

The Grasshopper

One night at 10pm one night when the house was quiet, I had a conversation with a grasshopper. Early bird that I am, it was a good hour past my bedtime. I was pleasantly surprised by a spurt of energy and decided to make use of it to clean my perpetually messy kitchen. Hubby was sleeping soundly in our downstairs bedroom and I didn't want to wake him so I quietly began my ritual.

Our home was catching its breath after five years hosting a newly blended family of six teenagers, five of them of the male variety. We were down to only two and I could feel the house exhaling in relief.

The quiet was intoxicating.

After a few minutes, I heard scruffling on the patio and suspected some small unfortunate rodent was crossing the path of our feline huntress, aptly named Boo. When Boo found us, as a scraggly stray with a bum knee, I agreed she could stay on one condition: No bird hunting. Over the years I had my fill of feline birders keeping me on first name basis with local wildlife rescuers. Understanding the choice, no birding or live on the street, Boo agreed to bird, inside, from our bay window. Conveniently located in our bedroom, I enjoy the pastime with her as she chatters and twitches her tail in resignation.

However, In that original agreement, I failed to include the numerous other small animals inhabiting the wooded lot that we call home. Consequently, moles, mice and chipmunks are off the list, of which Boo reminds me weekly with partially mangled gifts by the back door. Since she is, in fact, a cat and cats are, in fact, born hunters, a certain amount of natural instinctive behavior must be tolerated. That doesn't mean I don't interfere in the struggle.

As I investigated the commotion on our patio, I was surprised . The stalked animal was not a mole or a small mouse but a very large grasshopper. Four inches long, it seemed more than capable of finding an escape route so I grabbed my cat and ushered her quickly, into the house.

Adopting my number one strategy when trying to save her victims, I waited, while she scratched and clawed at the door meowing loudly, for the grasshopper to hop to safety. After about 10 minutes I let her back outside hoping for the return of my quiet solitude. Unfortunately, for me and the grasshopper, he had not retreated far enough and was, within minutes, recaptured. It was impossible for me to ignore as Boo was now bating him around by my glass, patio door. Anyone who has cats knows, they find pleasure in the hunt, the game, catching and letting go their prey, unmercifully, over and over, until it dies. I was sure it would not end well, or quickly.

I opened the door letting my dog out with specific instructions, "end it!" She, a lab/pit bull mix is about 35 pounds and quite the cuddler. A carnivore but with no desire to hunt for herself. Her idea of hunting is sitting by the kitchen table at dinner slurping up morsels that drop at her feet. She does enjoy jumping in on with her feline sister's kills, treating them much like a tennis ball or a bone. My expectation was that she would get involved and put the old grasshopper out of his misery. Again, I went back to my machinations.

While washing a pizza pan, trying to decide if it would fit in the dishwasher and opting instead for the Brillo pad, the grasshopper's little spirit desperate for release tugged at my leg, begging "Please, please end my pain, please!" A bit startled and feeling a sudden wave of panic, I took a deep breath and grabbed the large white rock on the shelf above my sink.

For my and Hubby's 50th birthdays, we took a cruise around the Hawaiian Islands. Our birthdays are exactly two months apart and instead of big parties we spent a week in Paradise. While there, on my first trip to a black sand beach, I met a rock, who didn't mind traveling home with me to South Carolina. He was in fact a magic rock, and didn't hesitate to communicate this to me, so happy were we to have found each other.

It is this rock I grabbed to aid our grasshopper friend in crossing over. It was done in a moment. As unsavory as the thought of the deed is, I

couldn't deny the sweet spirits plea. No more than his request for burial "under the pink blooming azalea" as he quickly added "not just tossed under but respectfully buried".

It was getting late and as my patio light only reaches a short distance into the backyard, I left the grasshopper covered by the magic rock til promising to fulfill his wishes in the light of the day.

Up, as I always am, before the other inhabitants of the house, in the early dawn light I laid the grasshopper, officially, to rest. Digging a small hole just under the brightly blooming azaleas, I buried the beautiful grasshopper topped with the magic rock. With unreasonable, overwhelming sadness I reasoned that it was my fault he died. If I didn't have a cat, if she hadn't been on the patio, if I hadn't let her back out.....

But with my soul rejoicing, I cried tears of joy in celebration of his life and the blessing of being included in The Magic. Even amidst the grind of my everyday life.....where it ultimately. Always. Exists.