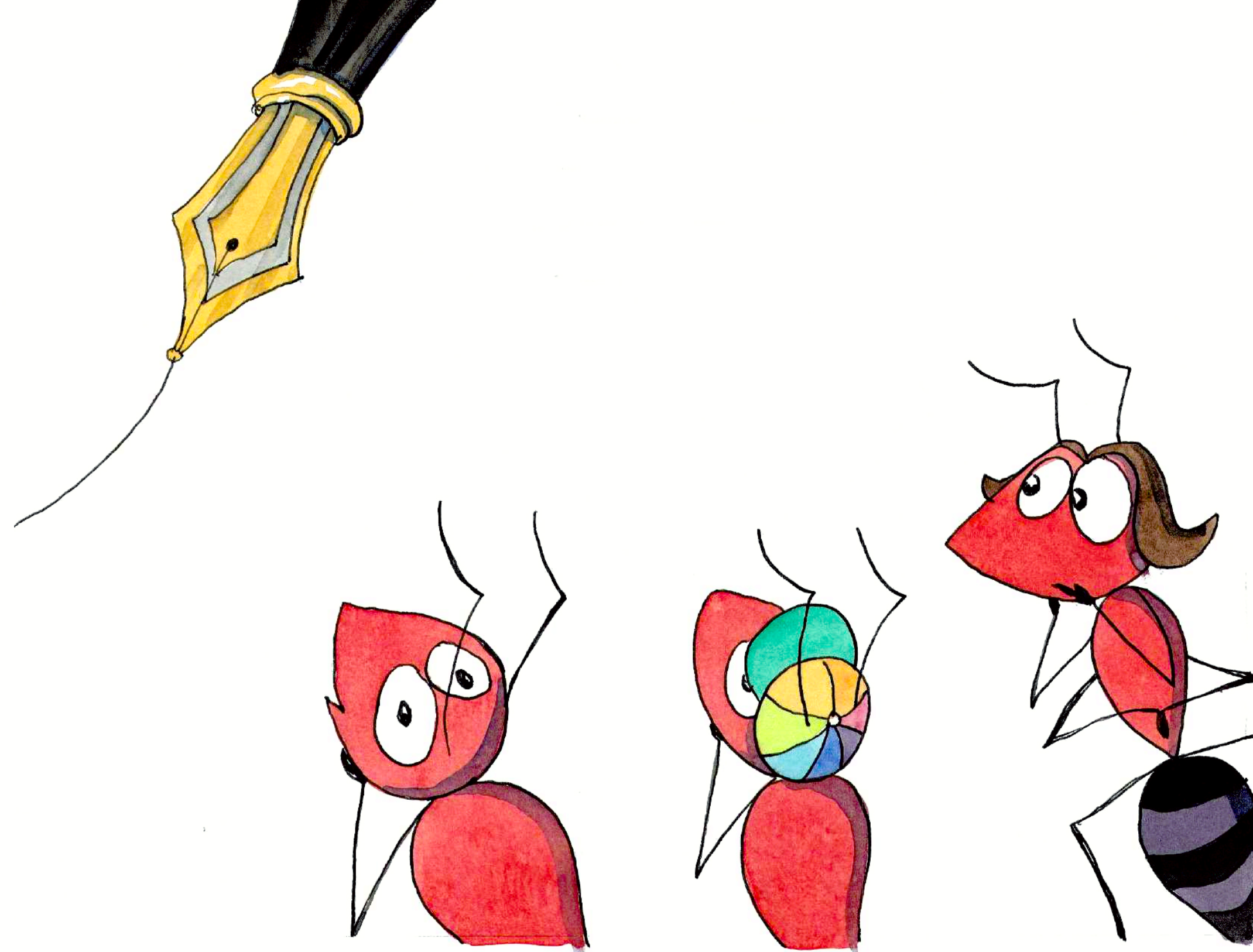
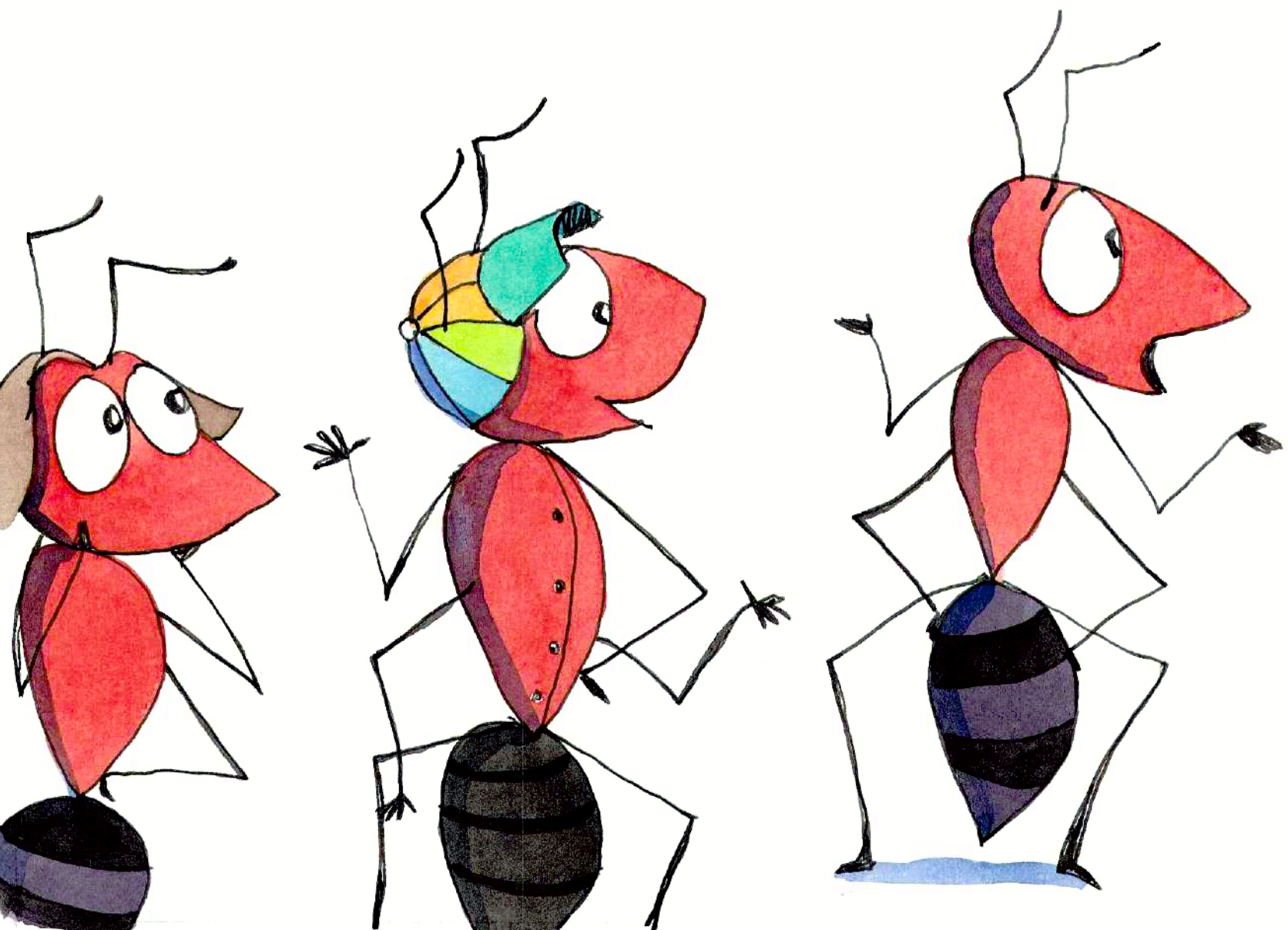
And the little ant was so excited that he rushed off to spread the news,



passing on his ideas to the first ant that he saw.



This second ant was just as thrilled by the squiggles and congratulated the bearer of the news for his discovery and for his powers of observation.

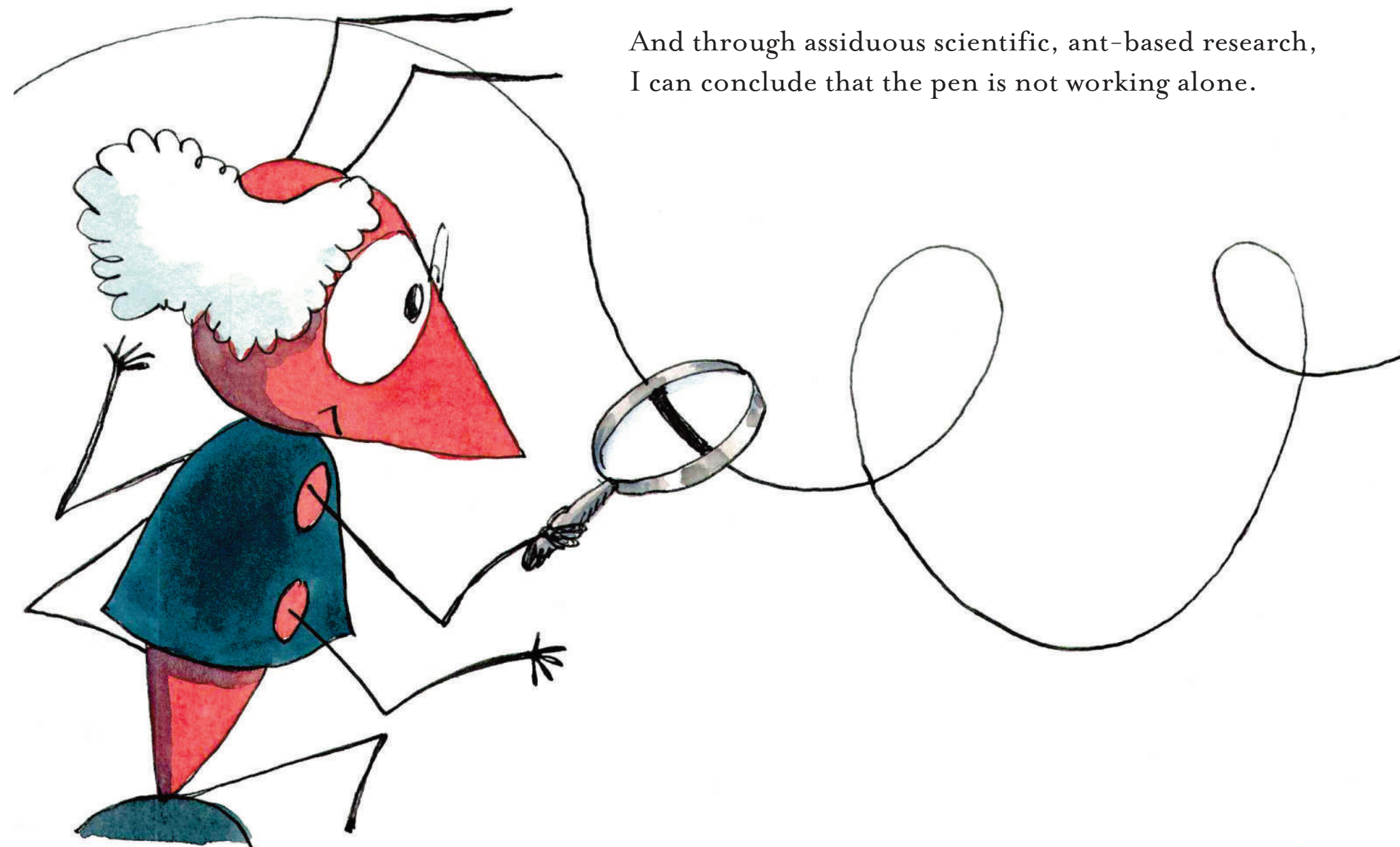






But a third ant wasn't so impressed, saying:

'I am afraid that you have allowed your emotions to run away with you, rather than giving the matter serious scientific ant thought.'



