

PUISSANCE du PISSANTS

by Rich Haber

Normally, I don't pay too much attention to this kind of thing. Squish a couple of ants, flick them into the toilet bowl on the way out, then later happen to see two black specks floating in the water. It's not like some hideous murder: Couple Found Dead in Car on Lovers Lane.

But the ants were floating together, after I'd flicked them at two different spots in the bowl. Had I only crippled them and once in the water had they enough strength to swim to each other and embrace for warmth?

Normally, I couldn't care less. Two ants as opposed to hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqis? The oil, greed and power, an idiot American president? I went for the magnifying glass, wondering if I was actually going to stick my head in my toilet just to satisfy... well, I HAD cleaned it two days ago.

Maybe centripetal motion brought the ants together, their lifeless bodies merely submitting to the laws of physics, not clinging to each other for warmth. Not like a Palestinian mother clinging to her baby shot through the belly or the baby clinging to the last moments of life in the arms of his father who, when the life departed, held him up over his head, the baby's head rolled back, unsupported... so the Israeli soldiers could see what they had done, see through their helmet visors, see through the tinted glass of their tank windows, see from their American-made helicopters and F16s. Not like thirty thousand Nicaraguan men, women and children clinging to prayers floating in the air, dreams of America the beautiful; eighty thousand Salvadorans, four million Vietnamese and Cambodians, whose soil was rendered useless, raped by Dow Chemical defoliants and napalm for twenty five years...

I retrieved the magnifying glass from my computer table and headed for the bathroom. I spend too much time alone. Had another person been there, even someone I didn't care about, I'm sure I would not be doing this. They weren't even spiders, more abhorrent than ants I think.

I bent over the bowl feeling the blood rush to my head as it used to when I vomited from too much drinking. I decided to kneel down instead but this brought more memories, of being so drunk I had to kneel as I vomited. I peered through the magnifying glass at what had looked like two periods on a gel-screen.

The two ants were indeed still alive though badly mangled from the squishing. They were not embracing for warmth but biting at each other. One finally bit the head off the other. This did not stop the headless one from maintaining the struggle, something like that rebel Chinese guy from whose decapitated head blood had streamed out to write something in the dirt, something about tyranny, something about the power of truth, something universal. Does it bloody matter? The Dead do not communicate with the Living. It's absurd. When you're dead, you're dead.

I stood up and put the magnifying glass on the bathroom sink, finally relieving myself. I aimed the urine at the ants, watching them swirl downward in the warm piss mixing with the cold water, something like alcohol in gasoline. Fucking pissants. nothing but a waste of time. I was glad it was over. I pressed the flush lever, not even watching the end.

A few hours later, I noticed the toilet looked fine and clean. Then I noticed an ant crawling next to the bowl, then another one. At least they weren't huge Miami palmetto bugs, cockroaches that fly! Man, I don't miss those things - had to actually hunt them down and bring 'em to justice.

