

The Unlikely Hero of Flat No. 403

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Raghav Mishra had two great fears in life: Cockroaches, and people who were not afraid of cockroaches. This is why it was especially unfortunate that he lived in Flat No. 403 of Shanti Residency, a building so old that even the cockroaches paid maintenance.

One Saturday morning, as Raghav prepared his famously inconsistent chai, he saw it—a cockroach of such extraordinary size that it could’ve filed income tax.

Raghav froze. The cockroach didn’t. It stared at him with the calm assurance of someone who pays rent. Raghav did the reasonable thing: he screamed, dropped the kettle, and called his neighbor, Mrs. Gupta, an unflappable retired school principal known for disciplining both children and municipal staff with equal ease.

“Mrs. Gupta! Emergency! Crisis! Disaster!” Raghav howled.

Without asking further, Mrs. Gupta marched in wielding her weapon of choice: a thick slipper that had seen more battles than the Mahabharata.

“Where?” she demanded. “There,” Raghav whispered, pointing at the creature now sitting on the wall like a disappointed landlord.

Mrs. Gupta took aim. But just as her slipper ascended with righteous fury, the cockroach did something unexpected. It waved.

Not randomly. Not insect-ishly. A deliberate, polite, unmistakably human wave.

Both Raghav and Mrs. Gupta froze. The cockroach adjusted its antennae and tapped on Raghav’s kitchen tile three times—like someone knocking at a door. Then, with surprising dignity, it scuttled under the sink.

A long silence followed.

“Beta,” Mrs. Gupta finally said, “yeh toh... shishtachari cockroach hai.”

Raghav blinked. “A polite cockroach?”

“Bilkul. Even I didn’t hit it. That’s character development.”

But Raghav could not sleep that night. What kind of cockroach waves?

The next morning, he decided to investigate. Armed with a broom, a flashlight, and a prayer, he peered under the sink.

No cockroach. Instead, he found a small scrap of paper. He unfolded it.

In shaky handwriting, it read:

“Sorry for the fright.

Trying to quit startling humans.

New to the city.

– K.”

Raghav stared.

“K? K for...?”

Before he could finish the thought, a familiar scritch-scratch sounded from the floor. The cockroach emerged, tiny backpack strapped to its back, as if ready for a weekend trek.

Raghav, shocked but curious, whispered, “You... left me a note?”

The cockroach nodded.

“But... but why me?”

It tapped three times, then pointed at Raghav’s face.

Mrs. Gupta, who had silently entered behind him (a superpower school principal never lose), interpreted confidently:

“He looks harmless. Even insects can tell.”

And then came the twist. The cockroach reached into its backpack... and pulled out a miniature ID card. Raghav took it with trembling hands.

On it was printed:

Inter-Species Urban Coexistence Program (Pilot Batch)

Field Agent: K.K. Roach

Assignment: Human acclimatization

Status: Ongoing

Raghav’s jaw dropped.

“So... you’re... you’re an intern?!”

The cockroach proudly puffed its tiny chest.

Mrs. Gupta sighed. “Government scheme hoga. Sab kuch ho raha hai aajkal.”

From that day on, Raghav became the unofficial mentor of Agent K.K. Roach, teaching him how not to appear suddenly on toothbrushes, how to knock before entering, and how humans feel when a flying cockroach takes flight (mostly: betrayal).

In return, K.K. ensured that no other cockroach ever visited Flat No. 403.

Years later...

Raghav received a tiny envelope. Inside was a microscopic medal and a note:

“Graduated.

Thanks, Mentor.

Keeping your flat off-limits forever.

– K.K.”

Raghav smiled. The world never believed his story. But Flat No. 403 never saw another cockroach again and honestly—that was proof enough