Luckily, now that you've drawn my attention to all these squiggles, I have also been studying the strange object that is making them.

And through assiduous scientific, ant-based research, I can conclude that the pen is not working alone.

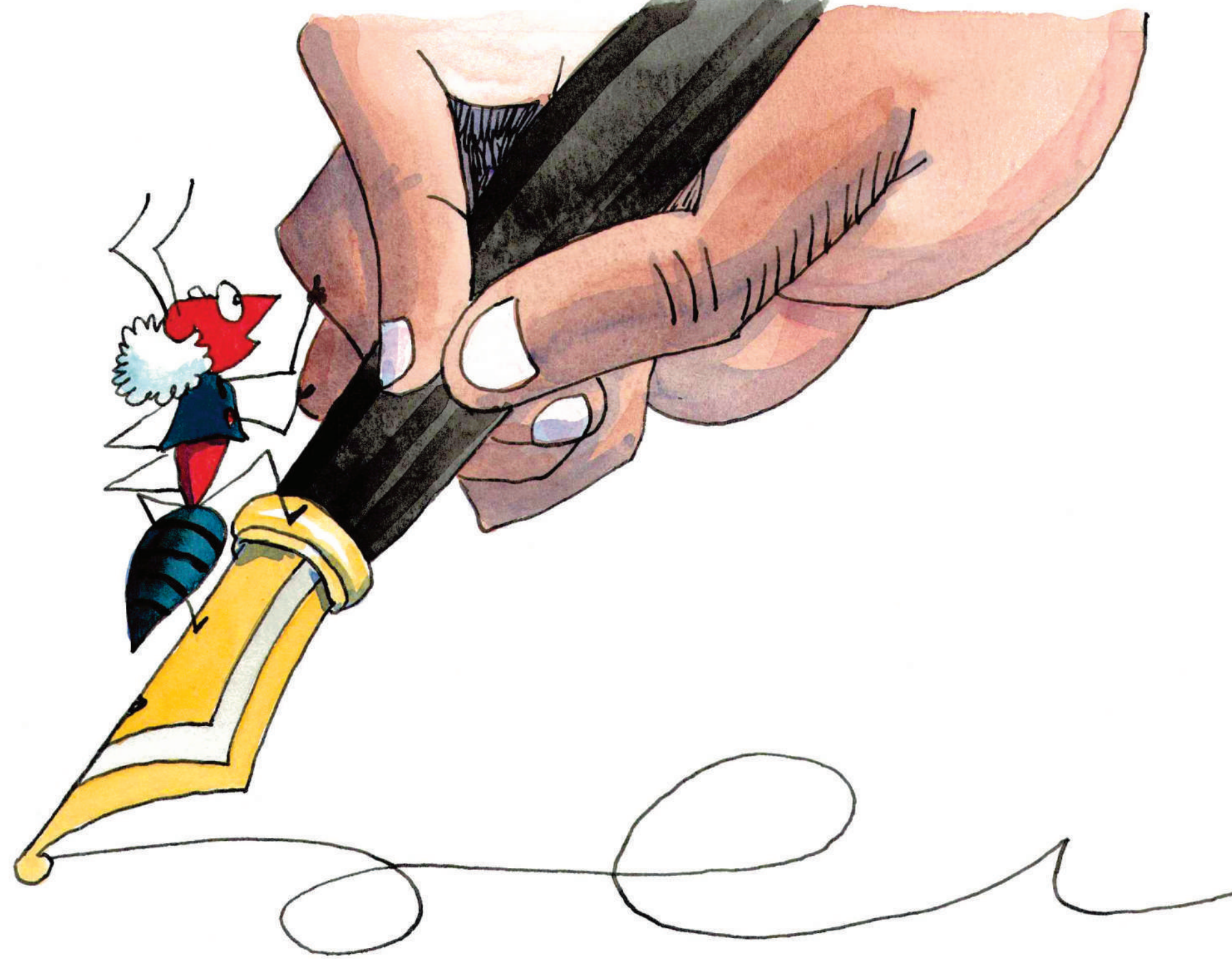


Didn't you notice that the pen is actually attached to  
and surrounded by all sorts of other things?

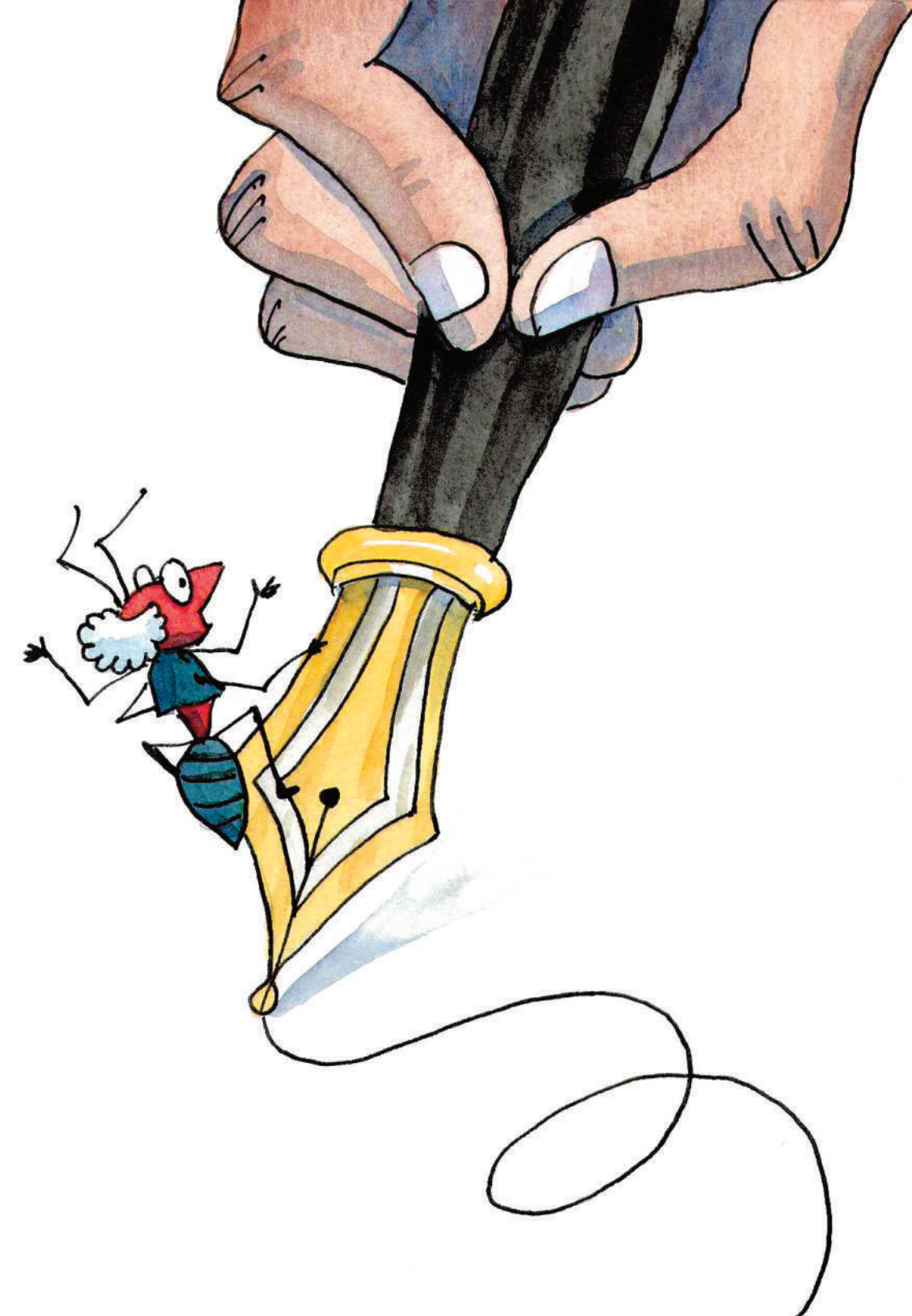
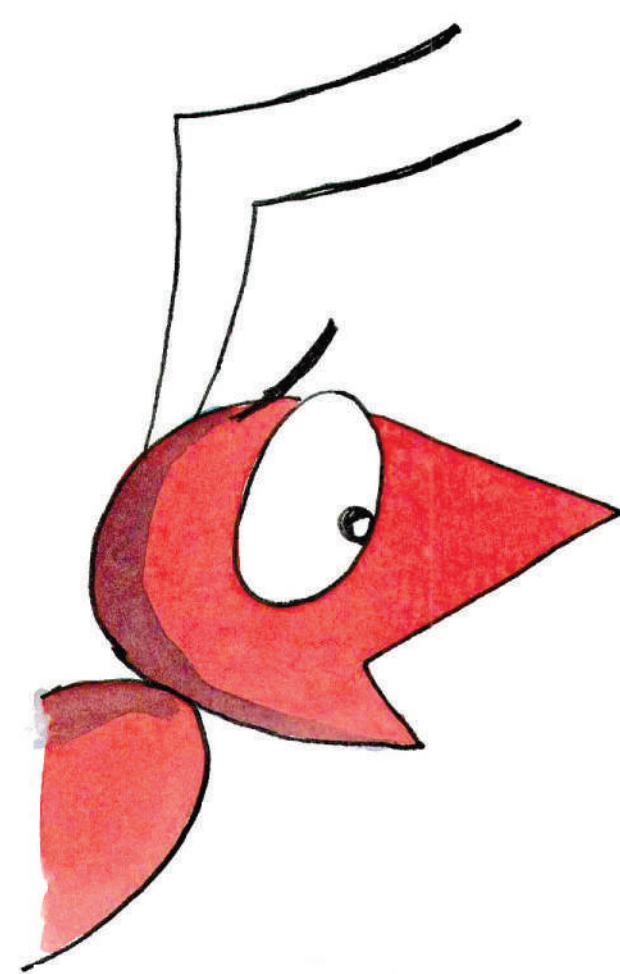




It is my scientific conclusion  
that these other objects are powering it.

