Black Bodies

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Three high-pitched screams, one after another, interrupt the humid nighttime air. A grown woman is clinging to the carpet that covers the stairs in the living room. She is shaking. If you look closely, you might even see the beginning of a tear in the corner of her eye. The room is peaceful otherwise. Puzzled by the seemingly unnecessary level of alarm, you might ask, “What on earth is the matter with you?”

“I saw a cricket,” the woman confesses, her voice trembling.

Whatever you do, don’t laugh. This is a very serious matter.

Shoes sit lined up nicely beside the back door. You are in a hurry. You spot your favorite white tennis shoes. You slide your bare foot into the familiar canvas. Just as your foot comes to a rest, you feel a wiggling between your toes. You scream as if your life had been threatened and throw the shoe across the room. Two shiny, black, hard-bodied creatures fall onto the floor and disappear under the couch. You wear thongs the rest of the summer.

You spill food on your favorite dress. You toss it down the laundry chute. When it comes back from the laundry, there is good news and bad news. The stain is gone. The crickets chewed through the material where the food had been spilled.

Your mother sends you out to the shed to retrieve the grill. Innocently enough, you grasp the handle of the white-washed door leading to the shed. As you open the door, you realize it is no longer white inside. A layer of crickets coats the wood. One by one, as they are exposed to the sunlight, they begin to fall off the door landing on your arms and feet. Their long legs and feelers tickle your skin. Your mother will have to get the grill herself. You have lost your appetite anyhow.
You can't sleep. A high-pitched chirping is coming from the corner of the room. You lie in bed wondering what to do. The sound is driving you crazy. You decide to kill them. You sit up to turn on the light. Silence. You lie back down. Moments later the chirping begins again. You sit up. Silence. You turn on the light. To your horror, not one, but four crickets scamper under your bed. Damn it. You are really mad now. You needed to clean the junk out from under your bed anyway.

They think they have won the battle. You are leaving. Little do they know, you have set a bug bomb. When you can finally return home, the floor is littered with millions of crunchy carcasses. Now you have to clean them up. You are sure they are in bug afterlife (dare I say heaven) laughing at the final irony.

It has been years since you have lived in a residence that had crickets. You buy a house and one evening, you see one. This time you will not let it happen. Not here. You roll up a magazine as tightly as possible and begin to beat it into the carpet. The pasty innards splatter on the back of the magazine. The cricket is motionless. Victoriously, you go to the kitchen to get a paper towel to clean up after the carnage. When you return to the scene, the cricket is gone.