

HUMBUGS ?

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He hadn't noticed it at first. In all fairness, it had been a long busy year. There was the new house, and what to do with the old one. A new car was needed. A new grandchild in town helped fill the days. The most important factor was that each day, each doctor's visit was a continuing adjustment, an iterative reaffirmation of their life together.

His wife was in her fourth year of 'clean' reviews following surgery and treatment for stage 3 ovarian cancer. One of the results of the 'aggressive' chemo therapy she had received was a set of diminished faculties - what one audiologist had characterized as the "...hearing of a four year old." was now the hearing of a sexagenarian who needed hearing aids, in fact, almost as badly as he did.

Her skills as a marvelous cook they realized had been enhanced by her keen senses of taste and smell. Her taste buds had been severely impacted and for the first time chocolate tasted good, but the other cooking nuances were severely damaged and at times, enough red pepper flakes for her to taste were too much for him to enjoy. And her sense of smell had disappeared entirely. It had become his job to sniff things in the refrigerator to see if they should be kept or tossed.

According to the oncologist all of these changes were byproducts of the heavy metals including platinum used in the drugs. They had been warned about the possibility of neuropathy, a combination of tingling, pain, numbness and loss of strength in her feet, legs and hands. The neuropathy made everyday activities very tiring. She had to concentrate on each step;

things which used to be routine tasks now required thought and preparation. All of this plus the other losses had come. What had not occurred was the promised retreat of the symptoms and a return to normal functioning. None the less, it was difficult to be too unhappy, since they were together, beginning their fifth decade of marital bliss almost five years after the initial diagnosis and operation.

She dealt with the new infirmities with the same fighting spirit she had faced the cancer and the treatment. She adopted a new motto, "It is what it is." That was not a sign of resignation, but a starting point to challenge her limitations. One thing which was not affected in the aftermath of the treatments was her concern for tiny bugs of all sorts.

Possibly influenced by a book she read their children when they were young, *Be nice to spiders*, with the exception of bees, which could be easily traced to an unfortunate childhood incident when one flew up her nose, she had always had a kind heart when it came to spiders, beetles and most other creepy crawlies.

Her philosophy was, "he didn't ask to be born a bug," or the slight variation, "how would you like it if you were a bug?" He loved her very much, and on most matters they agreed. Here, however, their views diverged. After all, he was the Man of the house, it was his duty to protect his family and his home against intruders, and if that meant squashing a few bugs, or putting out ant traps, mouse traps, and even, on one occasion, rat traps [here she did not challenge him] well, that was his role - survival of the biggest, the law of the jungle.

One of the things that filled the year was the move from vertical living to horizontal living. The old house was all steps - it was a flight and a half to get a quart of milk into the refrigerator. The decision to look for a new home had preceded the diagnosis. That effort was put on hold when the treatment began. But when the 'all clear' report came through, they were back on the streets: open houses, friendly realtors eager to represent them, then the long slog through house after house which were not quite right. Finally, after months of

looking, their daughter found something on the internet, which was not what they had specified, but was exactly what they wanted.

The new house was a one floor plan. Everything they needed was there, with only one step to the outside or the garage. Best of all the basement was now his domain, a place where all his stuff, and items from five generations of their families could be reviewed sorted and organized. Since he was a little slow to get started on that project, it was good that she didn't venture down the steps very often.

Then, after a couple of months in their new home, he began to notice the smell! He couldn't identify it, it didn't seem to be especially stronger in one part of the house or another, but it would seem more pronounced at some times. Although an unassuming man in most respects, he took great pride in his smelling ability - natural gas, most any petroleum product, and the Gold Star Mother ship on mornings when the air was heavy. On these matters, he was an expert. While walking the dog in the old neighborhood, he had identified a number of places where he could smell gas. He would call CG&E [he hadn't adjusted to the Duke name] and invariably within a week the crews would be digging up old pipe and replacing it. There was even a place on Columbia Parkway where he could smell the gas works on Eastern if the air and wind were just right.