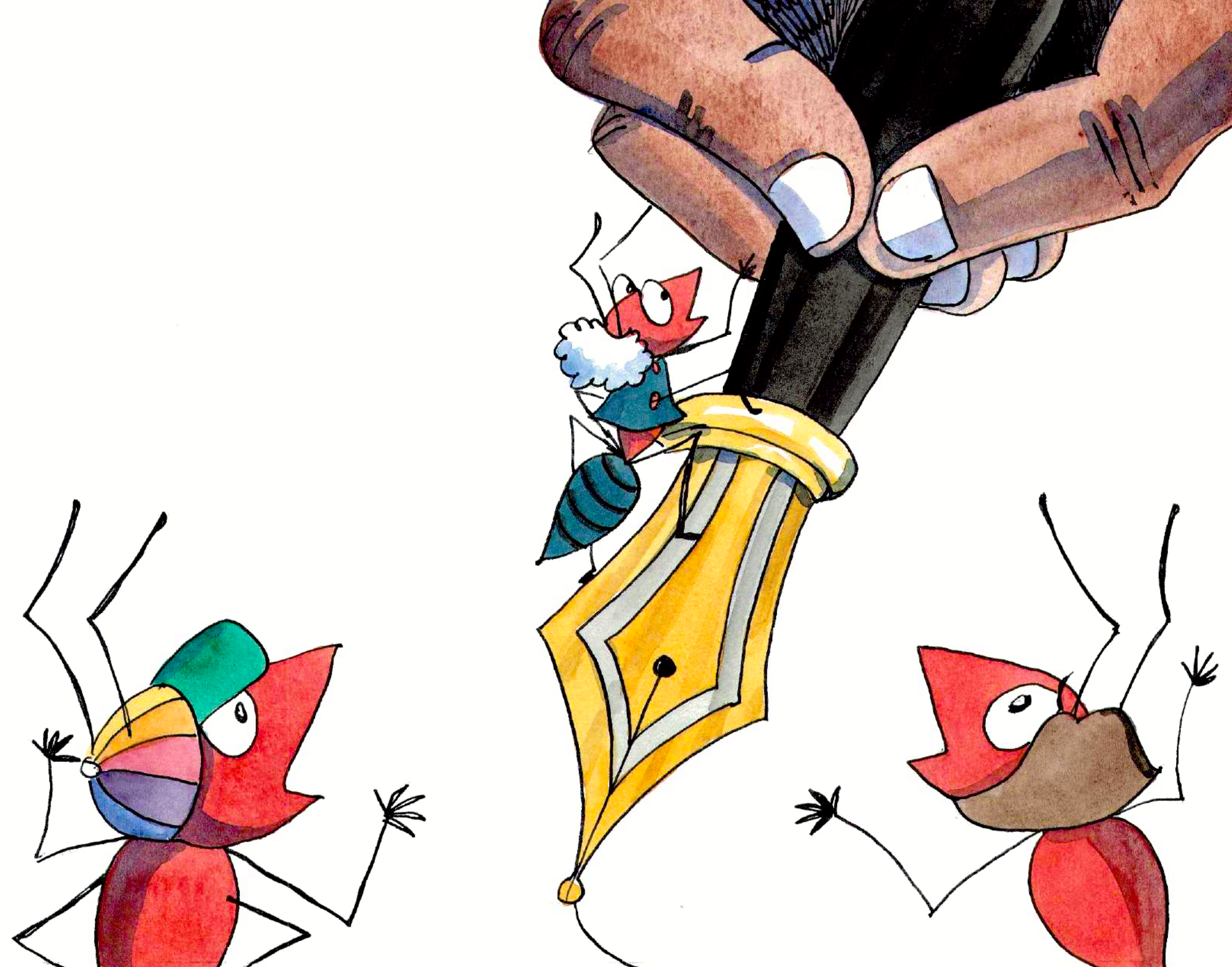


So whatever is supplying the power is responsible for these squiggles.'





And this is how the group of ants first discovered fingers.







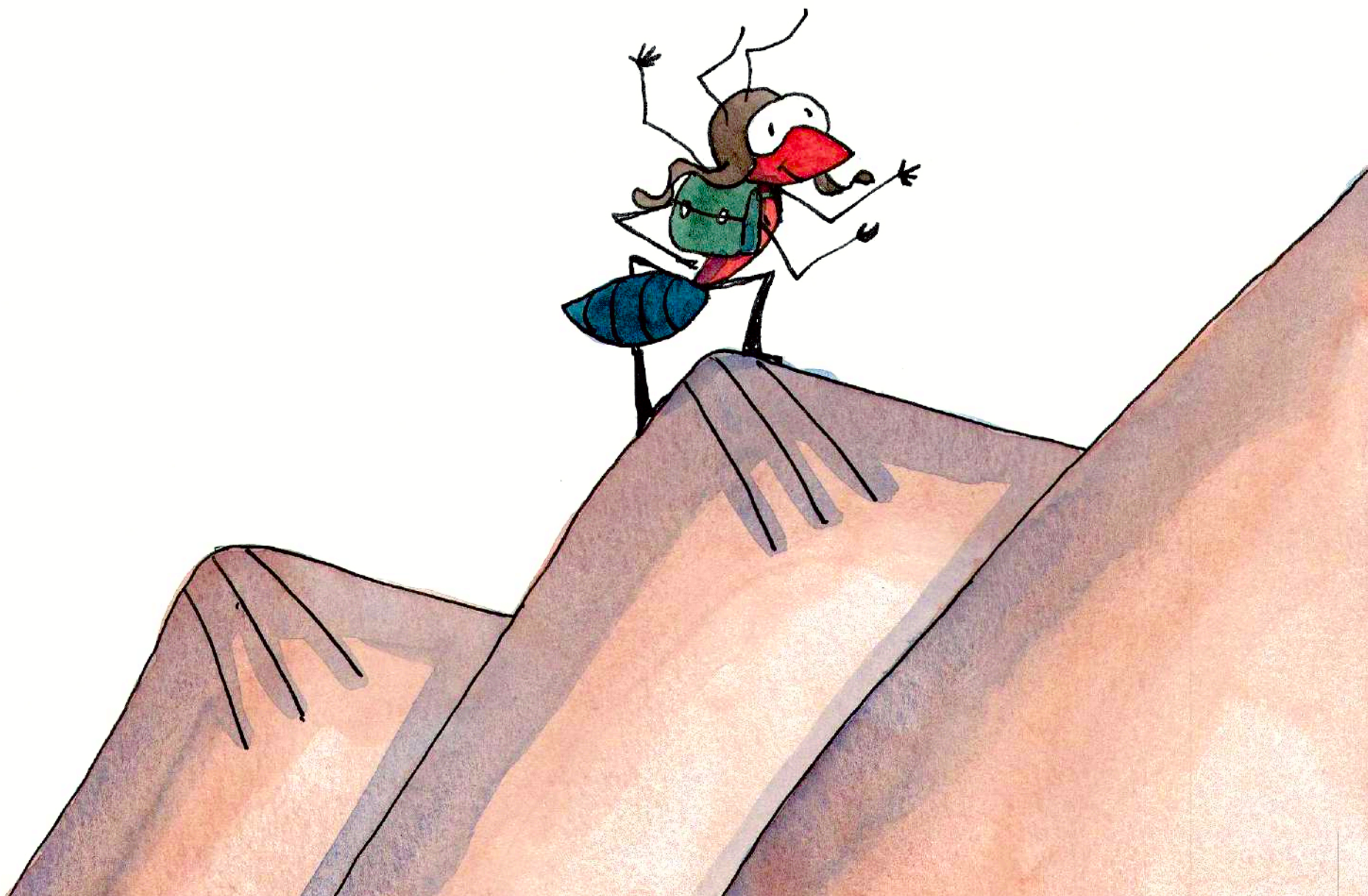
Scientific scrutiny is such that it wasn't long before another ant decided to extend the area of understanding.

And wanting to explore the fingers further, he scrambled all over them.

