

Barbara's Garden and The Spider in the Topiary

The walkway to the gym leads passed Barbara's garden; populated with a variety of colorful delights; enticing a host of busy workers and myself since early spring.

The workers scatter as I approach, then go about their business paying me no mind. There is one group of flowers the bumblebees seem to prefer; they grow in all directions, adding a much-needed asymmetrical relief to formal symmetry. Butterflies light on one flower then another in an erratic pattern, designed to confuse predators. The smaller workers depend on speed and maneuverability.

A grass spider lurks in the topiary, her web exposed by the morning dew, bad for a business depending on mistakes.

In most ways the workers are oblivious of each other and me. Still I feel a sense of place here among them, of being in the moment, rare in my suburban world. We are insulated from, even hostile to, the natural rhythms of the world. We secure the doors and windows, pull shades, close blinds and turn on lights. Our air comes conditioned; food prepared, entertainment voice activated; our days and nights come from the electric company.

My gym mates, preoccupied with their routines in a well-lit mirrored room, will greet me and bring me up to date on current events. The TV will be politically left or right, depending on who got there first and the

conversation will be pursuant to it. I spend most of my time in this suburban world. Yet there are times when the separation from nature seems like alienation.

One morning a storm was offshore. We were getting some effects, gusting stereophonic wind and warm breezes. Colors were muted, whirly jigs a-blur and the workers were hunkering down somewhere.

Only the spider in the topiary was busy, repairing her web.

I watched as she finished adjustments and darted back into her hidey-hole; nodded a Namaste and went to the gym.

I was alone this morning, no TV blaring, bright lights, clinking of weights and the steady grinding of badly maintained equipment. Inspired by a spider I turned off everything that would turn off, raised the blinds, opened windows and worked out. Content to be here, in the moment.