And so one day he asked his wife, "Do you smell that?" But of course, she could not smell much of anything, and especially this subtle scent which was beginning to bother him. He also noticed it in other places - a favorite nearby restaurant, his grandson's preschool; the neighborhood post office. What could it be?

That winter they first noticed the little bugs on the Roman drapes that covered the big back window. Then, on the same east wall, they appeared on the bedroom curtains. Eventually they were found on the west and south windows as well. Occasionally one would stagger across the carpet. The dog was interested in them, but didn't eat them although he had been known to snap bees out of the air. But mostly they flew about, frequently

landing inside lamp shades. When they flew, there was a humming sound, so he cleverly dubbed them, HUMBUGS. When his wife came across one, she would take a clean Kleenex and coax the bug onto it then carry it carefully outside.

He had had experience with small bugs another time. His father had lived in a log house out in the country. On one visit he noticed a few lady bugs inside and suggested that his mother, who had always liked lady bugs had come back to keep Dad company. He snarled, " I wish she hadn't brought her entire damn family." His mother had 12 siblings and innumerable cousins, nieces and nephews. And there were a lot of lady bugs!

It turned out they weren't lady bugs, but Asian beetles which had no natural predators, and liked to move indoors in the fall. His father took it upon himself to do something about it. He discovered that their love for warmth caused them to land in the upward facing bowl of a floor lamp he had. Once there they usually succumbed to the intense heat and fried. The odor was overwhelming. His father would let them build up, and then vacuumed them out with his indoor/outdoor vac. His son warned him that it was a fire hazard, but that was not a problem. The longer lasting legacy was the residual odor in the inherited vacuum cleaner even now almost a decade after his Father's death.

And his city bugs were different. They were bigger, varying from about the size of a little finger nail to that of a thumb nail in a shield shape. They seemed a bit goofy, not quick like crickets or equipped with special sensory awareness like cockroaches. Like moths they favored bright lights, usually settling on the inside of the lampshades after bouncing off the light bulb once or twice. When they landed on their backs they just wiggled about, eventually righting themselves.

Unlike his father's Asian beetle ladybugs, the humbugs always walked alone, never in pairs or a bunch. Early on as one walked across the side table, he smoothly swept it up in his hand shaking it around, and because his wife was watching, opened the door and threw it into the back yard. He was reminded of the classic scene by Robert Vaughn in *The Magnificent Seven*, when

the gunfighter tried to grab three flies off a table. The humbugs however, didn't present much of a challenge and he didn't do that again. Later that evening as he picked up a handful of peanuts, he thought they smelled funny as he brought them to his mouth.

Something dropped from the lamp shade, there was a bug climbing up his arm. He knocked it off. What is that odor?

The next day driving into town, he turned on the Diane Rehm show and heard her say, "join me to talk about the biology, ecology and efforts to control stink bugs. I'm sure many of you have seen them," Lights flashed before his eyes, a bell went off in his head, and a sinking feeling began to grow in the pit of his stomach. This is what was crawling around his house He listened in rapt fascination and growing horror as the two experts described in what seemed to him to be a rather cavalier fashion, the scourge that was the BROWN MARMORATED STINK BUG. He reached the parking garage and sat listening until the end of the show.

Once in the office he did a quick search and turned up little that he had not just been told. Surely there had to be research and literature on these things. The next day he went to the NPR web site and downloaded the transcript of the show. He read it through, three times! Over the next few days he reviewed in his mind what he had learned. The brown marmorated stink bug *Halyomorpha halys* was one of hundreds of varieties of insects, of the Hemiptera order. The family's name was Pentatomidae. Understanding that information pushed his high school biology class memories to their limit. He understood the self-protection nature of the odor release defense which occurred when they were frightened or squished. However, these brown marmorated stink bugs were no ordinary home grown bugs. Like his father's faux lady bugs, these were of foreign origin from Korea, Japan and China, discovered in Allentown Pennsylvania in 1998. He had never thought of Allentown as a major port of entry, but there they were.