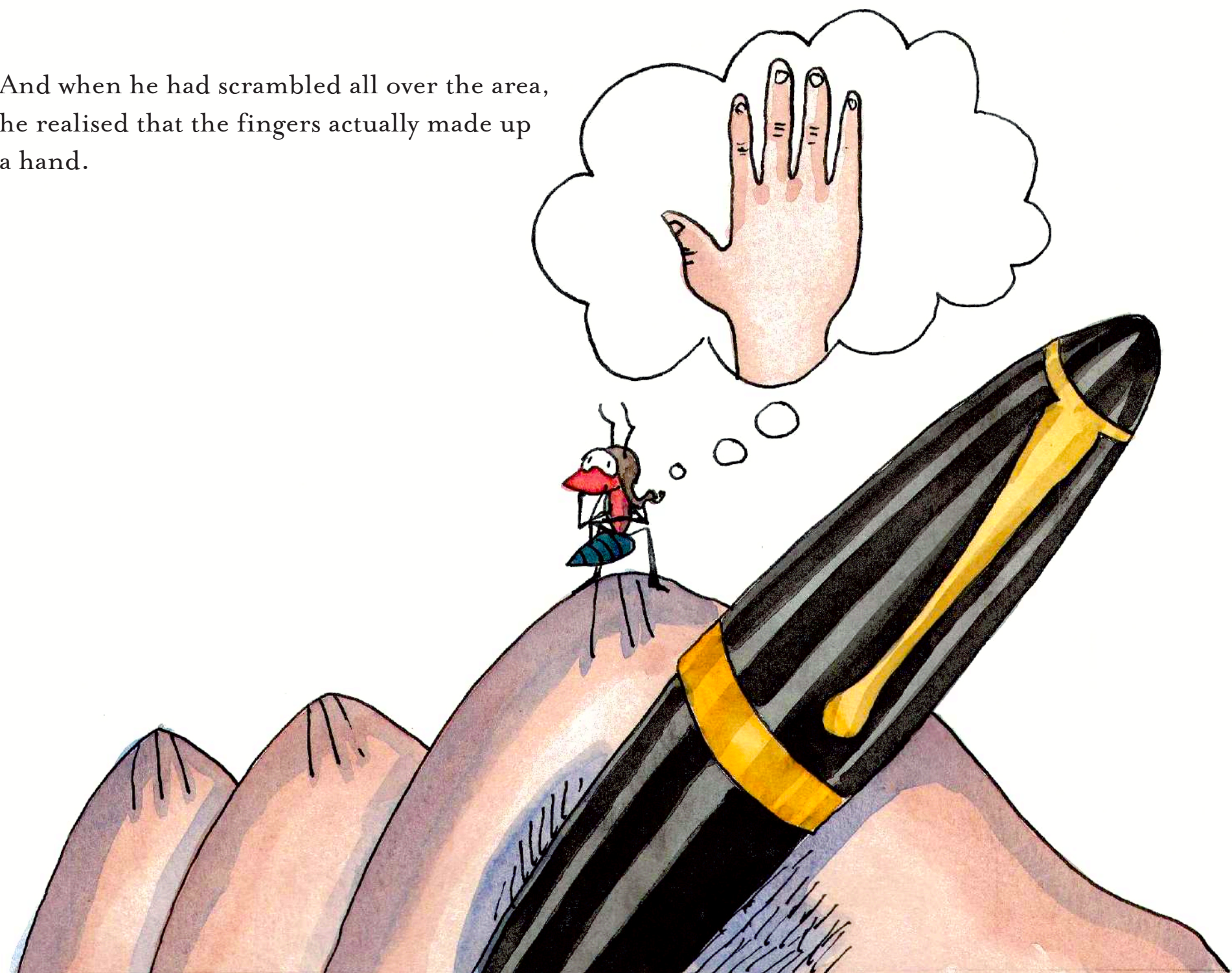




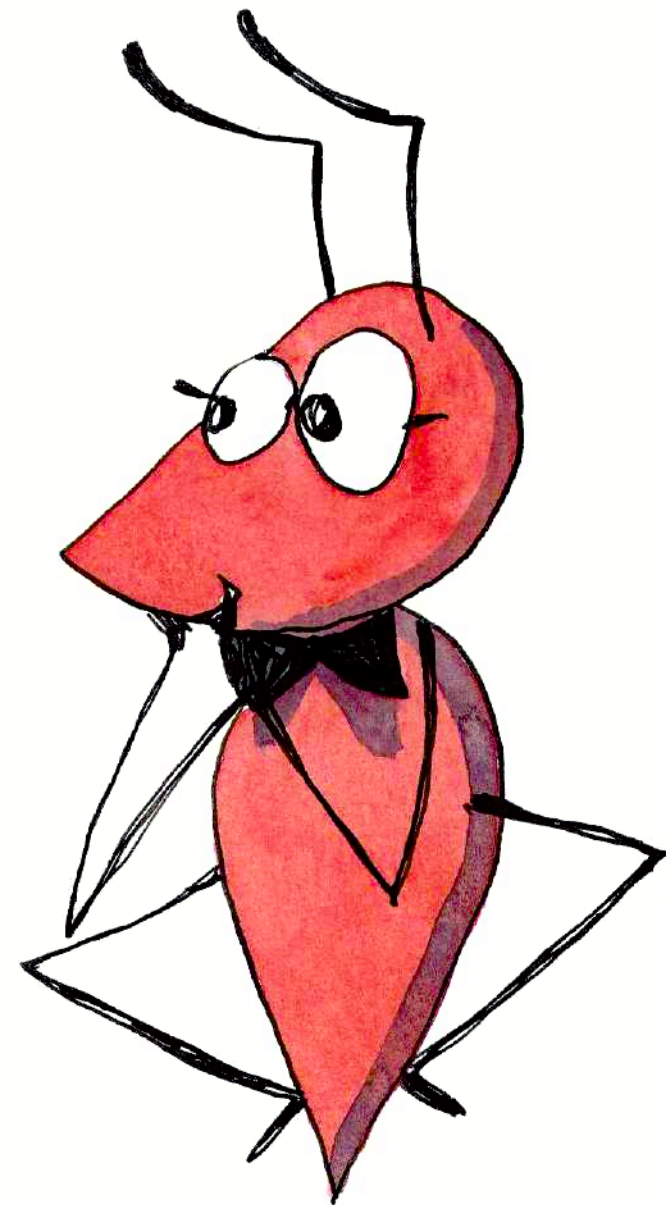
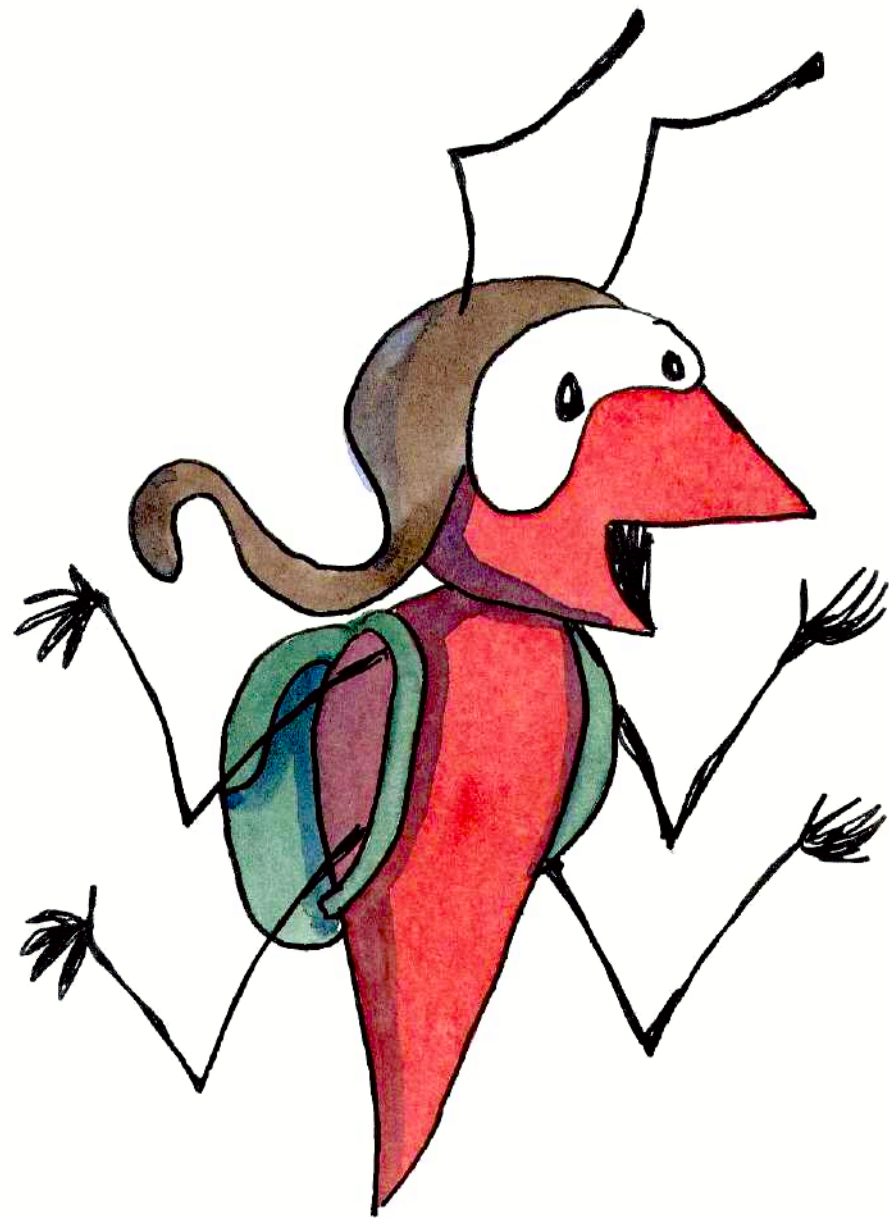
Because this is what exploring ants do.



And when he had scrambled all over the area,  
he realised that the fingers actually made up  
a hand.



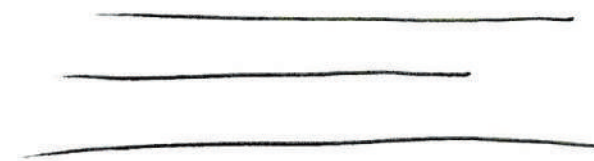




And realising this, he rushed off to spread the news.

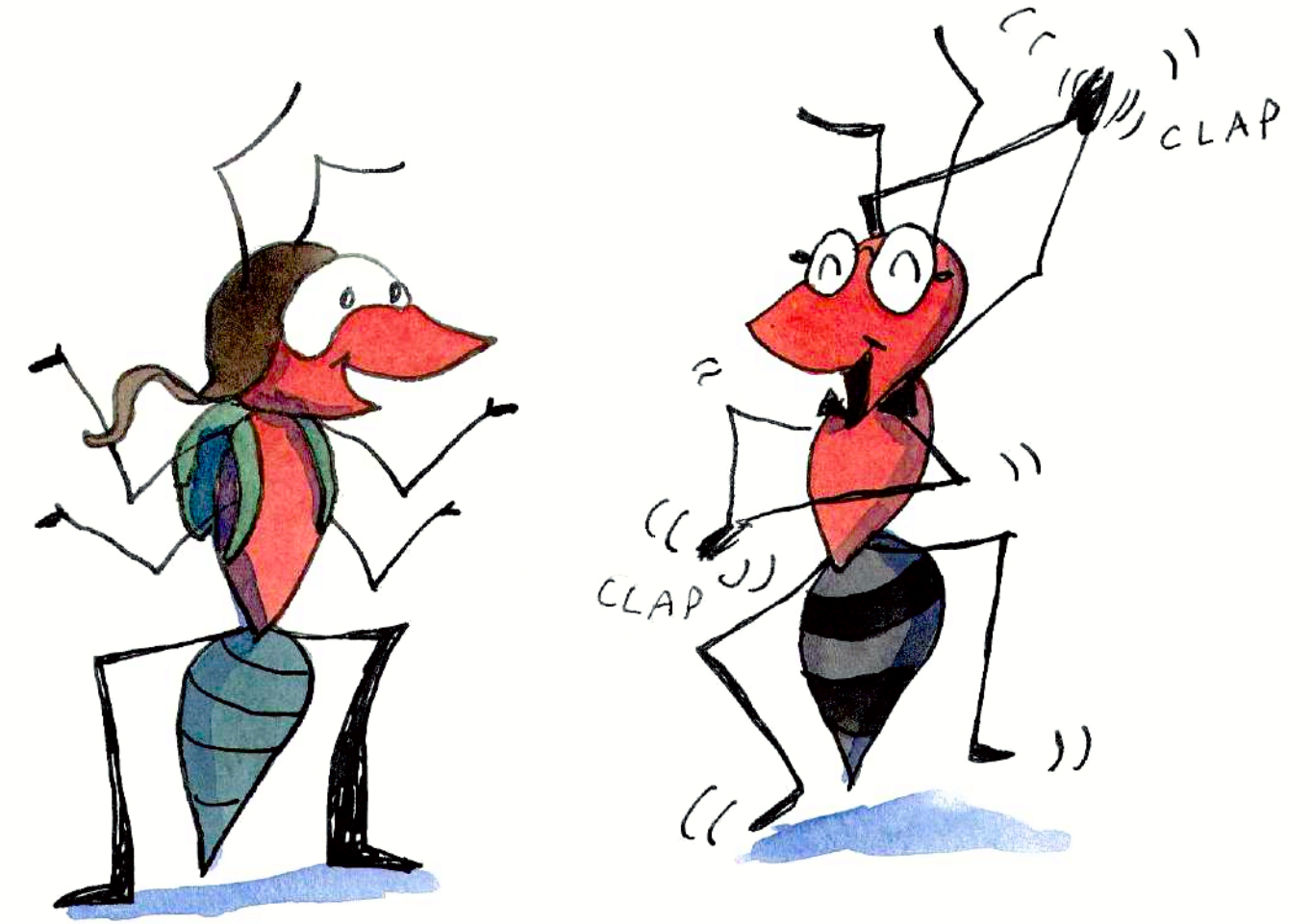


Passing on his ideas  
to the first ant that he saw.

