

LINDA FRANK

VON FRISCH'S TEN LITTLE HOUSEMATES

He explores their existence, examines
their exuberance, exalts in their extravagance.

The housefly he calls a trim little creature. A man
would have to leap from the Westminster Bridge

to the top of Big Ben to compete with the flea.
All living creatures are equal in the great law

of life, he writes. Even bed bugs. Lice can carry
two thousand times their body weight with their forefeet.

He says cockroaches are a community that has come
down in the world. Silver fish, entirely harmless sugar guests.

The spider's actions differ in detail according to the weaver's
character. We cannot blame the tick for her bloodthirstiness.

Anyone who has to hatch a few thousand eggs deserves
a good meal. In gnats, the organs of flight have reached a high

level of perfection. Moths are useful scavengers. What else would
happen to all the decaying hair and feathers that disintegrate so slowly?

Von Frisch's little housemates are extraordinary, in their own way
exceptional. At the end of each affectionate chapter

he recommends in equally good natured tone and detail
how each could be best be exterminated.