Also like the Asian beetles masquerading as lady bugs, the brown marmorated stink bug had no natural enemies in the American landscape. In just a decade and a half they had increased their

territory to include 40 states. It seemed that while not very impressive up close, they could travel more than a mile a day. Also, while in Asia they could produce up to six generations in a year, in America they had two generations, except in mild winters when up to four came into being. This combination of factors accounted for their rapid expansion of territory.

Further, although not known to be dangerous to man [research is continuing on this point] they had quickly moved from minor nuisance to major destroyer of certain crops. Fruit orchards were especially vulnerable as were agricultural products ranging from soy beans to legumes to TOMATOES! The last item particularly struck a chord. He loved tomatoes and had just put in a major gardening effort at the new home where at last he had a spot with the proper sun and soil.

Keeping up with the stink bugs was becoming more time consuming. His wife continued to use her Kleenex method even after he had informed her of the true identity of the invaders. For his part he found an empty pill bottle with a snap on lid. He perfected a system of slipping the bottle beneath them as they sat on the curtain or lamp shade and then in one smooth motion knocked them into the bottle and clapped on the lid before they could loose their noxious venom. Two problems arose from this. First, his wife realized that he was keeping them in the bottle until they died and she did not approve. Second, the pill bottle was not always close at hand when he needed it. Beyond these factors, he wanted to shift his wife from the Kleenex method. He recalled one of the experts on the Dianne Rehm Show referencing a BUGZOOKA. Back to the internet, and sure enough, there it was.

Introduced with the slogan, "Never a dead battery, always ready!" Certified with the magic words, "As seen on TV", this skillfully engineered wand-like device extended up to 24" and powered by a squeeze pump built into the handle, it noiselessly sucked bugs into the 'catch tube' from which they could be easily destroyed, or in his wife's case, released back into the wild. It seemed perfect. So for a mere \$24.95 plus shipping and handling [or roughly the equivalent of 5,520 Kleenex] the BUGZOOKA was on its way. Unfortunately, it proved less than satisfactory. His wife declined to use it after the first

attempt to pump it up. Her neuropathy and a natural disinclination to things mechanical meant that her Kleenex method was much more satisfactory. For his part he found the suction and nozzle size was not always adequate to pull in the stink bugs which just pissed them off and resulted in more of the hideous odor. The BUGZOOKA was retired for good after his attempt to extract one from inside a lamp shade went awry when the stink bug took flight and his bid to suck him out of mid air resulted in the lamp falling to the floor with disastrous results. Not surprisingly, he did not blame the manufacturer of the device - it was the damn stink bugs.

It was not in his nature to charge into things. Although he avoided self-characterization, such as, "I'm the kind of person who..." fill in the blank, like all of us, over the years he had developed an inner sense of what he valued. He favored a deliberative reasoned approach to life with a strong bias to calm and self-restraint. He had been known to remark to friends and his children that, "Procrastination is an underappreciated virtue."

He tried to explain that once to his wife as they stood in the kitchen. She glanced at the dishwasher which was in its second week of non-operation while he considered how to repair the broken door latch. Then she turned and gave him THE LOOK. He never offered his procrastination point again in her presence. He also fixed the dishwasher immediately, working late into the night.

He read that the stink bugs entered under the eaves and through openings in the foundation. When spring came, he spent three straight weekends caulking every crevice under the gutters, around windows and doors, along the foundation. Certainly, now they were secure.

As they were leaving church one Sunday his grandson pointed to the inside of the main door and said, "Look Grandpa, a stink bug." He asked his daughter where her son had learned about the insects. "Oh, we have them at the house, and at his day care center. They are harmless" My God, they were everywhere - she didn't understand.

One Friday he came in through the garage and without pausing to kiss his wife, went straight to the back door, Sure enough, there on the patio was another Kleenex - for the fifth straight day. Every day this week! Last week had only been three days. "More stink bugs." he snarled. "Don't get like that, they don't deserve to die." "They're going to die anyway", he replied - we could buy half as many boxes of Kleenex at Sam's if you didn't insist on carrying bugs out on a cloud of Puffs.