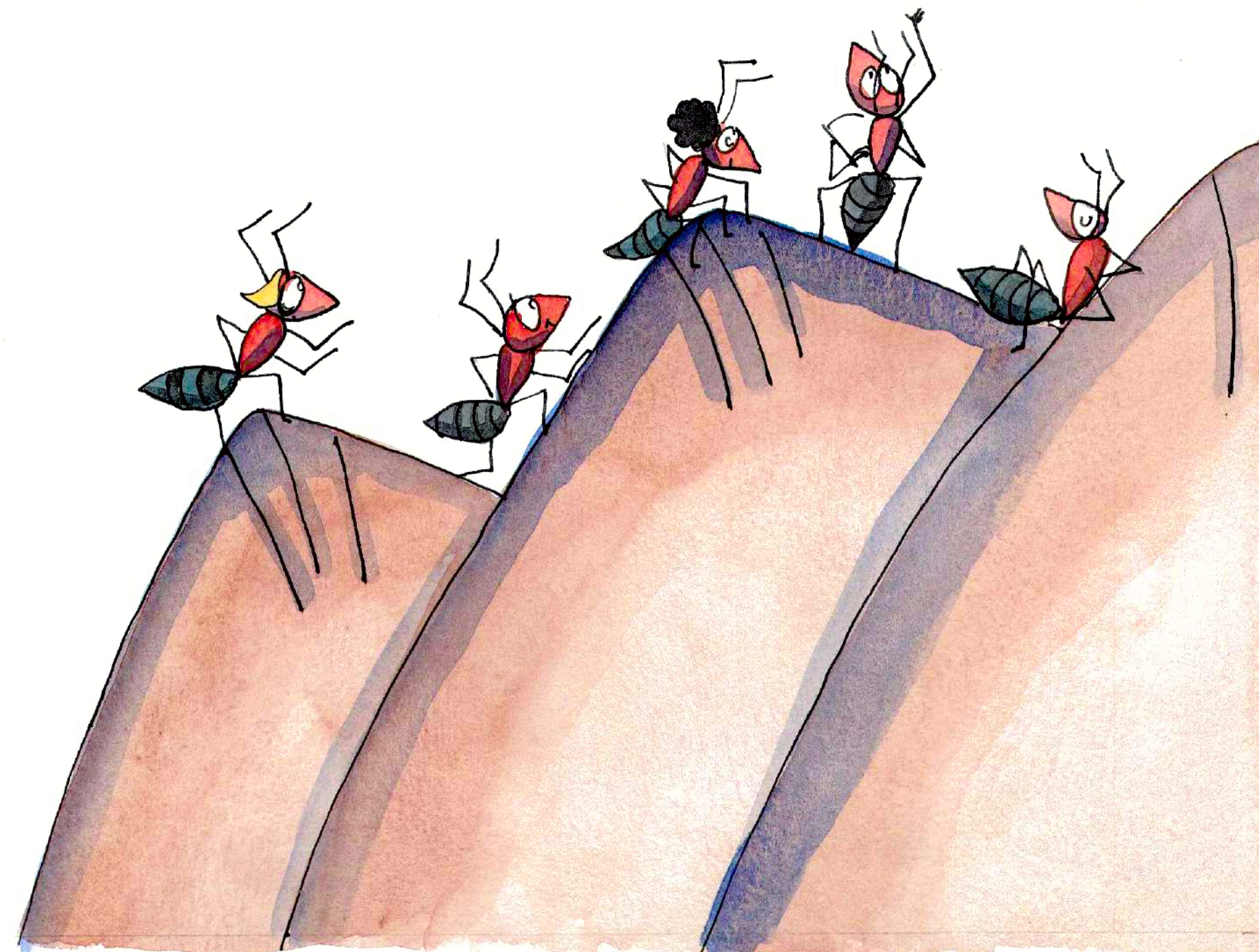




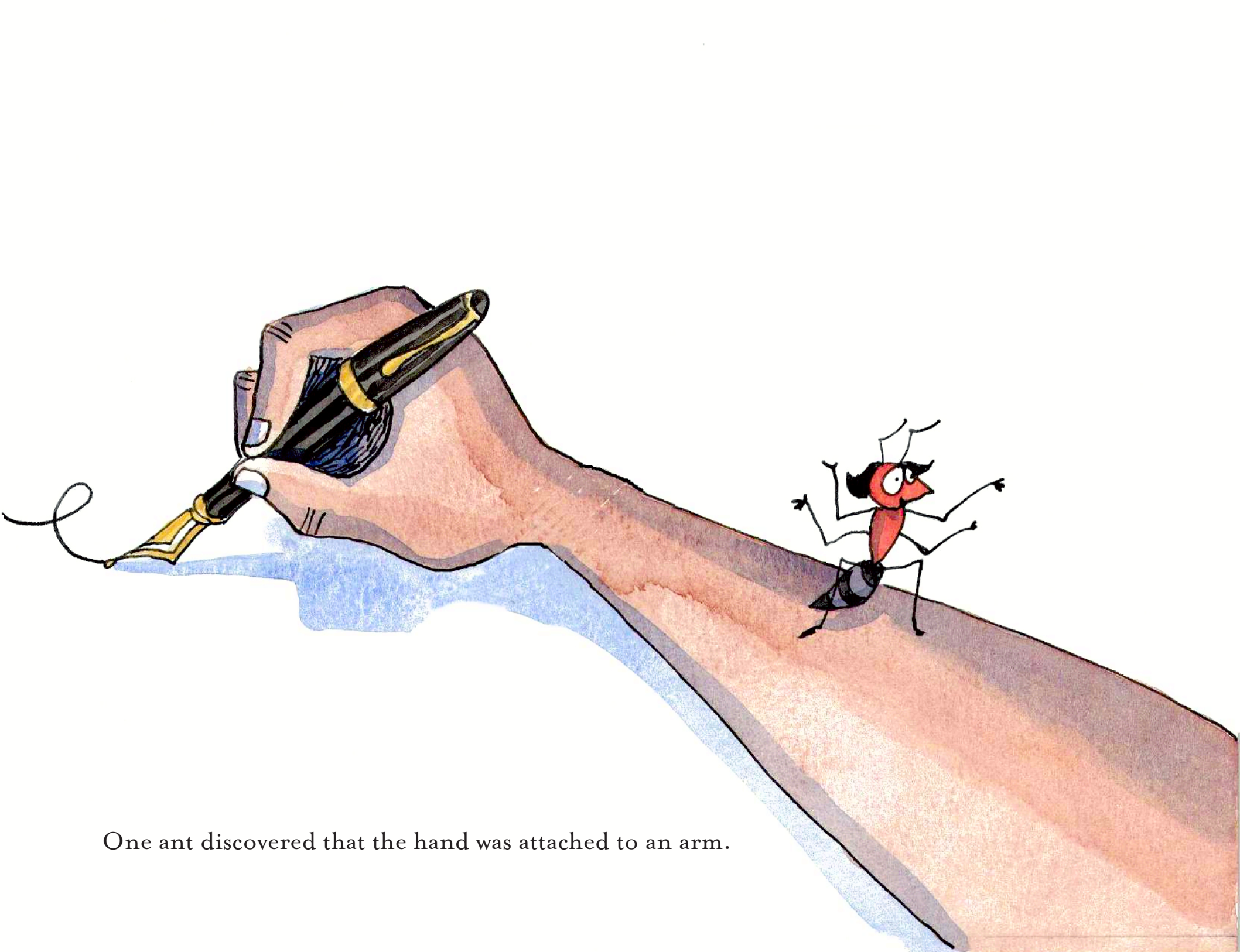
This latest ant was equally thrilled by the description of the hand, and congratulated the bearer of the news for his discovery and for his powers of ant observation.



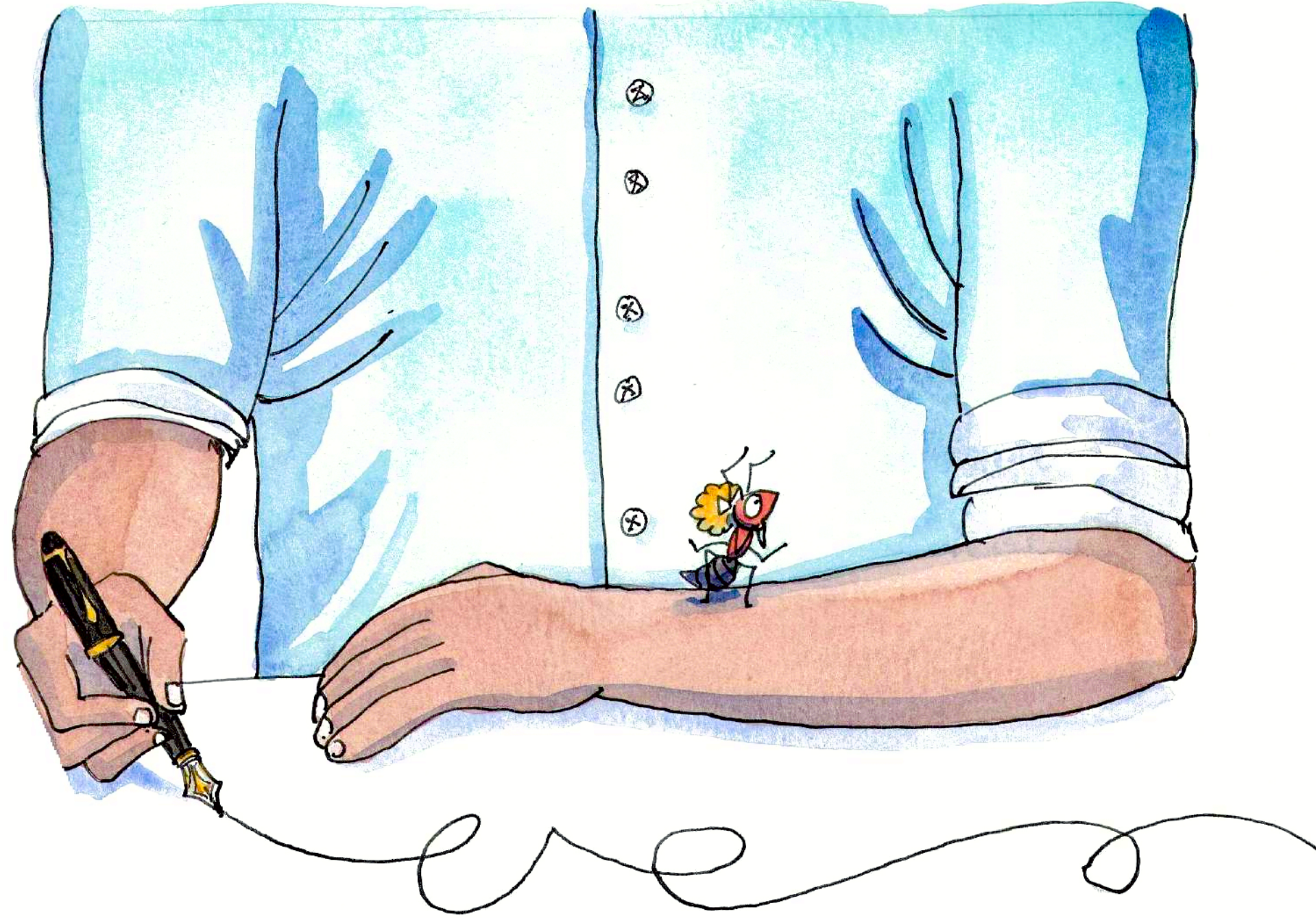
As time went by, ant after ant set out to extend the boundaries of the ants' understanding.





