After midnight



By Nate Smelle

I awoke just after 4 a.m. this morning to the sound of crashing. Preparing myself to confront the intrusion on my slumber I switched on the lights and headed downstairs slowly to investigate. At first glance everything appeared in order. Suddenly again there was another crash. Whatever it was, was in the living room.

My mind jumped back to the movie I had watched the night before. Could this be the real life Dawn of the Dead that would bring on the zombie apocalypse? I remembered the mantra from nearly every film on the undead I had ever seen ?remove the head or destroy the brain.? Like every other fool to wander blindly into the darkness in a horror movie I moved toward the source of the commotion ready to do battle.

There was dirt all over the floor, as well as a pile of books that had been knocked off of the coffee table into the mess. Before I could make sense of the situation a stampede of footsteps came running towards me from behind. Turning around quickly I watched my cats Kaya and Kanika race by me in pursuit of something I could not see.

Spinning around again something flew by my face from out of the darkness and landed on my shoulder. Grabbing an empty mug from the counter I trapped the creature before it could take flight. Holding it under the light its markings were bright pink, peach, blue, silver, beige, black and white. Beautiful!

Unlike any moth I had seen before I took the Audobon field guide down from the shelf to identify it. At least my cats' co-conspirator to get me out of bed hours before my alarm was a species I had not seen before, I thought to myself.

To Kaya and Kanika's disappointment I took their new friend back outside and set it down on a hollyhock blossom. The moon was so bright I could see the colour and detail of the flowers. I remembered hearing that the full moon in August was being referred to as a ?super moon.? Basking in the moonlight, enjoying the extraordinary illumination, another cosmic reminder flashed by overhead. I had forgotten that it was the time of year when the annual Perseid meteor shower put on a show for us who live far enough away from the light pollution that lingers over towns and cities. Remembering that the best time to sit back and enjoy the show was just before dawn I decided to buy the ticket and take the ride.

As the moon dipped below the treeline and the sun rose above the horizon, the meteors faded into the new light of day. Walking back to the house I noticed that the one-eyed sphinx had left its perch on the hollyhock. Approaching the front door I could see Kaya and Kanika sitting at full attention in the window. Waiting for me outside on the window screen, the moth, seemingly ready for a second go at domestic life.

The Perseid meteor shower is active from July 17 to Aug. 24, and peaks between Aug. 9 and Aug. 13. It can be viewed best by looking up towards the northeast sky between midnight and dawn. At its peak and under the right conditions one can view between 60 and 100 meteors an hour. As famed astronomer and jazzman Jack Horkheimer used to say, ? Keep looking up!?