

Your Move, Blattarian!

by strannikov

An unsigned editorial in a recent edition of The Cockroach Times of Snidehurst, North Carolina (translated from the Blattarian courtesy of the Entomology Department of the EDOC), read as follows:

“Stay away from that maniac at 151 Rum Street! Seriously: old and young are particularly vulnerable to the spry cunning of this human fiend, this bipedal devil! Scavenge at that address only if you feel possessed of great courage, a profound faith in resurrection or reincarnation, or an impatient desire for a premature date with certain death. The human fiend residing at 151 Rum Street is agile and cunning: you have been warned!

“The few witnesses to have survived forays to the premises report that this vertebrate monster freezes instantly upon spotting you and will not next move until after you do. By this time, he'll've armed himself with something: typically, this is one of the dozens of bottles of Windex he's parked throughout the residence (he's even begun alternating with tall cans of that nasty Lysol spray), although he is sometimes armed merely with thin cardboard tubes left from rolls of paper towels or bathroom tissue.

“If he douses you with Windex or Lysol, escape will be impeded just long enough for the fiend to smash the helpless victim from the exoskeleton in! If he's confident enough to arm himself only with a cardboard tube of whatever length, do not be complacent: for a bipedal specimen, he's particularly agile and ready to spring into action, and very few have escaped to tell of the zeal with which he smashes one's exoskeleton all the way through one's thorax to ooze out the spurs of one's quivering legs or out the tips of one's uselessly flailing antennas.

“You may think we are joking or exaggerating here, but we plead with the roach and waterbug public to heed this warning: this bipedal fiend has our number, **WATCH OUT!** The staff of our modest journal have in the past month alone lost a total of fifty-seven

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siblings, one hundred eighty-four cousins, aunts, and uncles, entire sets of parents, multiple generations of little roachling babes barely able to crawl, just in order to make this public warning possible . . .” —It went on from there with a lot of mealy-mouthed blubbing for sympathy and pathetic requests for government intervention and assistance (Blattarians seem to've lost all confidence in their private insurance agencies and companies to settle claims).

If this editorial were not an utter fabrication from end to end, it struck me as one wildly exaggerated account: and what a crass style some of these cockroaches exhibit! I think it a likely specimen of pure Blattarian propaganda, I won't swallow a word of it. My sympathies are with the fellow living at 151 Rum Street, obviously, he sounds like a resourceful fellow who knows how to put cockroaches in their place.

Meanwhile, at 151 Rum Street, it was plain that the Blattarian propagandist had far understated the case, in ways both his public and his bipedal translators could not begin to conceive. The modest frame dwelling was littered throughout with cockroach carcasses, countless numbers of inert, desiccated Blattarians flat on their backs as dependably as armadillo roadkill, legs bent upwards and frozen in Blattarian supplication or surrender. However, a visit to this address would offer clues that begin to convey the idea that Blattarians cannot be said strictly to understand very much of the world very well, and in fact, some of our sage investigators from the EDOC have begun to whisper that this one case illustrates quite well (with little risk of unwarranted extrapolation) that cockroach epistemology is subject to severe intrinsic limitations.

This, in spite of the fact that their literary prowess is commonly lauded in entomological circles, while perhaps Blattarian literary merit remains underappreciated in the formal domains of human literary aesthetics. The examples of their most celebrated poet and playwright William Squashspur (notable for his searing tragedies MacBug, Othello the Moth, King Earwig, and Prince Hornet of Havarty) notwithstanding, Blattarian literary output is not

really so very clever or insightful, and their poetry is altogether hopeless except in the inferior comic modes. The rest qualifies as rank hackwork, as dismal and deplorable as the multitudes of human examples.

And their scientific journals! Bugs and Glass, their leading journal in terms of purported sophistication and popular appeal, would make any self-respecting human entomologist cringe, what with the specious methodologies underpinning most of the work there. What sappy condescension to pedestrian intellectual standards! "Humans are nothing more than bipedal insects with inverted exoskeletons"! These vermin get exactly what they deserve!

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