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# A Treatise on the American Cockroach

JASON MARECKI

I am terrified of cockroaches.

One crawled onto my foot and I kicked him across the room. I spent hours tearing apart everything to find him but he was nowhere to be seen. They disgust me so much I can't bring myself to kill them. I can't even approach them without spawning a pit in my stomach that I seem

to spiral into. One was crawling on my ceiling as I lay in my bed and I could not move. I was paralyzed and could do nothing to change it.

They infest filth and bring it with them wherever their disgusting hairy legs decide they want to go. Reading *The Metamorphosis* was hard for me. The thought of becoming one myself made me want to vomit. Maybe vomiting would have made me more like them though. More filthy. I hate them and am terrified of them.

I tore my room apart multiple times. I could not deal with not knowing where he was. I don't exactly know what I would've done if I'd found him. Maybe I would've killed him. Maybe I would've just stood there and watched him dirty my room. I left the room and refused to sleep in it. I could not bring myself to willingly stay in a room with this intruder. An intruder that could find its way onto my sleeping body uninvited.

I don't hate most bugs. Bees are diligent workers. Butterflies are beautiful and delicate. Spiders are artists with their webs. The cockroach is the one with unfettered access to my hatred and scorn. After speaking with my mother about the unwanted presence in my room she laughed in my face. To her it was hilarious that I was unwilling to sleep and let my guard down to this thing. To her I was acting childish. It was not until my brother found him and crushed him within my doorway on his way to the bathroom did I return.

Even then my feet felt unwashed. It felt as though someone had tainted me never to be clean again. My headphone cable brushed the top of my foot and I nearly screamed. Even my baggy sweatpants felt foreign to me. I could not walk anywhere within my house without feeling like a new pursuer had given chase.

Sometimes I get the feeling it's personal for the cockroaches. They can sense my fear and disgust and use it to torment me. They stalk me and wait for my most vulnerable moment. When I'm in bed staring at my ceiling or groggily putting on my shoes in the morning or listening to records in my room.

I hate their crunch too. The way they just sort of splat is infuriating to me. Crunching

down and splattering their innards all over whatever you just smashed on top of them. Why do they get to have the last laugh in their death? They get your carpet or shoe all dirty and are scattered into pieces for you to collect. Their existence mocks me. Most of us will fade away and die but the cockroach gets to go out in a blaze of glory. It gets to be smashed and have everything on the inside get all over everything on the outside. I hate cockroaches.

Every little feeling on the hairs of my feet feels like one of them crawling along it. I kicked my foot out as though a doctor was testing my reflexes. In hindsight it was a stupid idea but it was all I knew. Get the thing as far away from me as possible. It didn't matter if he were to crawl into my closet or under my bed right then all I needed was for him to get off of me. I wanted him so far away from me and not directly on me. I hated that he was on me. I hated that he was in my room. I could not stand that he had decided to be anywhere near me. I wanted him to apologize for all the trouble he's caused and get up and walk right out the front door. I wanted him to be gone.

