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On the Road

by Sho Botham

Was there ever a June as glorious as that one? No. Never. Or was there? Glorious, no. Gruesome, yes.

I remember reading about it at the time.

Driving on the motorway, the driver felt something on his bare ankle above the back strap of his sandal. He'd reached down and brushed his bare skin with his hand. He felt okay. Two minutes later, he felt as if something was crawling up his ankle. He leant down and brushed it off. He couldn't take his foot off the gas pedal so made do with these haphazard hand actions. They didn't work. No sooner than he had brushed his hand over where he felt the crawling sensations when they started again. He didn't like it. He tried to glance down at his ankle and lower leg as he drove along to see if something was on his leg. Nothing. He could see nothing.

He began to think he was imagining the sensations. But they got stronger. It no longer felt like one creature crawling up his leg. It felt like many. Hanging onto the steering wheel with his left hand, his right permanently shaking madly in the confined space below, occasionally hitting his bare leg. Again he diverted his eyes from the road to look down.

Sweat poured out of him. His shirt soaked. A scream stuck in his throat. The road forgotten. His speed increased as he pushed his foot to the floor trying to get it away from the black crawling insects that covered his foot and ankle and lower leg.

He felt the car swerve. For a moment his attention was back on the road. His skin was constantly prickling; his blood pressure felt it might burst through the top of his head. He didn't need to look down. Insects were on his knee.

He hit his leg violently. More and more insects replaced the ones he dislodged. He was oblivious to the sensation of death as his hand crushed the bodies forming the relentless onslaught of insects crawling up his thigh towards his groin.

Panic set in.

His eyes bulged out from his head as they saw armies of insects crawling over his leg from foot to thigh. He was rigid with fear. His eyes were not on the road. His car swerved.

In an instant, insects clambered inside his shirt - their presence felt on his skin. They were on his neck. They reached his face. The car swerved. His hands left the steering wheel. They clawed at his face. Insects crawling inside his mouth; his nose; his eyes. He was oblivious to the car; letting it swerve all over the road. He shivered. The sensation of insects crawling all over his skin was unbearable. His mind was falling apart. He couldn't scream. He couldn't let them into his mouth. His lips were tightly shut.

The car swerved. It hit the central reservation at speed. Some insects died. The rest continued clambering over him. But the sensations of them crawling all over him were gone.