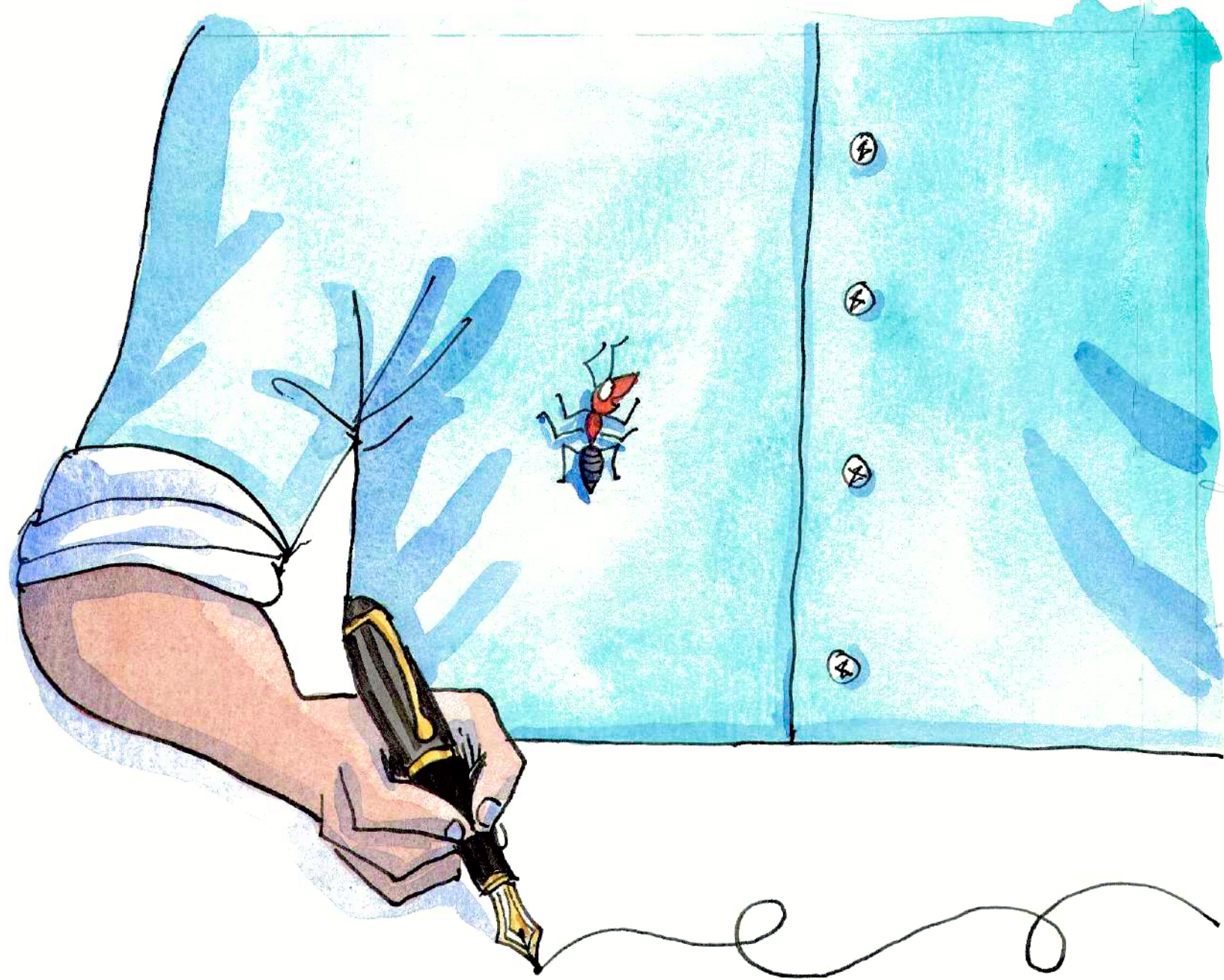


One ant discovered that the hand was attached to an arm.

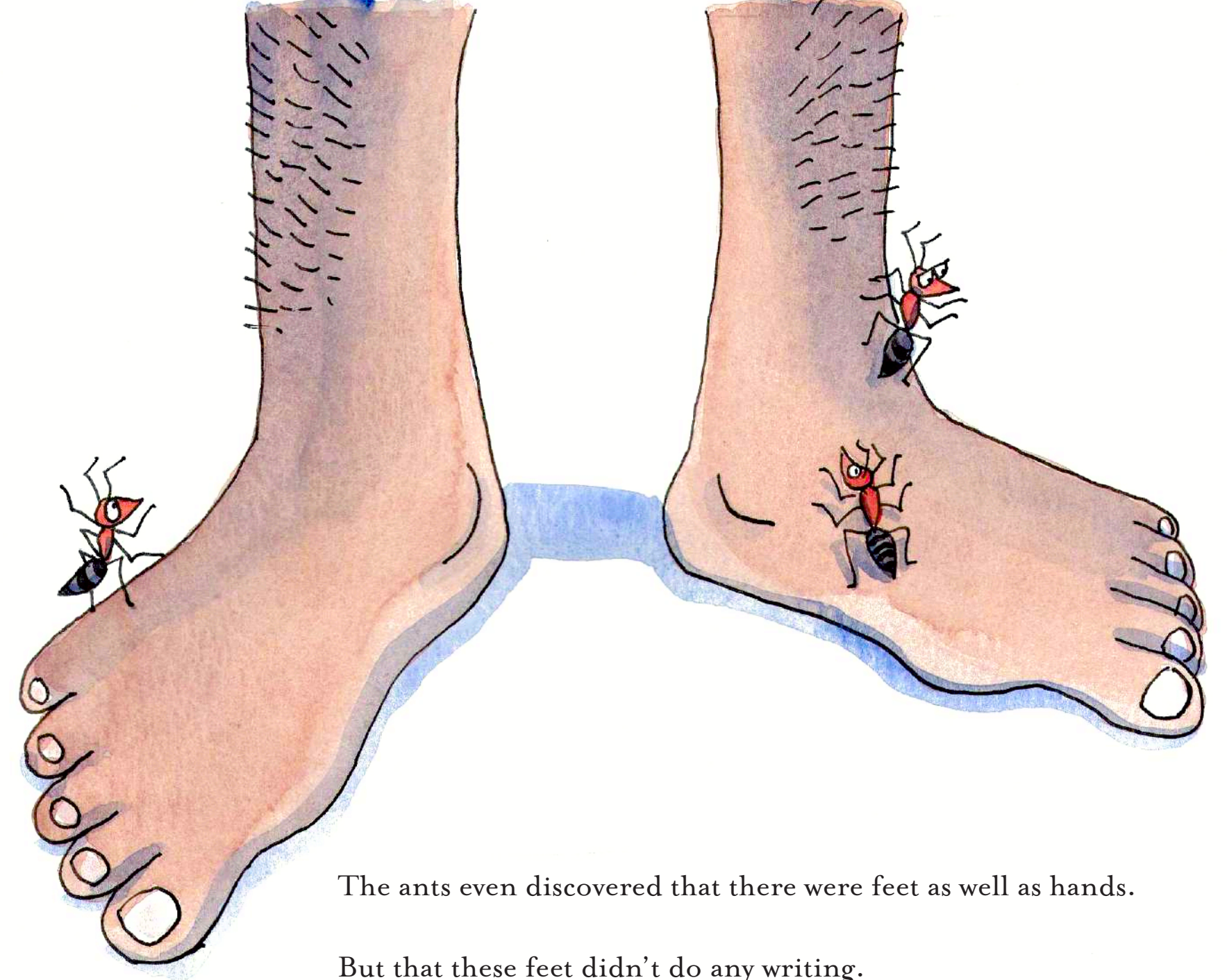


Another discovered that the arm was attached to a body.





