

## The Mantis

Legs, like spindles. Small prickling hairs growing, feelers being cleaned by mouth, eating small dust particles as a snack. Something about them was intriguing, they just sat and swayed with the wind. A metronome. One time- tic-tic-tic-tic. Right-left-right-left. Their small head cocked to one side as if pondering the meaning of the universe.

That's how I found them, the mantis. I'm no insect expert, so I will not try to label them as male or female at this time.

They were pretty hesitant about me at first- I was massive compared to such a small and fragile looking creature. They were unsure if I was a predator. I moved my elongated pointer finger over near their torso. It was rejected by a scattering of legs moving to a safer distance. I leaned back and gave them time to think of me, as a friend.

I made observations in my notebook:

- Light brown body and wings, greenish long legs
- Six legs, 4 behind for walking, two front, folded
- Two antennae (both around same length)
- Two (?) eyes, elongated spheres
- One prickly mouth
- Long curved back-side (butt?)

They were young, based on the size. Last fall I found a large one, all bright green and weathered. It had gotten cold so quickly, and they were outside on the ground, almost frozen. I picked them up and brought them inside to the windowsill in the hallway for some rest. Once inside in the warmth, they moved slowly, eating the frost off of their front legs, slowly unfolding. After a few hours I returned and placed them back outside on the patio. Unfortunately, I think that was the end of their life.

They stopped moving altogether, and I placed them in a small crevice of rocks.