What would you have me do? "I'll get you a pill bottle".
"And leave them in there to starve to death? They didn't ask...
"He turned and walked away. What a way to start a weekend.

He had read that some experts had characterized the odor as smelling like cilantro. He asked his wife what cilantro was. She explained that it was a leafy vegetable that looked somewhat like parsley, but had a much stronger, more pungent flavor. This seemed a bit ominous since the only two people he had ever known to actually eat the decorative parsley were his mother and his wife's mother. He had tried it once - never again. When next he was in the produce section at the grocery store, he went looking for cilantro. There it was on the top shelf next to the parsley, being misted and looking quite innocent. He glanced around, nobody was in the vicinity. He casually pulled a small bunch off the shelf, checked again for onlookers, and holding it close to his chest, pulled off a leaf and stuck it in his mouth. It was revolting, and a very close match to the odor which was filling his life.

The odor seemed more powerful sometimes. He finally connected it to the microwave. He checked, saw nothing. He turned it on, and sure enough the scent of stink bugs filled the room. He cleaned the insides, and then unplugged it, and took off the back. He was starting to remove something complicated to get to the sides where he was sure they were hiding. He prided himself on being able to fix things. Usually in moments of reflection he had to admit that he frequently broke something which didn't need to be touched on the way to his repair'. Despite this knowledge he was about to move ahead on the microwave when his wife walked in.

"What are you doing?" she asked. "Just trying to get the smell out of the microwave." he replied. What smell? The STINK BUGS he said calmly. "Oh, you mean the cilantro from the Lime Chicken carry out that we reheated Thursday?" The microwave survived for another day.

As he became more determined to rid the house of the demon bugs, he started to discuss alternatives with his wife. In response to one thought he got, "You are not calling an exterminator." Something about doing no harm, and chemicals and he didn't hear the rest. And he did call the exterminator, not from home, but from the office, their slogan was, you got'em, we get'em". Stink bugs? Sure, they're all over. Yes, maybe he did get more calls from that particular neighborhood. The big problem was the string of mild winters. In a way, Mr. 'you got'em, we get'em' said they were like cicadas, somewhat cyclical in their appearance. How to get rid of them was his question. Well you can treat the outside around the eaves and windows and foundation. But hadn't he learned that the benefits of external treatments were short lived? Of course you can caulk, but they can get in through openings so small you almost can't see them. The exterminator went on to say that since the stink bugs tended to lurk outside doors and windows, sometimes they came in when the door was opened or even rode in on the dog. The Dog! He fed and walked that animal, and now it was giving aid to the demon bugs. No wonder he wouldn't eat them, they were fellow travelers!

He asked about treatment inside the house. The exterminator thought a moment and suggested that maybe you fog 'em. Like a bug bomb for fleas? Yup, that should do the trick - Course you would want to be out of the house for a few hours afterwards...

Although stink bugs look very similar, there was one which he was certain was taunting him. He named it King Stink. His wife laughed at the idea, and said something like "...did you get his license plate number?" King Stink moved between rooms and windows with the same humming sound he had identified before. Now it seemed sinister. The next evening, he spied it in a fold of the curtain. He watched it for more than an hour, knowing if

he grabbed his pill bottle his wife would try to stop him. Finally she went to bed. He grabbed the bottle and went to the curtain. The son of a bitch was gone!

He became convinced that they were hiding in the attic. When his wife was out one day he made an exploratory visit

The down side of a ranch was that entry to the attic was through a ceiling hatch and the roof line was so low that he could not stand up once he got off the ladder. In the old house there was direct access through a door, and while you had to bend over and watch your head, it was possible to move almost to the edge with ease. He hoisted himself up onto the edges of the hatch. To his dismay he saw that the energy efficient previous owners had not only installed rolls of fiberglass insulation between the rafters, but had blown another six inches of loose fiberglass on top of that. That was a problem.

