

Bumblebee

Nobody owns life, but anyone who can pick up a frying pan owns death.

William S. Burroughs

I've heard that something like 90 per cent of animate life on this planet is made up of insects. Like the algae of the oceans, it is said, bugs are the fundamental life form upon which all other terrestrial existence depends. Well, maybe I never heard such things, but there sure are a lot of bugs creeping and flying about my house. And until recently, I never gave them much thought or attention.

But one sweltering evening last week, while relaxing with vague enthusiasm on the living room sofa, my drowsy outlook on bugs was awakened. For there, buzzing and crashing into a lamp suspended above my head, was a giant bumblebee. Opening my eyes with annoyance, I watched it land upon the lamp. I became slightly agitated, not wishing to share my environment with this potentially dangerous intruder.

My first thought, and I did not deem it a strange one, was to kill it. So I looked about for a suitable instrument of destruction. I spied a shirt draped over a chair and reached for it, rolling the cloth into a flexible club. This I bent in half in order to give my striking surface both more size and mass as well as to improve the accuracy of my aim. These precautions taken, I now approached the lamp and the bee. I moved closer still. I now held my weapon but an inch from his brilliant body, almost translucent in the bright light.

"I'm going to kill you now," I muttered. "You will soon be dead."

He did not so much as quiver. With precision I now lined him up for the strike as a snooker player might aim his shot, drawing the cue back and forth. My final swing was aligned and proportioned to a near certain probability of success. Even if he moved now, he might still at least be maimed, affording me the chance to bash him further upon the floor.

So back I drew my truncheon, poised to kill, when, in a gesture that would have gone undetected but for my complete absorption in the matter at hand, I saw him move. I looked closer, and yes, his front legs, if I can call them legs, were gliding upon the glass lamp cover. At first it appeared his legs might have been stuck there, adhering to the hot glass as if melted like a candle's wax, the appendages able only to twist in an agonizingly feeble reflex. But, to my great astonishment, I realized that my little yellow and black enemy was praying for his very life.

Deeply moved, I slowly extended my rolled-up shirt toward him again, and gently touched those thread-like legs. I watched with an increasing sense of delight as he crawled onto the shirt, his huge eyes lifted toward me. Fearless in my euphoria, I gazed into those eyes as I transported my friend across the room and opened a window, through which quickly he was out of sight, headed straight up.