

The Ants: Melissa Hickey

Creep, crawl, creep. A cavity in the kitchen wall housed a nest of menacing creatures. Unseen but undeniable, their insatiable mouths poised to slash, seize, and devour, their antennae in overdrive. I wriggled an Ugg Boot off my foot, so I had a weapon to slam them with. Those pesky ants.

Any minute now, they'd appear and start munching on the crumbs Kelly left scattered around the toaster. A sheen of sweat developed on my forehead. Damn her. The slob. Why couldn't she clean the bench after breakfast? If she didn't shape up, I'd be on the lookout for a new flatmate. A cleaner one.

Those crumbs. I approached the bench and tapped the silver sink with my hand in search of a Wettex.

My ant aversion started a decade ago. At a family gathering at my aunt's place, I was bringing a plate of sausages to the barbecue when, on my way; I heard a shout. "Hey Liz, check this out," my cousin Zoe called from the pool. I stopped in my tracks and watched as she somersaulted into the water.

Out of nowhere, my legs experienced a sudden sensation of pins and needles. I looked down. My feet had landed on a sandy, dome-shaped hill, and small black dots spotted my shoes and legs. Ants, yikes! I hopped from one foot to another to shake them off. On a mission, the ants continued their travels up towards my knees. I screamed. Family members scrambled in my direction. Mum reached me first. She forcefully pushed me aside and slapped my legs hard and fast until the ants fell off. "Stop the hysterics," she demanded. "You're fifteen, not two. Ants can't hurt you."

Wow! Did she not know a single ant bite could trigger a deadly allergic response? They all looked at me, my extended family, their eyebrows raised. "Oh yes," a red glow lit up my face. I laughed, and in a complete turnaround said, "Silly me, yes, ants are harmless."

Like hell. The nasty crawlies set my heart pounding whenever one appeared. Still focused on the bread crumbs on the bench, a group of ants made an abrupt appearance from a hole in the wall. One by one, they ran helter-skelter across the bench. I slammed my Ugg Boot on their tiny bodies, bang, thump, slap. “So long ants,” I shrieked, “adieu, good riddance, and farewell.”

Melissa Hickey © 2024