A Fun Day in the Dungeon

Morning. All is still. The lights are still dim and the coffee still brewing. Conversation begins. Professional chatter of office matters. A peaceful hour.

Then, a gasp. It is discovered. An unsightly creature. Six legs scurry carefree across the dungeon wall. I wonder silently if he is thinking of a grassy field. My boss is begging for his death.

Cockroaches go *crunch* when you find them. And someone says “at least it wasn’t a wasp!”


She sits and we talk all about our summers. My boss happens to be out of the office for a spell – “probably for the best” I think, as the next moment unfolds.

Another sighting. This time, in the air. Terror. We let out a collective shriek.

Maybe I am the one who said “at least it wasn’t a wasp.” I am eating my words.

A menacing stinger dangles in the air above our heads. Jeffrey – we name him Jeffrey right away – is confused. Flying in irregular patterns. Bumping into walls, lights.

Surely his wings are tired. Surely he will stop to rest.

Not once. A plastic cup materializes in the hand of a rescue squad member – because nobody is an office worker when a flying insect is involved. In one quick movement, Jeffrey is swatted from the air and falls to the ground.

Before our squad can finish the deed, he has vanished. We are mystified.

Defeated, we return to our posts. Our human visitor leaves. We keep our weapons in hand.

Within minutes, Jeffrey returns. Smug creature – he once again eludes us. I am sure by now he’s smiling. Again, he vanishes into a corner, which we dig around in carelessly, without fear of his sudden emerging – the potential pain of a stinger in the retina.

We are furious.

“He’ll be back,” we say, certain that we haven’t seen the last of him.

Hours. A solid handful. No sign of Jeffrey. All hope is lost.
Our numbers have dwindled. Two squad members remain, distracted. In office worker form. Weapons laid aside, forgotten.

Then, the sound of a soft gasp of surprise reaches our ears, like a suppressed scream. The indistinct noise carries a weight of specificity, and I recognize the message.

In my heart, I know that Jeffrey has returned.

The woman who gasped escapes the scene when she boards the elevator. I enter the break room adjacent to our office instantly and report back to the squad member who remained seated at his desk.

All I have to say is “Jeffrey,” and squad member 2 is on his feet – leaping (walking) with a weapon (notebook) in his hand.

Jeffrey makes a few irregular laps around the room. Our eyes follow him.

My rescue squad partner is raising his notebook. Jeffrey is starting to sweat, I think.

Squad member 2 discharges his weapon, and our enemy falls to the ground.

We shout triumphantly. I am suddenly glad that we named the office wasp. Now we can say “take THAT, Jeffrey.” We do. Repeatedly.

Jeffrey twitches, struggles to recover from the blow he received, falters, stretches his wings. I decide he fought valiantly, doesn’t deserve to suffer, doesn’t deserve another chance to slink away like a coward and nurse his wounds.

His last sight on earth is my shoe.

I collect his remains in a paper towel and rid the building of his presence with a loud flush.

“Usually,” my rescue squad partner says, “that’s the sound of a bowel movement. Today, it’s the sound of victory.”

Caitlin Perry – Squad Member 1