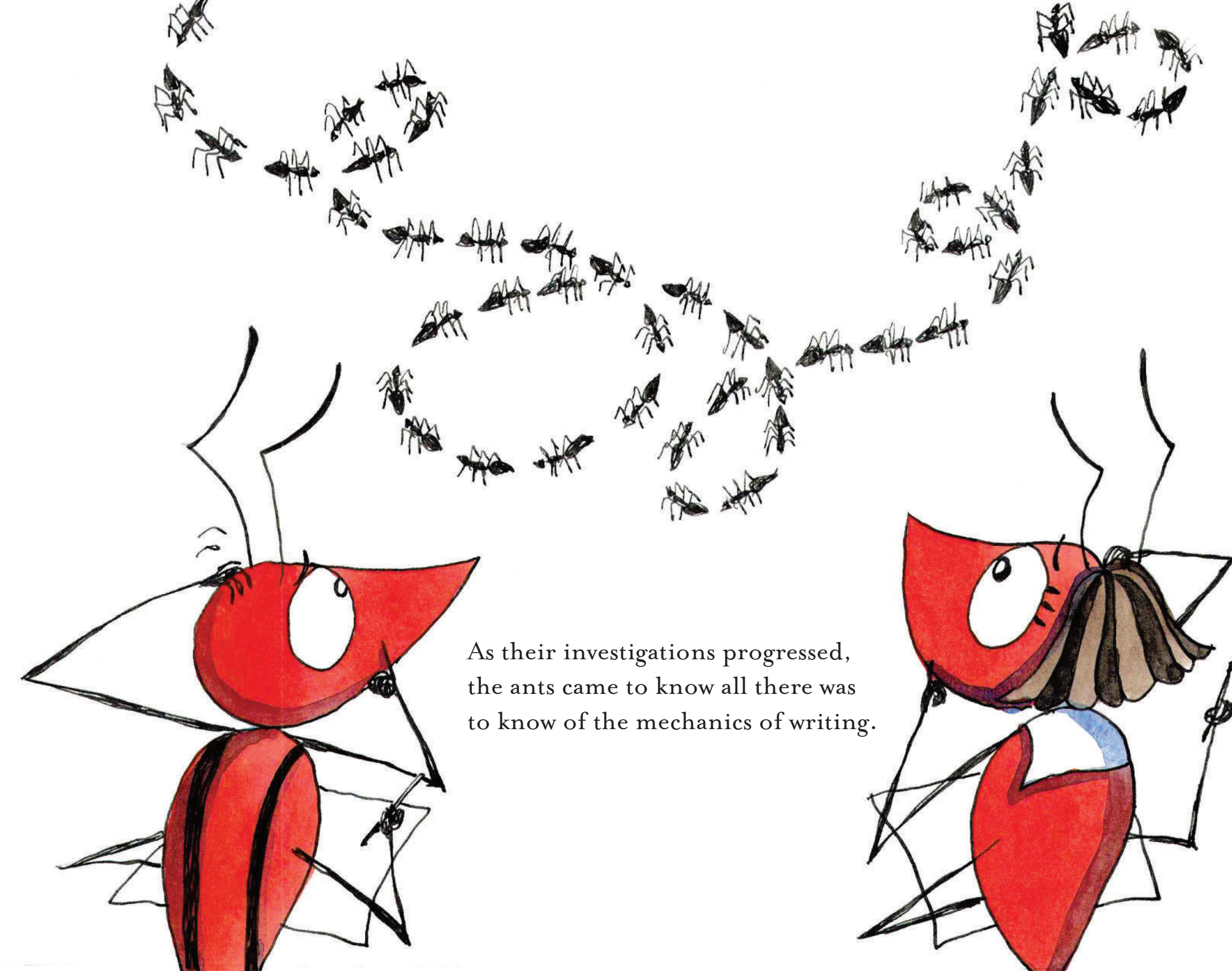
Another discovered that there were in fact two hands.



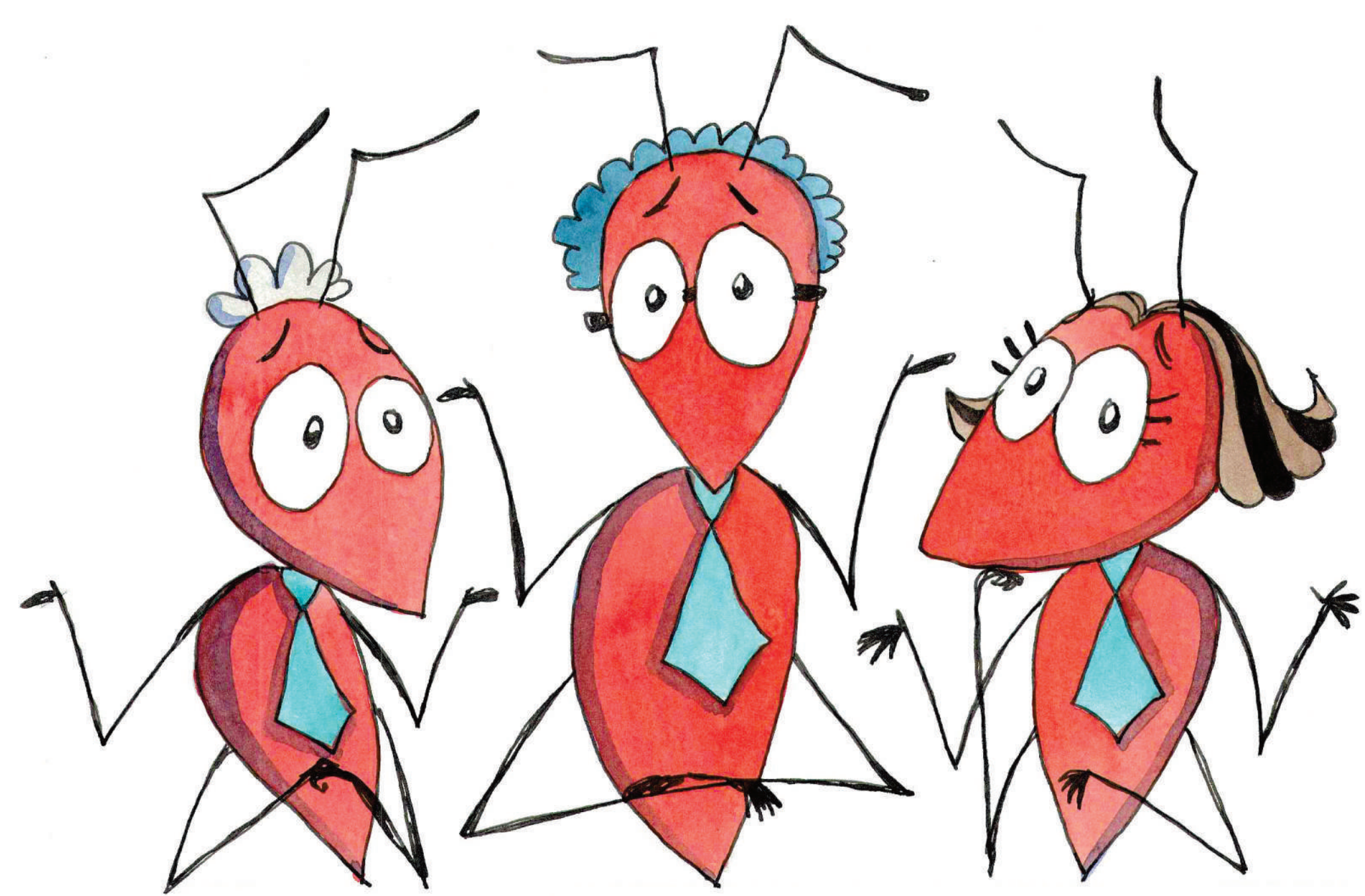
The ants even discovered that there were feet as well as hands.

But that these feet didn't do any writing.



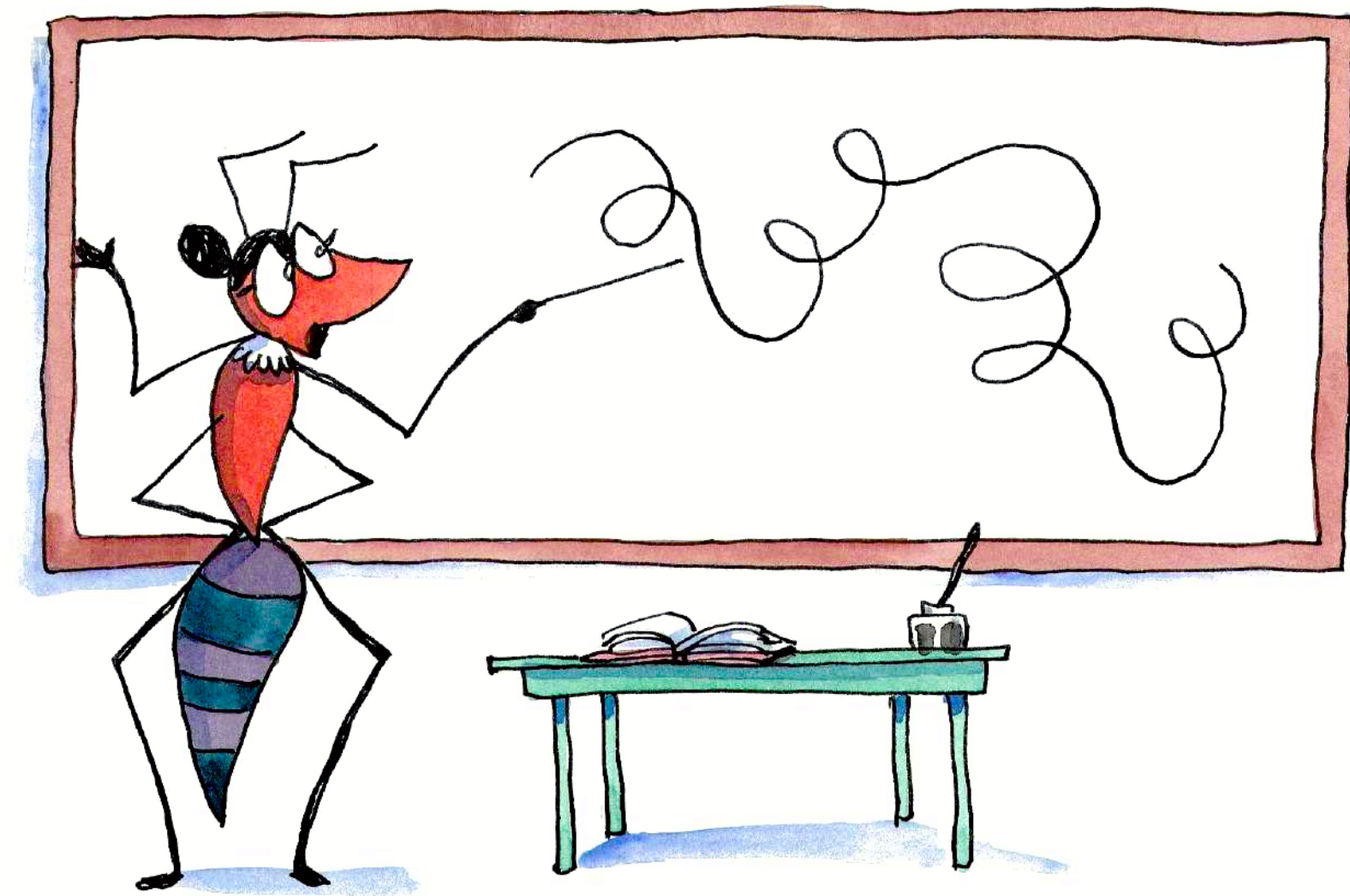


As their investigations progressed,  
the ants came to know all there was  
to know of the mechanics of writing.