His first summer job in high school was second shift at a sweat shop where he loaded sheets of fiberglass into a press where a resin was poured in and the press stamped out a 4'x8' panel. The job lasted just a week and he lost an entire layer of skin as a full blown allergy kicked in. A year later he pulled a T shirt from the bottom of a drawer. Within 30 minutes he was itching as his skin turned bright pink.

So, how to explore the attic without reactivating his allergy and his wife finding out? He did determine that the rafters under the fiberglass were sixteen inches on center. He started planning an exploratory mission to determine whether the damn bugs were up there or not. He would need the proper gear. He went exploring across the internet. Items started arriving at his office, and then he would sneak them into the house

Under 'hazardous material handling' suits, he found some very reasonably priced one piece jump suits made out of Tyvek. He ordered three. There were no lights or electrical outlet in the attic. He would need a trouble light and an extension cord as well as a flashlight. Did he need a breathing device? May be just a surgeon's mask would do. What about bug bombs? Through the internet he found some industrial strength versions that promised to be five times stronger than regular store bought items. In some states he would have to send proof of an

exterminator's license to buy them. Not a problem in Ohio. Finally from the National Geographic catalogue came the night vision motion sensor video camera. He could have gotten the still action model, but for a mere \$60 extra he got the "8.0 - megapixel Infrared motion-detection HD Video Camera with 4x Digital Zoom." That should do the trick!

As the odor became more prevalent, he noticed it, and stink bugs in more places. He was an inveterate and indiscriminate reader. One day he asked the Head librarian at the Mercantile Library for a 'fun' read - "My spirit needs a little humor." he said. And a few nights later on page 137 of the librarian's recommendation, the chapter began,

Stupid stink bugs. Alexis said ...she had complained.. a million times about the bugs, about the way they came seeping into her room by the dozens...they'd go dive bombing.. her. Once one had gotten caught in her hair,,, the worst experience of her life, top three anyway. You couldn't squish them, because when you did they would spew out that poisonous gas of theirs which smelled like rotting cilantro. Vacuuming didn't work because that just made the vacuum itself stink, thereby broadcasting the odor to the entire house the next time somebody used it.

Had the librarian somehow found out about his 'problem'? Was he somehow in on this? And what about Diane Rehm? Well, not Diane Rehm, but he would have to keep an eye on the librarian!

He told his wife they were after his tomatoes!! She pointed out that he only had four tomato plants, he put them in too late, didn't water them, and that the deer ate most of the shoots before tomatoes would be produced. He dismissed her observations, certain that the little monsters were targeting his fine crop.

Finally, as summer came to an end, he began planning his brown marmorated stink bug eradication campaign. He collected his new acquisitions in the safety of the basement. He tested the "8.0 - megapixel Infrared motion-detection HD Video Camera with 4x Digital Zoom." It worked perfectly until his wife called down and asked what he was doing in the dark. He tried on the Tyvek haz mat one piece jump suit with hoodie. It was comfortable, but

he would have to remember to go to the bathroom before venturing forth.

He decided on a three phase strategy. First a basic quick strike incursion for reconnaissance purposes and to set up the camera. Second a more extended mission to recover and exam the video intelligence. He could also establish staging platforms on the fiberglass insulation for the final push. Third, the 'coup de gras' armed with his commercial grade foggers he would take the little devils down.

Obviously he had to wait until his wife was out of the house. He marked his calendar when she announced she would be going with a friend to get her hair cut. He urged her to stay out and have lunch. He cancelled a meeting set for that morning, and lurking just out of sight, as soon as he saw their car turn the corner, he raced back. Quickly donning his haz mat suit and sneakers, he set up the ladder under the hatch, got the camera out of the basement and went to work. He used a trouble light which he plugged into an extension cord and carried up the ladder. He could not find a nail to hang it on and the cord proved too short to give him much coverage. As far as he could see, he saw no stink bugs, but he thought maybe he could hear them - a low hummmmm. And he could smell them.

