The Trembling Ant Hill
Zomzom and his family lived in the last piece of soil between towering apartment buildings. Zomzom came from a very large family. Humans called them the ant family. It was true, Zomzom was an ant and he and his large family lived in large maze-like houses, called hills.
These hills were built with care way before he was born, by his great great grandfathers and great great grandmothers. Nobody knew how deep the mound went. Nor did anyone know how many rooms there were. They only knew that the ant hill was very very old. From time to time some of the narrow passageways would be damaged by the trembling of a group of children riding bicycles nearby or from the loud noises from the city. Sometimes the wind would blow dirt into the entrance to the ant hill - blocking it.
But ants are the world’s best architects. They would repair their home quickly and continue to live there altogether. In fact, they even made up a folk song to sing while they repaired the collapsed walls and corridors:

We work hard, we never get bored,
We’ll always repair, we don’t care,
If our walls fall down,
We’ll raise them up!
Because we work hard! Something else that was special about his family was that all summer long they would bring food to the aunt hill and store it in large storage rooms.
All summer long they prepared for winter. The acorns that fell from the oak trees at the end of the summer, the sesame seeds that fell from the old simit hawker’s stand on the corner, sunflower and nut shells, and especially their favorite - wheat and corn seeds - were all collected and carried back home to the ant hill.
When school was out for summer, Zomzom helped his mom and dad carry food back to their home. In fact, he carried the most corn seed! It was going to be so nice to pop those seeds that winter as they danced and sang songs and listened to stories the grown ups would tell them. His mouth watered just thinking about it! The days passed quickly.
On one of those days, when almost all of his family was at home, a large terrifying trembling began! It was as if hundreds of elephants were dancing on top of their ant hill home. Zomzom had just gotten up and was on his way to the bathroom. He hadn’t even passed his mom and dad’s bedroom when everything began to tremble. He didn’t have a clue what was going on.
It was just like when he was a baby and his mom would rock him in his cradle. But, unfortunately, he didn’t feel safe this time around. He thought that perhaps once again, the kids on the bicycles were passing above them. But the trembling wouldn’t stop! As he wracked his brain to understand, he remembered what they had learned in school.
Their teachers had taught them to 'get down-take cover-hold on' when the ground shook like this! He got down in the safest place he could find, protected his head and neck and held on to something solid. He wasn’t sure how long he stayed like that.
When he came to, he realized that there was a large cotton dressing on his leg. On his head he had a metal hat. “Where are my mom and dad?”, he asked the nearby nurse ant. The nurse told him that they would be with him soon. He was very happy to hear this. He felt relieved. He still wanted to cry, but it was as if his tears had abandoned him. He stared at the wall in his room feeling lost - not knowing what to do. He was so frustrated and angry...
At that moment, he was all alone except for the inch worm that was on the chair at the head of his bed. He remembered how altogether they would stomp and dance in their home to the crunching munching noises that the worms made. "Those were the days!" he thought to himself. Then he remembered they used to sing as they danced. "What were those words again?" He began to hum and murmur the words that he could remember.
Crunch, munch, munch,
It’s time to smile!
Crunch, munch, munch,
It’s time to smile!

He closed his eyes and tried to picture the days where they used to dance for joy. Those were the days...
As he was lost in these thoughts, his mom and dad entered the room. He was overjoyed! He wanted to get up and hug them, but the bandage was in his way. His mother approached him and held his hand. At least they were there now. The days passed. Finally, the day came for them to return home. On top of that, his friends that were staying in other rooms of the hospital were better too! So, they all went home together.
The large human houses that surrounded their ant hill home had also been damaged. The bicycles of the kids that always rode past their home were nowhere to be seen. Even the trees in the area had broken and fallen onto the ground. His mom realized that this saddened him, and so she explained what had happened.
Those that had come to rescue them after the earthquake had also rescued the humans as well. They had been scared as well. He saw his friends crossing the street towards them. They had been scared too, but now they looked happy. Of course, the humming of the ants working in the ant hill had already begun! All of the ants were working together to rebuild their home. Some were bringing tree branches to brace the walls and some were bringing egg shells. Some ants were bringing bird feathers to make curtains...
He immediately bent down to pick up a shell next to him. From now on they were going to make their ant hill homes even stronger against earthquakes. It didn’t take long for them to rebuild the homes in the ant hill with all of them working together. Of course, from time to time it still seemed to Zomzom that there were elephants dancing on top of their home. But when he looked through the curtains and saw the sunrise and the trees that were slowly starting to grow again, he forgot everything. Because he knew that now if their home was damaged again, they would be able to rebuild it together.
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