

Roach

»» **A couple of years ago I rented** ««
»»» **a room in Los Angeles from** «««
»»»»» **a zoologist in training.** ««««««

Every morning he would hop on his bike and ride out to some UCLA habitat somewhere. He was a nice enough guy, passionate about his work, but in his bedroom, he kept a fish tank full of African cockroaches. He showed them to me as I moved in. He was proud of them.

»» Now, I don't know if you've ever seen an African cockroach, but they are decidedly different from the creatures you might discover in a kitchen in Brooklyn. They're massive. Alien. And there were hundreds of them. Climbing all over each other. Trying to escape. He asked me if I wanted to hold one. I definitely did not. My stomach started to turn.

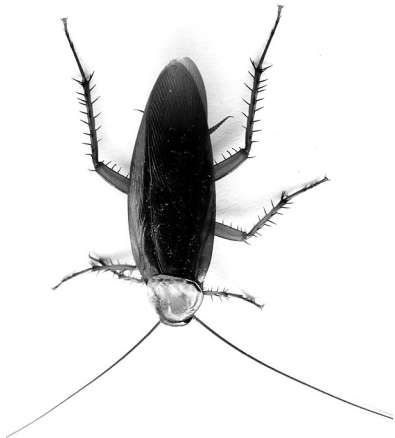
»» At night, even though I would be down the hall with my door closed, I could hear them clicking about in their cage. They haunted my dreams.

»» A few weeks later, I came home from work to discover one of the

bastards propped up on its hind legs like a praying mantis right in the middle of my fucking bed. I swear to God, it was looking at me, its antennae twitching about as if it could smell me. It was disturbing on its own, but the thing that was really fucking disturbing about it was that this zoologist kept a massive stack of textbooks on top of the cage so the cockroaches couldn't get out. And yet, this one had managed to not only escape but find its way into my room and onto my bed.

»» Did he have friends? Were there others? How many had escaped? How many were scurrying about, hidden in the walls? How long would it be before one found its way into my shoe or into my cereal?





» With a fury that I didn't think possible,
I brushed the fucker onto the floor and

crushed him under the weight of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*. Its insides were white and milky, and they exploded all over the floor. I grabbed my laptop, got the hell out of there, and spent the next 48 hours looking for a new place to live.

»»»» **I never finished the book.** ««««

BY » **Luke Renner**



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