

The Cicada's Complaint

by Gita M. Smith

Cicada sleeps for seven years, a curled and brittle pupa in the soil.

He stirs and digs his way toward the light.

All those years, he thinks, for just one chance to fuck.

I hope she's pretty.

He climbs a tree and lures a female with his song. *Reeee-ee!*

Reeee-ee!

Later, the two engage in pillow talk.

"Why can't we be like crickets or mosquitoes? Why such a long gestation? It's not efficient."

They sit a while, clinging to bark or branch.

He rubs his legs against his abdomen, hoping for one more hump before his time is up.

She busies herself, laying her eggs in holes around the tree.

Poor kids, she thinks. Our kind are most unfortunate. We never get to meet our moms and dads. If only we could speed the process up.

And then she dies.

The gods are busy, but they hear her prayers. Even the small cicada's hopes get noticed.

"What do you think, do we change the schedule?" asks Jehovah.

Shiva and Zeus convene a focus group.

"It wouldn't work," the panel votes. "Those leaf eaters would strip the trees and crops if we let them come back every year."

"That's true," Jehovah reasons. "Remember that plague of locusts I sent down?"

"Are locusts the same as cicadas?" asks a minor deity from Burma.

"Yeah, a while back someone changed the name. Same difference."

"Okay, well, then I guess it's settled. No shift in policy. They'll have to serve their time."

