

## Mind Your Manners

Written by Laura Packard

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Insects suck.

Both literally and figuratively. And I have the physical and mental (the one and only time I went camping) scars to prove it.

Now, to make them even more annoying, they enjoy the same easy breezy days of Spring that we do. They, being all 950,000 species of insects that roam the same earth withering, wiggling, biting, hissing and getting on everyone's last nerve.

Maybe I am missing something here. It's not just the aggravation. It's also the utter lack of common courtesy. I don't know about y'all, but I was raised that if you're going to invite yourself right on in and plop down on a perfect stranger's pillow, stretch and stay awhile, at least use some manners and knock first. Or at the very least, allow me to offer a complimentary beverage. Everyone knows it's in bad taste just to help yourself. This is the South, after all. We are always looking for an excuse to break out the good china and crystal.

Most of you know by now, I am a born and raised Georgia girl; sprouted strong in red clay and covered in the sweetness of over-ripe peaches. This also means I am quite used to wasps, bees, hornets, flies, mosquitos, chiggers, red ants, blank ants and every other ant in between. I am not afraid. I may not wield an olive green plastic fly swatter like my MaMa, but my Tory Birch flip flops in cherry red work just as well. Bring them ON.

With a few exceptions, that is.

See, I have been bitten by a scorpion once, while pregnant, which I admit was frightening and hurt like the dickens. Did I mention I was pregnant? My Ob said not to worry, though, seeing as scorpions down South aren't poisonous like they are out West. They're just thirsty when there's no rain so they get in through the drains. Well, this one must have been parched because he not only climbed up the drain, he then scurried out of my shower, boot-scooted across the bathroom tile, shimmied up my bed post, crawled under my covers and then proceeded to bite me on my back. While pregnant.

My OB ended up being right. Six months later, I delivered a healthy, happy baby. But 16 years later, when her eyes suddenly morph from big ole baby blues into beady little stingers just 'cause I asked her to peel her wet towel from the floor, I shudder a little. But then again, it was probably all that Kafka I read in college.

Another particular insect I have no time for is the palmetto bug. For starters, let's just called it what it is. My first encounter with one was on a trip to Charleston as a pre-teen with my parents one weekend. After a long day of buggy riding, grave meandering and United Colors of Benetton shopping, I hopped into the shower before dinner, exhausted. That was when a ginormous FLYING cockroach landed directly onto my soapy, wet hair and fluttered. Y'all, I watched it take flight in silent horror and froze. Still to this very day, almost thirty years later, I can't shake the indecency of it all. So, let's be clear, like the political campaign-speak of 2008, if you put lipstick on a pig . . . well, it's still a pig. A palmetto bug, yes, while albeit that's a charming lowcountry name... is STILL a FLYING cockroach.

And don't get me started on no-see-ums. The actual scientific name for them is "flying midge" which doesn't make anything any better. Y'all, these invisible blood suckers that sting like a red hot poker make every single one of us look like we have lost our ever lovin' mind. There is nothing more ridiculous than a group of smart, interesting and well-dressed people, sitting al fresco, noshing on fish tacos, sipping a few glasses of chilled Albarino while scratching their scalp/knees/ear lobes/underarms raw with their fingernails/fork/knife/serving spoon/cocktail straw.

We are civilized down here in the South. We truly are. Promise. We just can't help that our insects have no idea how to act politely while out and about. But then again, it'll be summer before we know it when it's safe to wander outside once again. Only, it'll be hotter than Hades so we won't wander far.

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So scratch, itch and swat on, y'all. Springtime still is the best time to enjoy Lowcountry living . . . even while doused in a few bottles of Skin So Soft.