



**Dwayne Yancey**

Norman Maine Publishing

**Animal Instinct**

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## Animal Instinct

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**Buzzards** was first produced April 25-27, 1979 at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA. Directed by Dwayne Yancey.

**BO:** Phoef Sutton

**COTTON:** Steve Snyder

**Lemmings** was first produced January 23, 2004 at the No Shame Theatre, Mill Mountain Theatre, Roanoke, VA. Directed by Dwayne Yancey.

**OLGA:** Laura Tuggle Anderson

**HELGA:** Marycatherine Smith

**INGRID:** Kris Sorensen

**The Sex Life of the Praying Mantis** was first produced May 3-7, 2005 by Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, VA: Kristi Marie Morgan, director; Lauren Grace Jones, stage manager.

**AMY:** Misty Critzer

**MICHAEL/JONATHAN:** Justino Palacios

**MOLLY:** Christina Sayer

**LEXIE:** Jennifer L. Hall

**Chicken** was first produced April 25-27, 1979 at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA. Directed by Dwayne Yancey.

**ONE:** Steve Clark

**TWO:** Steve Snyder

## Animal Instinct

**BLACK COMEDY/THEATRE OF THE ABSURD.** Macabre, zany, sardonic, this collection of five short plays offers a unique look at death and all its horrifically comical trappings. In "Lemmings," three lemmings perched on a cliff off the coast of Norway discuss how to jump off—cannonball, head first, or swan dive. In "Chicken," two hungry people stare into an empty chicken coop and debate whether to cook and eat a nonexistent chicken. In "The Sex Life of the Praying Mantis," Amy bites the head off of her boyfriend and then seeks solace from her friends to assuage her guilt. In "Spiders," a group of arachnids plot revenge against humans and their most deadly spider-killing weapon—the daily newspaper. And in "Buzzards," two cowboys stranded in the desert watch as hungry buzzards circle above. The men must find a way to kill the birds before the buzzards make a quick meal of them.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 60-75 minutes.

## Lemmings (3 w)

**OLGA:** Nervous rebel.

**HELGA:** Upholder of traditional values.

**INGRID:** Nerdy, concerned with technique.

## Chicken (2 flexible)

**ONE:** The dumb one; dressed in rags.

**TWO:** The smarter one; dressed in rags.

**Note:** Can be played by same actors as in "Buzzards."

## The Sex Life of the Praying Mantis (2 m, 3 f, 1 flexible, extras)

**AMY:** Has bitten off her boyfriend's head and feels very bad about it.

**MOLLY:** Amy's detail-obsessed friend; wears a bathrobe, curlers, and slippers; has a mess of kids.

**LEXIE:** Cool, calm, collected punkish sort who wears black, has lots of piercings and tattoos (specifically a red and yellow barbell on her stomach, plus spider web, heart, roses, barbed wire and Chinese symbols elsewhere on her body).

**MICHAEL:** Amy's boyfriend; non-speaking.

**JONATHAN:** Amy's new boyfriend.

**BARTENDER:** Non-speaking.

**EXTRAS:** As night-clubbers.

## Spiders

(4 m, 4 f)

**TABITHA:** Assertive.

**ARIEL:** Emotional.

**REGINALD:** Elder of the group; proper, reminiscent of a retired British army officer.

**IAN:** Rugged, a builder who admires architecture.

**SOPHIE:** Tabitha's teenage daughter.

**NATASHA:** Black widow spider; sexy, cool, and resolute, with a hint of exotic evil; dressed in black but slinky and sexy. She's also wearing something bright red on her front—either part of her costume, or a piece of jewelry.

**GORDON:** Natasha's boyfriend.

**NIGEL:** Non-speaking

## Buzzards

(2 m)

**BO:** Cowboy.

**COTTON:** Cowboy.

**Note:** Can be played by same actors as in "Chicken."

## Setting

**Lemmings:** On a cliff off the coast of Norway.

**Chicken:** Bare room except for a small table, two chairs, and an empty chicken coop.

**The Sex Life of the Praying Mantis:** Evening. Stage is split in half. Amy's bedroom is SL; Molly's living room is SR. Amy's bedroom has a bed and nightstand; Molly's living room has a sofa and end table; nightclub has a bar and two barstools.

