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East Texas Wild Life

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Three Poems · Janet Piper

Cowardice

The pattern has been
    Fear and flight
At the first sight
    Of the Ugly or Evil.

I have been no comfort
    In trouble, to anyone—
Not even my son—
    The unforgivable sin,

For which no tears atone;
    The burden of age,
Which no prayers lighten
    Or assuage.

East Texas Wild Life

I
Roaches I dislike
    For the arrogance
Of their stance,

But more, I suspect
    From fear and respect
For their power of endurance.

Entomologists say
    They are not as old
As the earth, but nearly,
And here they will stay
   When the human race
Has long passed away.

II
Moths have depleted my wardrobe,
   And, unlike other bugs
Have eaten my rugs.

What mercy do they merit
   Who work such mischief
In secret?

III
As for ants, the small
   Sugar ants, I mean—
I fear I may have ingested
   A bit of that infinitesimal
Protein, unseen.

"BEHIND THIS MORTAL BONE"

My life is over
   And my days are done.
It is my turn—
   My time has come.

Adelaide Crapsey said,
   "I weave my shroud
But no one knows."
   I add: "Nor cares

What one wears—
   To drape the skeleton,
Cover the bone—
   We die alone."