



Silver Lining

When I bought my current home some years ago, I did so in mid-winter. The negotiations took place in the - very cold - kitchen of the building, and I was thus under no illusions at all about how uncomfortable this place could be at that time of year.

The actual moving date was in January, so my introduction to this place was totally coloured by the bitter cold of that season. But no matter how chilly it got in here - and it got so cold the bathtub froze over one day - I consoled myself by thinking of the warm seasons to come.

Spring eventually arrived, and the pleasure at seeing the eruption of greenery in the surrounding area soon erased memories of those January days. April and May are wonderful here; it's neither too hot nor too cold, the occasional rain is not bothersome at all, and even this non-insulated house can actually be called 'comfortable'.

June soon arrived though, and I learned something interesting about this place - the cold season *isn't* the worst time of year here - the rainy season is! The building is situated right on a river, so the problem of damp is magnified many times over. Rain drizzles from the sky, there is not a breath of wind, and there is so much moisture hanging in the air that it is sometimes difficult to breathe.

And don't ask me about the problem of battling mold down in the printmaking workshop! Myself and all the staff are now on full-time battle stations. If a damp brush is left on the bench overnight, it will be covered with green fuzz in the morning, and all the tools have to be washed after each use and hung upstairs in the most airy part of the building.

And what is worse, we have no ammunition with which we can fight this war. Back in the winter, when it became very cold, one could always put on another sweater, or huddle for a while on the hot carpet. But against this damp, there is nothing we can do. A modern office building can be sealed against the elements and climate controlled, but that is completely impossible in this sort of structure. My workroom is pretty well insulated, but it is certainly not airtight, and there is simply no escaping the insidious dampness. We have a collection of fans to keep the air circulating, and this does help to some extent, but for the most part, all we can do is wait for arrival of the blue skies of summer.

Even that won't bring all that much relief though, as the humidity here will remain very high right through until October, at which time we will enjoy the second of our pleasant seasons - the all-too-short autumn gap between the time of 'too damp' and the time of 'too cold'.

Look at this though - I've spent all this time complaining, and that's not the point of these stories. Let me do an about-face and tell you why this is the time of year when I can have the most wonderful experience ...

It will happen again this evening; after dinner I will head downstairs to the river embankment taking with me a small mat on which to sit. I won't take a flashlight, because it won't be necessary; all the illumination I need will come from the open sky ... and from the parade of visitors who pass back and forth in front of my grandstand seat.

The previous owner of this building had mentioned that I would be able to see *hotaru* on my own property, although at that time I kind of shrugged it off as part of his sales pitch. But it was no exaggeration, and here they are again, performing their magical dance. Yes; bring on the damp and rain, because if that's what these beautiful insects need, then let's have more of it! It's firefly season again!

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