

Workers Unnoticed, a.k.a. “Critter Poems,” by Leslie N. Sinclair

I. It Sensed my Intent

A cockroach was walking about
the floor in my bathroom at home.
I watched as it moseyed along
exploring its own little world.
But who wants a cockroach in-house?

The moment arrived when I thought,
I’ve watched it enough, now attack!
I moved not a finger nor toe,
there wasn’t the time to do that;
it shot like a bullet, and hid.

II. What Was it Waiting For?

A critter whose name I don’t know
lay drowning before me today.
A small one, I’ll throw on the deck –
a handful of water withal –
I don’t want its feet on my palm.

But this was too big not to touch,
nor would it hop free of my hand.
I let it relax there awhile
and flutter the wet off its wings,
but still, it would not walk away.

I took myself out of the pool –
perhaps a hard edge isn’t kind
to two-inch green critters with wings –
and offered it leaf after leaf
in planter pots next to the wall.

It stayed on my hand, even backed
away from the flowers and leaves,
then started to walk up my arm.
While wondering what it might need,
I thought to step out of the gate –

no shoes, with my swimsuit for clothes –
then place it to nibble “my” plants;
but that didn’t happen because

it sensed my assistance and crept
to freedom on palm frond at last.

III. What did it Need from Me?

I rescued a critter today,
descending, apparently gone.
It didn't fall free of my hand –
its stiff little leg seemed to move
so slightly I wasn't quite sure.

I waited but it wouldn't budge,
nor did I step out of the pool,
because I'd be waiting too long.
I walked with it, taking my steps;
not swimming, for then it would drown.

I wondered what this one would teach,
then focused on nature around,
not self or the bug anymore;
and that's when it seemed to revive.
It left me but wouldn't stay safe.

Departing the pool, I looked back
to see how it managed itself.
I wanted to find it a plant,
and thought, from within, to provide;
and that's when it crawled from the edge.

IV. Why Didn't it Take its Bellyful?

I sat on my rocking-chair porch;
a hummingbird came to say Hi,
and butterflies I hadn't known
to live in my yard fluttered by.
Surrounded by noises of life,
the world as my backdrop, I read.

I felt a mosquito jab in;
decided to let it alone –
not brush it away; swat it dead;
nor even react at the red
that swelled up its little behind.
Another came by; took its take...

I watched them, it seemed a long time –

enough for their bellies to fill.
A third one alit on my hand.
I noted the time, as I read,
but thirty secs later it's gone –
it didn't have time to fill up.

I knew they had drunk by the itch
in spots where they'd punctured my hand.
I said to myself, never mind;
allow them a drink, tell the itch
it isn't required to be there;
and next thing I knew, it was gone.

Leslie N. Sinclair, Williamsburg, August 2022

V. Why Did They Die?

I thought it was easily done –
that critters need help to get well,
then let them behave as they will
and all will arrange itself right.
I got more ambitious, today...

The first was asleep for so long,
I took it along with me home –
still gripping my finger for aid.
Companion said not in the house;
it fell off my finger quite dead.

The next was a spider below –
it lay on the bottom half-dead.
Companion denied it my touch;
I fluttered the water behind
and fanned it to where it could breathe.

He said, it can sting someone there,
and that's when its structure collapsed –
it fell on its side as though lost,
with legs going limp, folding up,
and pool-water washed it away.

VI. One Year Later

I got to the pool with the sun –
the earliest light of the day.
A critter was swirling, entrapped;
perhaps it had already drowned.

Another one, giant and green –
reviving itself at my touch,
it fluttered its wings right away.

I talk to them now, and I said,
“I think you can leave me to swim -
you don’t have to walk, you can fly
away from my hand any time.”
Perhaps it had wings that were wet,
or somehow its feelers were hurt.
It wouldn’t depart; as the one,
a year ago, stayed on my hand.

I walked with it, watching it act;
Its legs were exploring my hand;
its mandibles nibbled me too.
It didn’t seem sick, and I thought
“It’s checking me out for itself,
ignoring that I want to swim.”

I told it I had to get on;
I offered it leaves, but no way.
My fingers took hold of it next –
it didn’t like that, to be sure,
but next time I tried, it fell off;
I left it there safe on a wall.

Footnote – A year or two later, another big green grasshopper wouldn’t let me alone. A neighbor told me it was a Katydid. It seemed to have pooped on my hand, as I arrived with it back at my home. BUT the next time I looked, my hand was clean. I think they were eggs, not poop, and they had turned into nymphs and hopped away! *Leslie N. Sinclair, July 16, 2026*