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Karma is a Wasp Queen

Tue, 2015-09-29 20:25 — Robin Olson

I thought a lot about Karma last week when Sam and I decided we had to call an exterminator to rid our house of a nest of social wasps. They'd built a home under the siding over the summer and although I knew they would perish naturally in a few weeks, there were so many of them swarming outside that I worried they'd be chewing through the walls breaking inside the house next.

As a Buddhist I am told to consider every living being in the same way as I would think of my mother. Every fly is my mother. Every spider is my mother. Each creature has a precious life and to take even one on purpose is definitely not something you want to do.

The morning of the event, I wept. I really did. My cat Gracie is constantly wavering from circling the drain to maybe feeling better. I didn't want to kill other creatures. I thought about the Queen wasp and all the drones. I thought about how they would be dead soon and how could I do that while my own cat was so ill. I knew that there would be a price. I just couldn't imagine what it would be. I just hoped Gracie would be left out of it.

Joe, the exterminator arrived. He has a Brooklyn accent and a friendly demeanor. When I told him my concerns he said that the wasps would have to go because they really could cause a great deal of damage. In my own defense, last year they built a big nest on the underside of a bird feeder so we just didn't go out on the deck much and the birds got fed elsewhere.

Joe explained the process. It was a powder. It was safe for us. It would work pretty fast. I didn't want to see the wasps die but it was happening right outside my office window. As he applied the powder I heard the wasps making a familiar "tick" sound inside the wall. They were moving around trying to get out. Some were trying to get in because the alarm, sent via hormones through the air, had gone out and the wasps who were outside were coming back to save the Queen...but it was already too late.

I said a silent prayer. I said I was sorry to the dead wasps. They aren't just bugs. They are part of the natural world and now they were gone.

Joe said that we should be all set and wished us well. I tried not to dwell on it and went back to fussing with Gracie, trying to get her to eat.

Until that night when Fluff Daddy knocked over a lamp.

He was trying to get at the wasps. Yes, that's plural, WASPS. They had found a way into the house and there were about a dozen of them skittering about around Fluff Daddy's head. He and Freya were having a blast racing after their newest toys.

It's funny how quickly things can change. I went from pure remorse to hyper-protection-mode. I had to get the cats away from the wasps and I had to get the wasps OUT of the house, fast.

I ran for the vacuum and Sam and I spent a few minutes sucking up every one we could find. We managed to take a very few of them outside, but there were too many. We decided to leave the vacuum out because we didn't know if there'd be any more. A few minutes later the cats would go crazy, signaling that there was another...and another...all in the same room by the front door. But where were they coming in from?

We looked around and found nothing. Only the front room had wasps so it had to be from that room. I flashed back to a day when we found a mouse in the house. I figured out it came in from inside the coat closet by the front door. The sheet rock from the back of the closet didn't go all the way to the floor. There was no molding at the end of the sheet rock so anything inside the walls could get into the house. It took me until the next morning to figure out that was the problem.



Creative Commons. Wasp. Thanks to [Richard Bartz](#). ^[1]

Joe returned and we began emptying out the closet. Sure enough wasps continued to come into the house from inside the closet. The tables certainly were turned. I was struggling to consider the wasps as blessed living creatures. I just wanted them out of my house.

Joe treated the areas and he took another look around. We thought that things were settled once and for all. Joe cautioned us that maybe we'd see one or two more wasps but they'd be heavy with the dust and too off-kilter to sting any of the cats.

It was late morning so I went upstairs to the foster room. I began doing the daily cleanup when I noticed Piglet playing with something. **It was a dead wasp.** Their room is directly next to where the nest was in the wall. Joe told us there was no way they could get into the ducts and fly into the rooms so I couldn't understand where this lone wasp came from.

I had shut the window when the spraying was going on so I decided it was okay to open it again. A few moments after opening the window about 10 wasps appeared in the foster room. I called out to Sam to bring me the vacuum quickly. I couldn't risk the cats getting stung and these wasps were none too happy. Though I would have preferred to catch the wasps and let them go outside there was no time. I sucked up each one, then waited, then another would appear. I wondered if they, too, had an entrance route through the closet in that room.

It seemed as though I'd turn my head for a second and another would appear, but it couldn't be from the vent, right?

Wrong.

I decided to put a flashlight on the vent. I turned it on knowing it would attract the wasps. **A moment later, a wasp appeared IN the vent.** I called for Joe yet again. The receptionist was stunned when I told her, no it wasn't just one or two wasps, it was over a dozen. She told me to cover the vent with a doubled over garbage bag, to seal each edge of the bag perfectly because wasps can slip through a space the thickness of a piece of paper. She promised me that Joe would return, but not until the next day. I was to cover up the vents near the nest and report back if it got worse.

The next morning Joe returned, a bit embarrassed. He'd never seen wasps get into duct work, but we have a cheaply built house so I'm not surprised. He told us to simply leave the vents in my office and the foster cat room sealed shut for the next few weeks. Any remaining wasps would die once it got cold enough outside. He did not want to put any chemicals into the duct, nor did I want him to do so.

He re-inspected the area outside the house and declared that the siege of wasps was over and this time he was right.

I'm pretty sure I'm going to have a crappy re-birth over this, but at least I don't hear buzzing.

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Wasps [6]

Oh my. How harrowing for you with everything going on with Gracie. But you know what you're doing to be wary of wasp stings. I had a cat who was allergic to them. He loved to be outside and thought nothing of swatting at any which would fly by him. I watched helplessly as he got stung on the nose and then drove like a mad woman to the vet when his face swelled up and he struggled to breathe. Of course, he didn't learn his lesson and I had another episode involving a paw the size of a sausage. Karma might have come back but she needs to tell the wasps to move to other quarters.

Wed, 2015-09-30 14:13 — jmuhi (not verified)

RE: WASPS [7]

Sad and scary, Robin. I can relate to your not wanting to kill the wasps, as much of my cultural background is rooted in respect for all living beings; but of course, if someone is attacking your loved ones, your natural instinct, no matter your beliefs or roots, is to protect them, and rightly so. We have paper wasps here in L.A. Metro, and they build nests. I once pointed one out to my gardener and he got quite animated, saying we should get rid of the wasps. I told him they had not harmed anyone and would not harm him as long as he kept his distance. The wasps never come in the house, thankfully, and I am quite happy to let them live their lives, as I have been with a large bee colony that decided to take up residence in some outside ductwork one year (and then left, never to be seen again). So glad your family stayed safe from your own wasp onslaught.

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