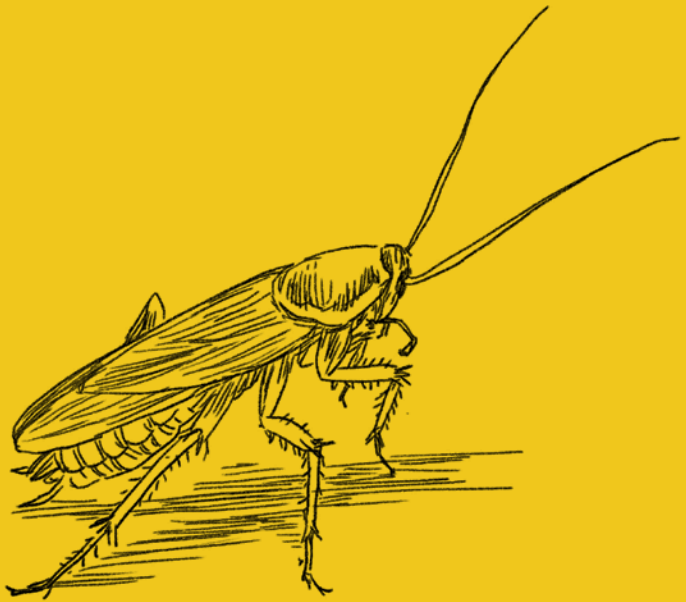
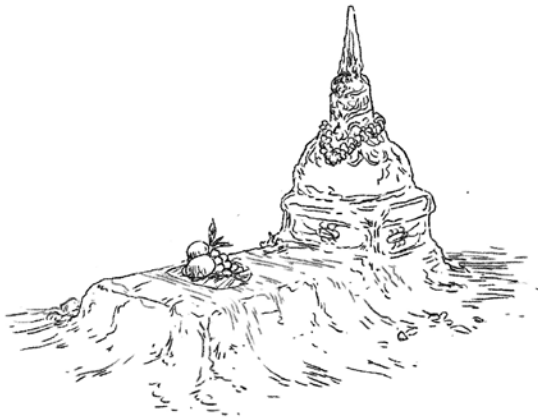


# SIGNS OF A ROACH





Dedicated to Atlas, beloved pet, dearly missed.

