

19.

Even Buddhists Kill Bedbugs

Let today's poem deal with or mention the killing or rescuing of insects or small creatures and the feelings incurred. Let the poem's meaning stretch beyond bugs to wider issues.

All The Time I Pray To Buddha –

All the time I pray to Buddha
I keep on
killing mosquitoes.

Kobayashi Issa
Translated by Robert Hass

I'm going to roll over,
so please move,
cricket.

Kobayashi Issa
Translated by Robert Hass

She Killed the Spider

for Robert Bly

She killed the spider
that I've been watching all summer,
the one whose grey bedsheets flapped
in the corner beside the mailbox.
I liked coming home
to that web spun by the door,
to the spider hiding in the corner
and the gnats caught in the web
like mail.

Now it's autumn, and the nights are cold.
I value every name
in my address book
even more.

Jay Leeming
anthologized in *Between Water and Song:*
New Poets for the Twenty-first Century

Backyard Mercy

A fruit fly fell in my fine crystal glass
half full of five-dollar wine.

Annoyed, I almost flung the final sips
behind a rosebush, But I remembered Bogotá,

where four men fished me, face down,
from a tide pool of tequila,

delivered my body, unruined, to soft hotel sheets
and left two white aspirin by the bed.

Fly, maybe grace is everything
that could fuck you but doesn't.

Like my middle finger, just long enough
to scoop six wretched legs from the deadly red

and set them stumbling toward dusk,
the shadowed promise of coming light—

another unearned chance at life.

Rachael Petersen
in "The Sun" magazine
May 2021, issue 545

LATE WINTER DILEMMA

Today, there are five ladybugs on my
windowsill.

So small, helpless, vulnerable even with
their hard shell.

What to do? Yesterday there was one.

I gather them up and hold them in the palm of my hand.

Four are motionless. One moves its tiny feet and begins to
explore. I name him Enterpriser.

The other four then begin their dance and now
the moment of truth.

What to do? I don't want to hurt them or kill them.

So sweet, so helpless.

Down the drain – an emphatic no – the toilet – no, no!

So down the stairs I go, out the door and

place them delicately on a bush near the house.
Will they freeze to death?
I don't know but I feel like a murderer nevertheless.
Stephanie Beling

Allowables

I killed a spider
Not even a murderous brown recluse
Nor even a black widow
And if the truth were told this
Was only a small
Sort of papery spider
Who should have run
When I picked up the book
But she didn't
And she scared me
And I smashed her
I don't think
I'm allowed
To kill something
Because I am
Frightened

Nikki Giovanni
anthologized in *Poetry of Presence II: More mindfulness poems*
edited by Phyllis Cole-Dai & Ruby R. Wilson

And I Beg Your Pardon

The first mosquito:
come here and I will kill thee,
holy though thou art.
Wendell Berry
in *Leavings*