

A dichotomous key to common ants, flowers, and emotions of the Springtime

1. Antennae geniculate; six legs; sharp constriction just after the first true abdominal segment; unlikely to be either flower or emotion of the Springtime.....**2**
- 1'. Otherwise.....**6**
- 2 (1). Worker caste distinctly dimorphic; antennae terminating in a 3-segmented club; Having nothing to do with the flush I see or imagine in your face as you speak to me.....
.....*Pheidole* (>1000 species world-wide)
- 2'. Your eyes change as you look at me. A refocusing from the background? An anticipation of running? Is it desire? They are brown and deep, I am not focusing, I rely on approximate visual cues from your face to know when to smile; I should be thinking about ants.....**3**
- 3 (2'). ok. Concentrate.....**4**
- 3'. Worker caste continuously polymorphic; antennae terminating in a 2-segmented club; the sting eliciting a raised pustule in humans and many domesticated mammals.....*Solenopsis invicta*
- 4 (3). A circular hole fringed with hairs (the acidopore) present in place of a sting; antennal scapes extending past the rear margin of the head by more than half their length; light brown; rapidly, erratically, constantly in motion; pantropical.....
.....*Anoplolepis gracilipes*
- 4'. Acidopore not present; citronella-like smell when agitated (or perhaps blue cheese, or coconut).....**5**
- 5 (4'). Somewhere between Rumi and Malthus; familiar, yet under a microscope a serendipity of dust and splendor: focus; focus; There be dragons, quarks, infinities.....
.....*Tapinoma melanocephalum*
- 5'. I'm just grinding everything up and shooting their DNA with lasers; Nature is an imp, a trickster-god: fawn/coyote/spider dancing at the periphery of my vision.....*Technomyrmex difficilis*
- 6 (1'). Flower radially symmetric (actinomorphic); I've guessed how you feel about me, and now I need to make a decision; do I push you away with words, and lead you along with my breath; do I let myself be led; which of us is clay and which will be sculptor.....**7**
- 6'. Flower symmetry otherwise; Or else, are we musicians? Swordsmen? Any number of other weary analogies; Could we just be demosponges or pines, and dowse our vicinities in our passions? What are the secrets of your face and voice? What do we all conceal? Dragons, quarks, infinities; dust & splendor.....**8**
- 7 (6). Heliotropic, if you have the time to watch; You didn't really need a dichotomous key for this, did you? You've seen this before;

you've tasted it; you've felt the warmth—it seems to be evercleft to Zephyr—taller than should be possible, nodding gentle affirmations of summers to come.....*Helianthus annuus*

7'. Thorny and conspicuously thigmotropic; the flowers are purple puffs; Thoreau saw what he wanted to see, and jerked off to his own adverbs. Fuck him. He taught us nothing but a mistrust of breathlessness; Beware all ye who wallow in the slop of false epiphany; Pantropical, introduced outside of its native range by commerce.....*Mimosa quadrivalvis*

8 (6'). At night, a room could be filled with the warm, languid spice-scent; nectar spur ~20cm long; I should not have said those things; my laugh sounded fake, was too loud, too quick; you won't want to see me again; it's better; I'll smile and hug you and assume we'll return to unfamiliarity; obligate mutualism with an extraordinary moth; native to Madagascar.....*Angraecum sesquipedale*

8'. John Gardner intimated that life might have a pythonic purpose, but I don't know what that means. I don't know what pythonic means. I think it might be important. Engulfing? Powerful? Tortuous, winding? Constrictive? Burmese? Monty? Cool and smooth like a stalactite; long intervals of slumber punctuated by hungry awakening and a hunt; he's dead now, so I can't ask.....9

9 (8'). Imposing; unmistakable; having the scent of rotting meat; I saw pictures, you and he in various locations; you (plural) were smiling; I (singular) was not there; I am swallowing things; swallowing; I am not thinking about this; the scientific name suggesting the resemblance of the unbranched inflorescence to a colossal, misshapen penis; satisfying to hack with a machete.....*Amorphophallus titanum*

9'. Fragile and easily trodden underfoot, but ultimately resilient in frequency: a dew-sparkled embodiment of autopoiesis; on the first warm day, as the snow thaws, there are throngs, unhuddled masses, calling to be admired; entire genders in bloom; fragrant; a ringing in the pineal depths; eclipsing; rippling on the surface; rootless; sticking to oars, to the eyes of a crocodile, to the feet of a grebe; possibly ant, or flower, or emotion of the Springtime*Wolffia arrhiza*

10. Just as Neruda cast his net into the enigmatic sea (brimming with cnidoblasts and algae and mother-of-pearl), and trawled in (hand-over-hand) his naked self, so have I lost and found myself while turning over stones and rotting logs; the fleeting moments of contact with the other; with you.....

10'. How did you get here? How did any of us.....