Moving thru the fiberglass proved more difficult than he had anticipated. The latex gloves he had selected gave him a good grip, but soon his hands began to sweat inside them. He also began to sweat as the spring sunshine heated up the attic which he had not expected. He had brought one piece of cardboard to provide a platform for the camera. Unfortunately it didn't provide adequate support. Seeing no other choice, he went back down the ladder and to the garage for a scrap piece of plywood to secure the camera. He was horrified when he saw what time it was. This was taking much longer than he planned. He set up the camera, came back down, secured the hatch, and was carrying the ladder through the kitchen when he saw the mess he had made on his previous trip.

Frantically he cleaned up and had just started down the basement stairs when he heard the door open and his wife call out,

"Honey, why are you home?" Tossing a 'hello' over his shoulder, he ran down the steps and stripped out of his gear. He came back up. "I forgot something" he said. "Are you sure you feel all right?" she inquired. "You look flushed, and your hands are all sweaty."

Over the next week he reviewed the first venture and considered adjustments for the extended search to probe the enemy's position. He desperately wanted to view the video from the infra-red motion sensitive 4x zoom camera. The Tyvek jump suit had worked well, but the gloves needed to be replaced and he needed more light. He noticed that he had a rash around his wrists where the latex gloves had left a gap at the cuff of his jump suit. Overall he was satisfied with his anti-fiberglass costume.

Some time passed before a second opportunity occurred. He had been encouraging his daughters to, "... do something nice with your mother." Lunch and shopping was the plan for a Saturday. The one glitch was when he was asked to watch over the grandchildren while they were out. That wasn't going to work! So for the price of lunch and movies with a baby sitter for the little ones, he had a four hour window to work with.

He staged his new equipment in the basement. He found three pieces of scrap wood which he planned to use to help him move across the attic. He didn't want to slip and put a knee through the ceiling! Catalogues and the internet brought him a battery powered LED camp light and a headband mounted miner's light in addition to the light on a lanyard around his neck and a three cell flashlight.

Fully suited up, including the face mask, he pulled on his long thin cotton gloves and admired himself in the full length mirror. He was ready for combat! Once more into the breach.

His first stop was the 8.0 megapixel infrared motion-detection HD video camera with 4x zoom. Other than early images of him while setting it up, there was almost nothing. It seemed to have turned on a few times, but he could not distinguish any images. He just knew the stink bugs were playing with him. His

lights worked well, but he could not detect any sign of the invaders. The process of moving through the attic was more laborious than he anticipated, so he abandoned the boards and moved cautiously from rafter to rafter. He developed a rhythm going across the 16" span, although his sneakers slipped on the edges as he tried to brace himself for the next move. He calculated that he was almost at the half way point in the house when he looked up and thought he saw something at the end of the attic! He hadn't mastered the techniques for turning his head to shine the head lamp where he wanted it, so he grabbed the flashlight out of his pocket and shone it on the space where the house ended and the garage connected off at an angle. Sure enough, there were a few stink bugs humming about! As he considered how to proceed he suddenly was aware that the attic had become extremely hot in the afternoon sun. Regretfully, he began to retrace his steps. It was so hot that he pulled off the hoodie and unzipped the front of his jump suit. He decided to pull the camera from the battlefield but left the LED lantern.

By the time the ladies returned he was sitting on the patio sipping a well-deserved beer. None the less, his wife looked at him with a puzzled expression and asked why he had a rash around his neck and on the top of his distinguished bald head?

Once again he reviewed the mission and considered the final battle plan. First, he would have to wait until it was much cooler. Also, he needed different footwear, the sneakers weren't working. The lighting was OK, but he would need some sort of satchel or backpack to carry the foggers.

Time passed. He could be patient, he was the cunning hunter biding his time until all conditions were right. Fall came and the marmorated brown stink bugs returned. He found that in general he could tolerate them better, knowing their end was near. He was sorely tested when one dropped from the lamp shade into his beer. He considered leaving it there to drown, but felt that it was too good for the bug so he threw beer and bug down the toilet. That was one of the methods mentioned in the Dianne Rehm show. However it and the others - drowning, freezing and then using for compost seemed too incremental. He wanted mass destruction!

