



THE SONG OF CEDRICK

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My wife tutors the children of one of her former students and is always finding interesting activities for them. The other day she found a dead cicada on our back patio under our large red maple tree. She put it in a glass jar so she could show it to them the next day.

Later that day, she and I were in the office when I noticed our cat was staring at the cicada in the jar. I was surprised to find her displaying so much interest in a dead cicada. I looked more closely and thought I saw its legs move. I looked closer, but it appeared as lifeless as it had been all day. Then the cat's ears went forward, as she and I peered into the jar. Its legs were definitely moving this time! Intermittently at first, then more repetitively, the cicada began moving, still on its back. I told my wife, who was as surprised as I was. She put several air holes in lid. He (we were both sure it was a "he") was making a valiant effort to come alive. We could tell it was not easy. I went and grabbed some leaves from our maple tree and put them into the jar. He immediately clung to them. My wife (having researched and become our new resident expert on cicadas), learned that while they are primarily nocturnal, cicadas like light and warmth, so she moved the jar directly under her desk lamp. He got visibly more active.

When it became apparent that he really wanted to live, I suggested she release him into the back yard. She was reluctant to do that as she was planning on sharing him with her young students. But we became convinced that he WOULD die if he stayed in that jar, so she reluctantly released him, placing him on our patio table.

In the early evening when we went out to check on Cedrick (we had now named him "Cedrick, the Cicada"), we saw that he had flown to a nearby crab apple tree and was now singing his heart out. I know this sounds ridiculous, but he sounded absolutely exuberant and joyful. Other cicadas began to wake up for the night and started their songs, but none sounded like Cedrick! The melody, the tone, the rhythm – all expressed his radiant enthusiasm, a song of boundless gratitude and delight. Had I not witnessed it myself, I would have thought it no more than sentimental fantasy. But I felt the energy. He was happy and singing out his joy.

My wife informed me that male cicadas sing to attract their mate, and the closer their mate comes, the softer they sing. He seemed so happy to be free that it made us happy, too. Happy for his freedom and life, and happy for our own. That night, through our bedroom window, we heard him singing, until, in the wee hours of the morning we noticed his location had changed and his song become much quieter. I like to think he found his "beloved"; that while in the jar he somehow knew she was coming, and that was why he just had to live. But whatever the case, witnessing his movement from apparent death back to life was astonishing.

In the end, Cedrick was only a bug. But his coming back to life brought me such joy. I wondered why. I decided it was because of what it represented in me: my own desperate struggle to come "back to life" after times of loss, sorrow, or failure; my own feeling that sometimes I am trapped in a jar with no way out and nothing to do but give up in despair. I have experienced times of self-doubt and self-recrimination; times of fear; times of feeling indifferent to life. In other words, I was spiritually "dead". Yet, like Cedrick, something in me stirred. I awoke to a new strength, a new determination, a new courage to make the effort – to wake myself up, to come back into the Loving that is the source of my being – to come alive again!

That process of transcending our circumstance, of heeding that inner call to wake up, even in situations where it seems impossible – that is what brought my joy in what Cedrick did. Because that is what I, too, can do: find that which is invincible in me, stand up after whatever fall I have taken, and embrace life with the same kind of exuberant joy I heard in the song of Cedrick. The wondrous ability to wake up is the miraculous dynamic of our spiritual journey. Rather than complaining about the struggle, today I stand in awe of it. I am alive! I am awake! Can you hear me singing?! I, too, am calling to my Beloved.