

The Sadness That Can Be Gulliver's Travels

by Gary Hardaway

For years, Marvin did as his species normally does: crushed and sprayed whatever roach he saw to death. One day, he decided instead to be-pet them, luring them out- one by one, at first- with crumbs he thought they might enjoy and talking to them in a feminine register, as one does with cats, about how clever and quick they were. It took some time, but they finally began to expect their meals at certain times and a certain place. They learned to high-five Marvin as he laid the goodies out before them and would come toward him for a head rub instead of scurrying for the baseboards when he clicked a light on late at night.

It became Marvin's habit to read and re-enact famous scenes from military history with tiny lead figures for his many-legged pets. He was finally able to replace the lead figures with costumed squadrons of roaches who dutifully turned six legs up if they were the Spartans at Thermopylae, for example, or the Army of Virginia at Gettysburg. Marvin expanded the readings to include *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, Shakespeare's *Histories*, and, finally, *Gulliver's Travels*, which Marvin came to rue when the roaches dressed themselves as Lilliputians and pinned him down for a week with finish nails and fishing line to the hardwood floor in his living room. After his release, Marvin sadly called Bruce Terminix.