# SMELL

A roach is close. It smells like →



1 → 

1 Muesli, gone stale.


4 Cilantro, beloved by devils.

2 Tar, still warm.

5 Old milk, going sour.

3 Pepper, in a dustpan.

6 The first poo of your newborn child.

2 → 

1 Caramel, just expired.


4 Bread, gone mould-green.

2 Sawdust, wet by rain.

5 Carrion, embedded in honey.

3 Paper, buried in loam.

6 The soil of a houseplant you let die.

3 → 

1 Old wires, rusting in darkness.


4 Garlic, scorched to a crisp.

2 Cooking oil, turned rancid.

5 Coffee grounds, wet and old.

3 Rotting leaves, in sewage.

6 The sweat between your thighs and genitals.

4 → 

1 Sand, warmed by noonday sun.


4 Corn chips, bag left open.

2 Shed hair, clumped in the corner.

5 Oil, from last night's doughnuts.

3 Dust, in a damp cellar.

6 The storeroom you feared as a child.

5 → 

1 Papaya, far too ripe.

4 Insecticide, in your nose.

2 Wax paper, soaked in grease.

5 Nutmeg, that your cat pissed on.

3 Curing varnish, on a chair.

6 The soy-sauce bottle in a restaurant you regret.

6 → 

1 Wet fur, on a dog in heat.

4 Almond milk, slowly cooling.

2 Cigarette butts, in a beer can.

5 Mildew, on your mother's gown.

3 Compost, badly covered.

6 The puddle in your yard that never dries up.

# SIGHT

A roach is within view. It looks like →



1 → 

1 A coffee candy, wet with saliva.


4 A dried date, stomped on.

2 A leather pouch, left in the sun.

5 A fresh date, newly plucked.

3 A stain, indeterminate in origin.

6 A child that botched her attempt at hiding.

2 → 

1 A chip of wood, rattled by a saw.


4 An obsidian shard, among shards.

2 A bullet, fired by an invisible gun.

5 An oval of lacquer, translucent red.

3 An almond, roasted and polished.

6 A tiny door that you would regret opening.

3 → 

1 A chip of bark, dipped in oil.


4 A scab, peeled off in one piece.

2 A chocolate, in a shop display.

5 A potato chip, behind the couch.

3 A drip of wax, browned by flame.

6 A blur that vanishes when you focus your vision.

4 → 

1 A table, with too many legs.


4 A mold spot, on a highly-anticipated cheese.

2 A gob of tobacco juice, just spat out.

5 A slice of cellophane, browned by the sun.

3 A piece of sea-glass, washed onto shore.

6 An alien entity, evaluating you for qualities you would deny.

5 → 

1 A topaz stone, deep and unrefined.


4 A bronze medal, catching the light.

2 A black spot, in a corner of the eye.

5 A harmless insect, remarkably ordinary.

3 A twist of pork skin, in a kitchen corner.

6 A gorgon tasting the air with the snakes of her hair.

6 → 

1 A mango leaf, wet by rain.

4 A panting tongue, momentarily still.

2 A chestnut leaf, blown by wind.

5 A bar of soap, used down to a sliver.

3 A bay leaf, half-sunk in soup.


6 A long-lost cousin, successful in life, now come home.



# TOUCH

A roach is on you. Its touch feels like →



1 → 

1 A mother's fingernails, on your cheek.


4 A toothpick, pressed to your flesh.

2 A lover's breath, on your back.

5 A hair on your arm, standing on end.

3 A strip of velcro, over your shoulder.

6 The itch you feel after touching something foul.

2 → 

1 A small stone, jostled in your fist.


4 A cat's whiskers, under your chin.

2 A roll of cotton, on your eyebrow.

5 A kitten's claws, clinging to jeans.

3 A dead leaf, brushing your ankle.

6 The roll of suction pops from an octopus's arm.

3 → 

1 A wire brush, pricking your wrist.


4 A stranger's breath, on your hair.

2 A jolt, jangling the nerves in your spine.

5 A copper wire, scratching your finger.

3 A toilet brush, tickling your armpit.

6 The memory of a past age, when we were closer to the earth.

4 → 

1 A playful lover, touching your belly.

4 A sprinkle of debris, falling from above.

2 A toddler's fingers, drumming your side.

5 An ear of wheat, stuck into your ear.

3 A shift in the grass, as you nap in the yard.

6 The sudden throbbing of a temple vein for no reason.

5 → 

1 A strip of bubble wrap, crossing the floor.

2 A toothbrush's bristles, on your lower lip.

3 A drop of sweat, trickling downwards.

4 A peacock's feather, behind your knee.

5 A chicken's feather, across your brow.

6 The slightest weight -- enough for you to doubt something is there.

6 → 

1 A fishhook, inserted and reinserted.

2 A hair on your leg, untangling itself.

3 A dead bird's talon, on your inner thigh.

4 A makeup brush, dabbed on your shin.

5 A pencil, drawn down your forearm.

6 The beating of your heart, your own life's unyielding rhythm.





# TASTE

A roach is in your mouth. You bite. It tastes like →



1 A lump of wet sugar, crunch-crunch.

11 A spinach leaf from the back of the fridge.

2 A peanut full of baking soda.

12 A leafy top from a too-ripe strawberry.

3 A clod of congealed, week-old fat.

13 A chilli stuffed into a cigarette butt.

4 An egg filled with oil and sand.

14 A durian seed on a dirty spoon.

5 A shrimp, not yet shelled.

15 A bland pudding still in its packaging.

6 A spoon of curdled vanilla custard.

16 A dollop of pesto on peanut brittle.

7 A teaspoon of stale cashew butter.

17 A cup of nectar, full of struggling flies.

8 A scoop of instant coffee, dry.

18 A pipette of your own blood, gone bad.

9 A slurp of pus from your own pimple.

19 A syringe of salty tide-pool water.

10 A dead rat with an apple in its mouth.

20 A rupture. You forget everything you've tasted before.



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REACH OF THE ROACH GOD  
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