



A Marvelous Night for a Moondance

I am staring at the spinning light of the police car, the blue orb pulsing in the dark. Someone is in trouble. Someone needs help...

My eyes snapped open. In the half-moon light, I took sleepy inventory of my bedroom: the outlines of the sepia photos on the wall, the ghost-like cedar branch standing in the corner, the plant I kept moving around the house for better exposure. And then I saw a flash of green that bathed the dormer. On...then off. On...off.

I sat up with a start. My first thought: an outlet was sparking. An anvil of terror crashed into my chest as I envisioned the house bursting into flames. I leapt out of bed, dropped to my knees for inspection, my eyes now adjusted to the dark.

I have a memory of being six or seven at Mitchell Gassner's house on summer evenings. The Gassners had a monument of an evergreen in their yard. During the nightly light shows, I'd imagine it was a most splendid Christmas tree with dancing luminaries and sparkling ornaments come to life. We challenged one another to collect as many fireflies in jars with holes "humanely" punched in the top, then see who could "go longest," inhumanely imprisoning them until, one by one, their lights went out.

This is my first summer in Bucks, having made stops in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Hoboken, where I lived on top of, below and squeezed among lots of other people, and where I always

had a bug "problem." For me, one bad bug did spoil the whole bunch. I was indiscriminating in my pursuit, capture and execution of anything that flew, crawled or scurried. Please know that before the swat, slap or whack of a newspaper that left its inky scar on a wall or counter, I always apologized. But something shifted when I moved here. In the majesty of this area, I have discovered a respect for all of nature, even the tiniest, peskiest, most unappealing creatures I share my new world with. I have cupped countless stinkbugs in my hands and coaxed shy spiders onto sheets of paper, depositing them outdoors.

Tonight, I would make very meaningful restitution.

Still on my knees, I reached for the windowsill, dumped the tea candle from its crystal votive and gingerly lowered it over my charge. Then padding down the steps, I carried the encased magical treasure – my own ailing Tinker Bell – through the house and flung wide the door. "Live!" I commanded, and it flitted then danced upward, its waning green glow brightening against the gaining light.

On behalf of Mitchell Gassner and the kids from Grant, Lincoln and Lawrence Avenues, I dedicate this to all those who died on those soft summer nights. 🍯