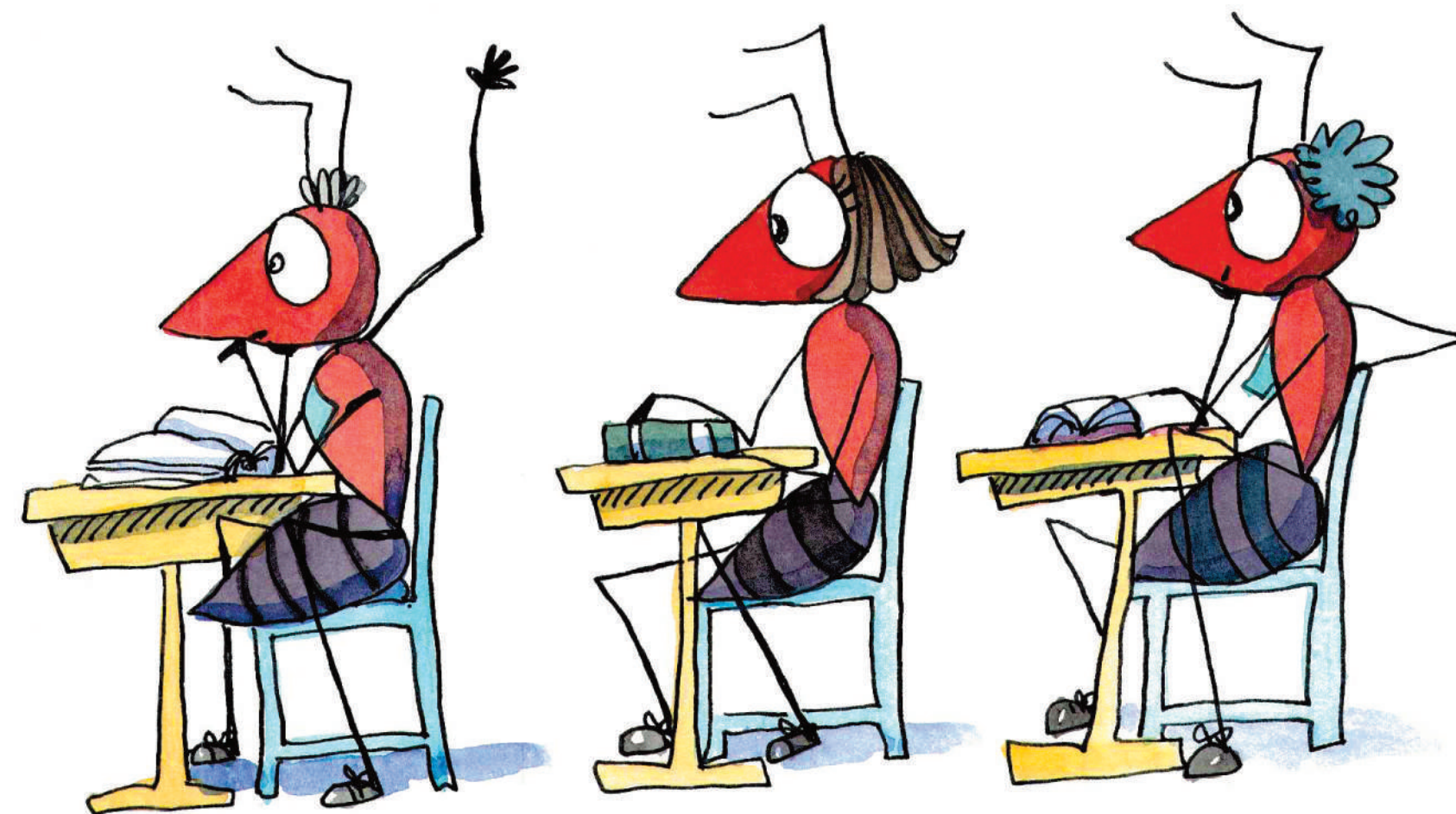
But because these investigations were based purely on the scientific,  
the ants never came to understand anything of the actual writing itself.



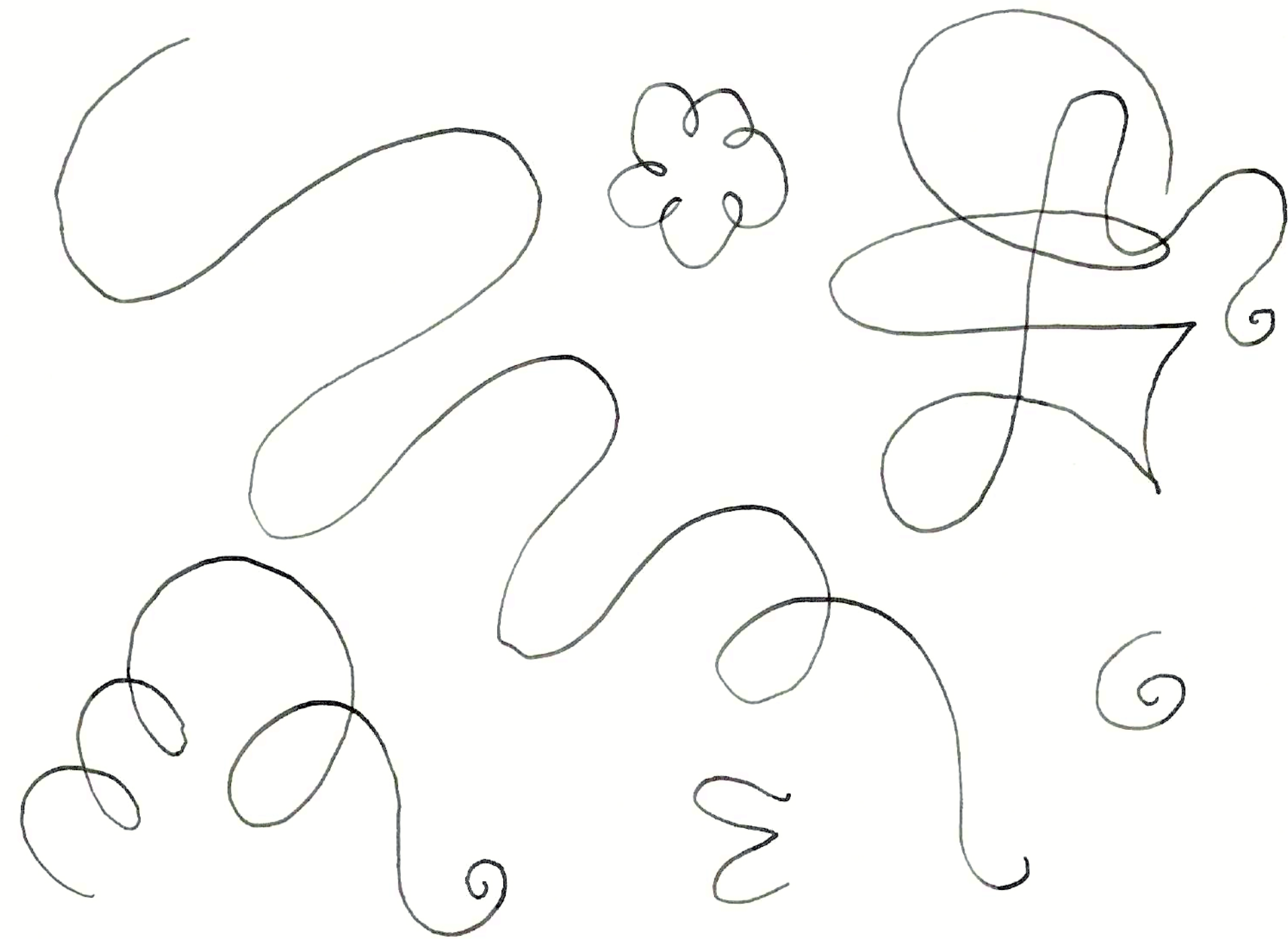
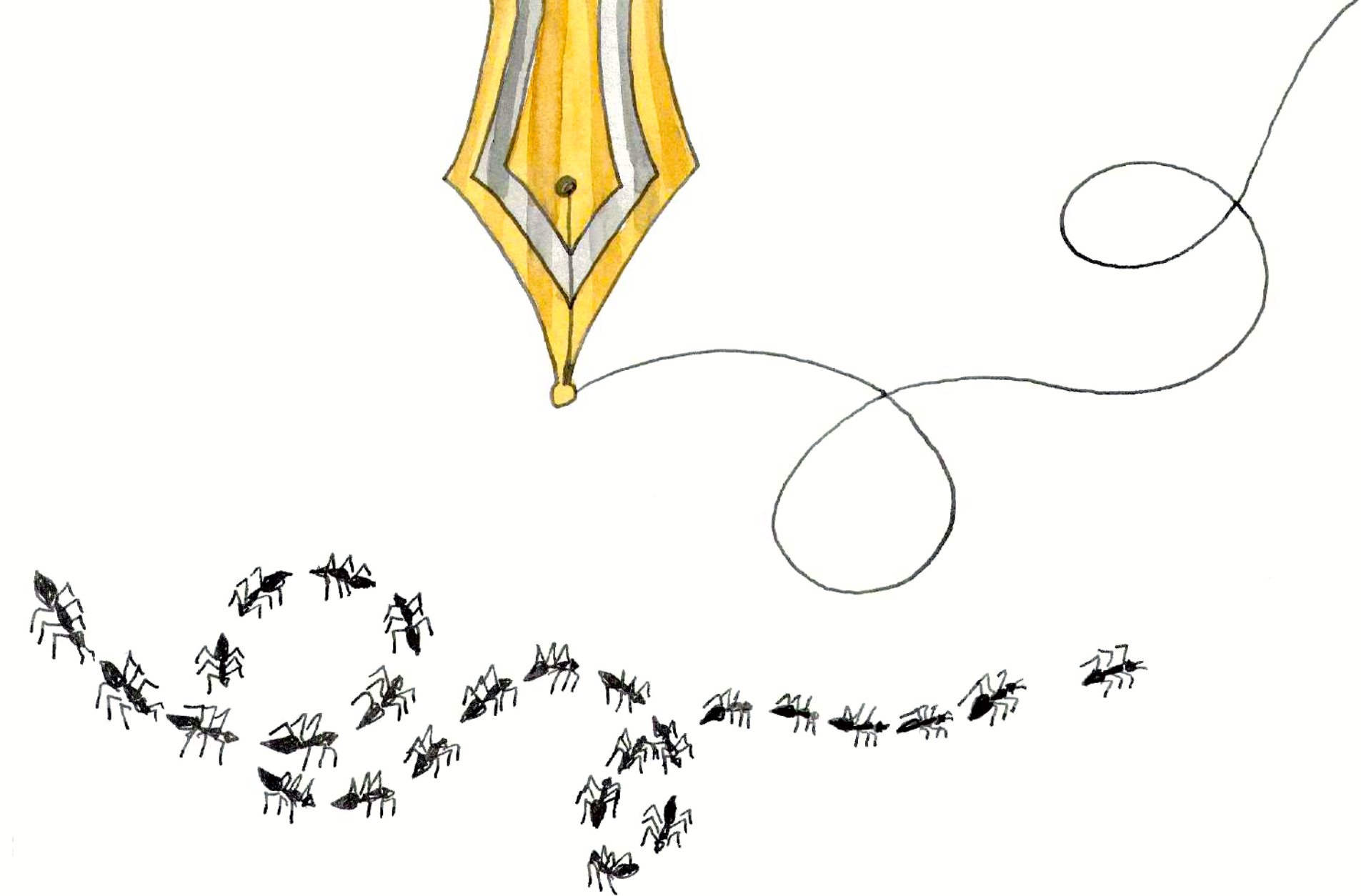


So after all this time, if you were to ask an ant to read a word...  
...or what message a squiggle is attempting to communicate...

...it would simply look at you blankly...











...and tell you that you had completely missed the point of thorough, ant-based research.



