

Eight Legged Things

“Why do you do this? It's like, the dumbest thing I've ever heard.” Katie puffed from her cigarette, the smoke blocking her eyes from me. Her perfectly blood red lips puckered around the cylinder as she raised her eyebrows. It was surprising that someone so beautiful could look so judgmental.

I rolled my eyes. “They're living creatures. Their life matters as much as ours.” Katie sniggered as I leaned down and whispered, “Today you, tomorrow me.” The spider leapt out of my pale palm and scurried away into the dim moonlight. I sighed. Sometimes I wished I could do that. Scurry away and never have to worry about this. I just didn't have the strength to leave.

I gazed at my arm, which was still extended into the distance. Nobody believed that Katie- innocent Katie could have given me the scars. They would laugh at me, mock me for being weak enough for a girl to push around. So I didn't tell many people. Just my brother and a few close friends from school. Their disregard toward my problems hurt more than Katie's alcohol-induced rages and anger issues ever would. Every time somebody didn't listen, it felt like another stab to my already-battered heart. Still, nothing hurt more than the woman I used to love. Every apology gave me hope. Every promise she made fueled me with dreams I had before. But dreams couldn't keep me safe from the insults she spat or the bruises she had left. Sometimes I looked into her empty gray eyes and wondered if the Katie I had fallen in love with was still there.

I had tried everything. I was someone who always knew what to do, always knew what was coming next. My best friend jokingly called me a 'fixer.' He was right. So, I tried to fix everything. I tried to fix Katie, tried to fix myself. Deep down, I knew nothing was working. So, I decided to see a therapist, do some of that counseling my mom always suggested. It was a bust.

Some days she got so mad that she locked herself in our bedroom and refused to go. Then, I went alone. Each time, I got asked where my other half was. I always had some sort of excuse prepared about how she was working or had an appointment, when really she was throwing a tantrum and trying to wash away her annoyance with a bottle of wine. When Katie accused the therapy of driving a wedge between us, I stopped going too.

Soon after that, Katie quit her job. She drank and smoked her days away, and partied away her nights. I almost got kicked out of our small townhouse twice for causing disturbances and not being able to pay rent, so I decided to work two jobs. When even that wasn't enough, I asked Katie to stop.

I rubbed the puffy bruise above my eye, and ran my fingers over the ace-bandage on my leg. I don't do that anymore.

I got up and limped over to the back door. "Hey Kat? I was thinking that we could start seeing that doctor again. He could help with your-"

"Aargh! Jesus- HELP!" What? What was going on? I rushed inside, knocking over empty bottles of beer, and kicking away cigarette butts. I dodged around our overstuffed sofa which was tearing at the seams, and practically leaped over the wicker chair I had bought for our anniversary.

I then saw a large shadowy figure looming over me. Holding- what was that? The vase I had painted. I could see what was going on. Katie had lured me here by acting like she was in danger, so she could try and get rid of me once and for all. There was a sickening smash followed by the sound of glass shattering. I was barely aware of my surroundings, and everything was numb. I felt crushed, both inside and out. The pain was almost unbearable, and

my brain was pounding against my skull with a hammer. Blood trickled into my mouth. It tasted-coppery. A bit like a penny. My thoughts swirled in my head like dirty water swirling down a drain.

There were five- no seven Katies. My eyes could barely make out the blurred images around me. I counted before everything went dark. There were still screams and sounds of glass breaking behind me. I just didn't care enough to say anything anymore.

I barely remember that night. There were more screams, as Katie smashed everything in the house with a baseball bat. "I HATE YOU!" I knew that this was directed at me. "I HATE YOU! WORTHLESS PILE OF GARBAGE! YOU'RE USELESS!"

Through the cracked lens of my pair of glasses, I could barely make out a spider crawling across my hand. I tried to sleep, but It was hard. Why did everything have to be so hard? I hiccuped as I thought about my one true loving being the reason I wanted to die.

The next morning, I woke up dazed. There was a blinding pain on my head. I placed my hand on my neck, which felt hot and sweaty. My palm came away a bright crimson. My whole body felt shaky and broken. I let out a quiet groan. Yet another evening in my life.

I looked around. Everything looked normal, except for the broken glass strewn everywhere. Katie was passed out on the couch, a bottle of wine spilled on her white tank top. Her blond hair was thrown up messily, and she smelt of cigarettes and bitter brandy. She must have gone out after her episode last night. I honestly couldn't care less at this point. When you hurt enough, you stop noticing.

I sat down, and noticed the spider on the arm of the couch. I stuck out my palm. “Hey, little buddy. Sorry you had to see all that.” I pushed my broken glasses higher on my nose. I had been saving for a new pair, but Katie must have taken the money since I had not been able to find it behind the bed where I had hidden it.

Then the most unbelievable thing happened. A giant rectangle emerged from under my couch. Looking closer, I saw that they were all spiders. Spiders I had let back outside my whole life. At first, I thought I was hallucinating. This couldn’t be happening. They crawled under Katie’s petite frame and lifted it up. I didn’t know how something so small could pick up something so big. She slumbered on, unaware of the events that were taking place.

Slowly, the spiders made their way to the door. I cautiously opened it, and they skittered across the backyard and into the collection of maple trees that were planted in the meadow across the yard.

I held my breath, barely making a sound. The event that was taking place seemed so unreal. So magical. It felt like if I moved, everything would go back to the way it was. So I stood and watched. The spiders disappeared with Katie’s body into the little forest. When they came out in about twenty minutes, they were not holding anything. It seemed like the wrong thing to do, but I didn’t miss her. I was finally free! I smiled and stepped outside.

“I must be dreaming. This is impossible.” Chilly wind whipped through my hair, and I closed my eyes. “Please let this be real. Please, please, please.” The spiders didn't reply, and they all stood completely still, waiting for my next command.

I shook my head in disbelief. There were so many questions to be answered, so many thoughts running through my brain. What had happened to Katie? How did the spiders know she was hurting me? I ran my fingers through my bedhead, and settled on something to say. “How?”

The spiders quickly skittered across the wooden porch. At first, I was confused. Then, I saw that they had spelled something out. I inspected the writing carefully. Their bodies lay out a pattern that formed the words “Yesterday us, today you.”