



A SUMMER BLESSING

It's the ants who've got my attention now, coming up through cracks in the clay soil of the apricot orchard this suburban house was built on. First sighting was a straight line across the kitchen floor and up the slick aluminum garbage pail. When I lifted the lid, they were already mobbing gobs of sour yogurt, plum pits, and bits of burnt turkey. These are the small black ants, not the big red ones that sting and make war, like those in Thoreau's Walden woodpile— these rather, the wily buccaneer crews who with industrious delight leave pheromone trails for one another from nest to bounty and back again. Each yawning July day they surprise me with their selfless camaraderie. When death comes, they mourn their losses on the move, trudging pieces of the fallen back to the colony: their communal serenity a balm for what we must also reckon as individual torment. According to the goddess Lakshmi, small black ants in a house signal the end of troubled times and the promise of wealth. No word yet from the state lottery commission on the status of our impending riches; however, I can report that the brave young scouts among them freely tickle their way up my leg when I sit too long in the same spot. And by this morning, they had trekked all the way to the laundry, among scents of sweat and grime, Clorox and Tide—and then this evening, just now in fact, one clever and lonesome soul danced across your forearm, my darling, my love.

—David Denny