As D-day approached, another incident confirmed the righteous necessity of his cause. It was the first cold snap of the winter. Not terrible mind you, highs around freezing and into the teens at night. None the less, it was the first cold they had experienced and despite having lived thru seven decades of Cincinnati weather, it always came as a shock. That morning as he stood in the kitchen pouring his coffee, his wife came thru the hall followed by the dog. Speaking, he hoped to the dog she said, "Now don't nudge me until I deal with this." In her hand she held a Kleenex in a funnel shape, as if she were carrying a lit candle. She walked past him to the basement door, opened it and gently pitched it down the steps. What was that?" he inquired in what he hoped was a calm tone. The look in his wife's eye revealed the failure of his attempt. "A stink bug." she replied in a steely tone, "I can't put them outside in this cold." And with a chill not related to the cold outside, he remembered seeing two Kleenex on the steps yesterday.

Once again, the first task was to see that he had a clear field for his operation. After discussion with his daughters, he agreed to spring for the complete manicure, pedicure treatment for all three of his ladies as well as lunch and shopping. Another \$500 invested in the project.

He had difficulty sleeping that night. He tried to go about Saturday morning in the normal routine. He was so focused, that when his wife asked him, "What are you going to do while I'm gone?" He couldn't think of a response. Finally he mumbled something about working in the basement, which seemed to satisfy her.

As soon as he saw the car turn at the end of the street, he raced to the basement, suited up in a brand new Tyvek haz mat jump suit, surgeons mask, cotton gloves and new rubber bottomed socks with individual toes that he had found on the internet. He gathered his equipment, putting it in a light weight back sack which his grandson had forgotten, in part because his grandfather hid it. It would get rediscovered and returned. No harm done.

With the ladder in position, he stood once again in front of his wife's full length mirror and pulled up the hoodie, so only his eyes were visible. He thought he recognized something in the image. Only much latter did he make the connection. From deep in his memory banks came the photographs of Japanese Kamikaze pilots just before takeoff.

He climbed the ladder, removed the hatch and entered the battle field. He turned on the LED lantern and left it near the opening as a guide for his return. He immediately got into the swing moving from rafter to rafter as he approached the end of the house and the turn into the garage overhead. At the junction he stopped and with practiced ease from time spent in the basement between missions shown his light along the eaves of the garage roof. Suddenly he stopped and gasped! There near the front corner, at the edge of the roof line was a mass of marmorated brown stink bugs. More than a foot high at the center, almost two feet in diameter were thousands of the demon spawn. The guy in North Carolina claimed he found 24,000 in his attic. Well, after this was done he would do a body count of his own. This could be a record.

He carefully pulled two of the super flea foggers from his back bag. He placed the bag and his flashlight to the side and considered his next move. Should he try to toss them from here? Would they get trapped in the insulation? No, he must get closer. And so, perched somewhat precariously with one hand holding the foggers he inched forward raising one knee to swing it onto the garage rafter.

What he didn't know was - while the house rafters were 16" on center and ran across the house, the garage rafters were 24" apart and because of the angle were not parallel to the house rafters.

Thus, when his knee came down on the drywall ceiling of the garage and he didn't have a second hand to grab at something, he went tumbling through. He landed on the roof of his new car [a claim he never submitted to his insurance company] setting of the alarm. But even above that noise, his screams could be heard

a block away as the MARMORATED BROWN STINK BUGS tumbled out of the overhead and covered him.

A few days later the polar vortex brought a week of subzero temperatures, causing one of the weather girls to comment - "It's not all bad news. We've been assured by the experts that next summer will be free of fleas, ticks, and even stink bugs."

He laughed hysterically and the tears of pain ran down his face as he watched the King stink bug walk across the top of the TV set.

Resources:

Want Not: Jonathan Miles, 2013

The Dianne Rehm Show, May 7, 2013, guests: Tracey Leskey.

Michael Raupp