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Mad Scene

Written by Matias Travieso-Diaz | 👁 Hits: 6

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Oh, happy day! At last, I am yours, at last you are mine; God gives you to me.

Every pleasure is more gratifying, life will be a smile from merciful heaven for us!

Salvadore Cammarano / Gaetano Donizetti, Lucia di Lammermoor, Act III, Scene 2

Arturo, an impetuous male praying mantis, is anxious to engage in sexual commerce with a welcoming female. This age-old ritual is replete with dangers, but Arturo is determined to be careful. For him, success will be achieved if he can get onto the female's back, copulate, and dismount without being eaten.

He spots a female, Lucia, resting on a fallen log, and approaches her slowly, with extreme caution, stalking her from behind to avoid being seen and identified as prey. He detects the pheromones being released by Lucia that indicate her readiness for sex and decides that the pleasure that awaits him is worth the mortal risk.

Once he is close enough, he leaps onto Lucia's back. This is the most dangerous moment in their courtship, for he must clasp her thorax and wing bases with his forelegs, yet position himself in such a manner that he can penetrate her abdomen while staying out of the reach of her forelegs, which are enlarged members with long, sharp spines that interlock to hold their catch securely. These "raptorial legs" are formidable instruments of death and must be avoided.

Contact is made, and intercourse begins. Arturo deposits his sperm in a chamber near the end of Lucia's abdomen. As she senses her partner, Lucia twists her flexible neck almost completely, allowing her to search behind her to locate the interloper. Arturo notices the focusing of her stare in his direction and the opening and closing of Lucia's mandibles. He accelerates his thrusts, hoping to get done and run away unscathed. Alas, the pleasure is too intense, and he cannot bring himself to let go. He continues to discharge into her.

Lucia finally stretches her head back sufficiently and one of her forelegs locates and reaches for Arturo's head. There is a rapid snapping, like a pair of scissors opening and closing, and Lucia cuts off the head, severing it cleanly and bringing it forth to her mandibles to be devoured. From Arturo's neck emerges a yellow-greenish fluid, which flows freely as his body writhes in mortal agony. He dies, but his copulatory exertions are controlled by ganglia in the abdomen, so he goes on fertilizing Lucia's eggs. The mating continues for a long time, until Arturo's dead body is no longer able to release semen.

Lucia notes the cessation of the fertilization motion and turns her head again towards the corpse of her lover. Then, she proceeds to devour the rest of Arturo and experiences a two-fold measure of satisfaction: besides the enjoyment of the body of her dead spouse, she has gained a ready source of protein and fat and is able to produce more eggs and thus better fulfill the obscure command to ensure preservation of her kind.

Lucia stretches her body, leaps onto the forest floor, and breaks into a dance, rocking in repetitive side-to-side movements while circling her bloody foreleg above her head. Perhaps she acknowledges her status as *femme fatale*, or salutes the wisdom of Nature's scheme in which everyone has a role to play. Whatever the reason, she mimics the mad scene in a famous bel canto opera with the same gusto as leading sopranos of past and current times.

She will deposit her fertilized eggs in a froth produced by glands in the abdomen. The froth will harden, creating a protective capsule for the eggs, and Lucia will place the capsule in a safe place, wrapped around the stalk of some plant. Her mission accomplished, she will return to lie placidly on a log to await future encounters with lovers or mere food sources.

END

Bio:

Born in Cuba, Matias Travieso-Diaz migrated to the United States as a young man. He became an engineer and lawyer and practiced for nearly fifty years. After retirement, he took up creative writing. Over two hundred of his short stories have been published or accepted for publication in one hundred and thirty anthologies, magazines, blogs, audio books and podcasts. A novel, an autobiography entitled "Cuban Transplant," and four anthologies of his stories have also been published.



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