**Spiders:** Inside a house.

**Buzzards:** A desert.

## Props/Special Effects

### Chicken

Chicken coop  
Table

2 Chairs

### The Sex Life of the Praying Mantis

Sofa  
End table  
Bed  
Nightstand  
Bar  
2 Barstools  
Headless corpse  
3 Cell phones  
Cocktail glass

Fake blood  
Loud chomp  
Loud chewing sounds  
Gulp  
Phone ringing  
Kids fighting and screaming  
Call-waiting beep  
Dance music

### Spiders

Ropes  
Crumpled body  
Tape measure  
Pad of paper  
Pencil  
Cigarette

Black fingernail polish  
Scream  
Loud sound of swatting newspaper  
Music  
Loud thud

## Chicken

"Gots to eat chicken  
or we're gonna die."

---One

## Chicken

*(AT RISE: Two characters dressed in rags sit before a small table. An empty chicken coop is on the table.)*

ONE: I says we kills it now and eats it 'fore's we starve. Grab it 'round its skinny little neck and twists it till it don't squawk no more. Then we plucks out its feathers and cuts it open to pull out all the slime and innards, then we boils it in a pot—

TWO: We ain't got no pots.

ONE: Or a pan. We could fry it—

TWO: Ain't no pans neither.

ONE: Fried chicken. I love fried chicken. Hear it cracklin' and poppin' and watch it movin' all around in the grease a-fyin', just like it was alive, 'cept it ain't, just a hunk of dead meat in there swimmin' 'round sizzlin'. Oh, boy, makes my mouth water just thinkin' 'bout it.

TWO: Ya ain't gonna fry it neither.

ONE: Ain't? I gots to have me my chicken. Gots to! Gonna starve! Gotta cook chicken and eat it! Eat, or starve! Aaargh!

*(One lunges for the coop.)*

TWO: Ya ain't gonna kill the chicken! Shut that coop! Get away from there! Keep your grimy hands to yourself. Ya want her to get out or something? Ain't never gonna catch her if she gets out.

ONE: Aaargh. Chicken. Eats. Or starve. Fried chicken. Aaargh. Fried chicken!

TWO: Go on, get away from the coop. Go on.

ONE: Aaargh. Chicken. Eats. Starve...

TWO: Gonna disturb her with all that commotion. Get her all worked up and then she won't lay at all. Then what's we gonna do?

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ONE: Chicken. Fried. Boiled. Baked. Ummm. Tasty, tasty chicken. Gots to eat chicken or we're gonna die. Kill chicken. Kill chicken or die.

TWO: Nice chicken. Come here, look at me, that's a girl. Nice chicken. We ain't gonna hurt you. Come here, cluck, cluck. Come on, cluck for me. Cluck, cluck. That's right. Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck. Nice chicken.

ONE: We could fry her. Chop her up and eat her for supper. We could have a meal. You...and me...eat chicken. Meal? Fill stomach? Stop hurt? You can have drumstick, eh? Nice, tasty, juicy drumstick. Hmmm?

TWO: Ya ain't gonna kill her. Fill yer belly up and then what ya got? Nothing? No chicken! Nothing! Just some feathers and a stomach growlin' again in a couple hours. Only there ain't no more chicken 'cause you done ate it. Then ya really gonna starve. Shrivle up like an old dried carrot.

ONE: Aaargh!

TWO: Yes, you will! Just better let her keep on layin'. Ain't much but least it's something.

ONE: Eggs. Pshaw. Eggs no good. Hold 'em in your hands and crack 'em open. Can't eat shell. Ain't nothin' inside but gook, all wet and yellow and drippin'. Aaarggh. Don't want eggs. Been eatin' eggs. Still starvin'. Lissen, it growls. (*Sound of stomach growling.*) Don't want no more eggs. Gots to have meat! Bloody, tasty, chewy meat! Don't drink it like egg—grind it up with teeth! Meat, umm. Chicken meat. Kill chicken!

TWO: Eggs are good for ya. Lots of nutrition.

ONE: Lots of drip!

TWO: 'Sides, what ya gonna eat after ya eat the chicken? Can't eat the coop?

(*One bites the coop.*) **[End of freeview]**

## The Sex Life of the Praying Mantis

"My boyfriend is laying there dead-  
with his head eaten off-  
and now I've got to clean it up,  
and all you can think to ask  
is whether he was crunchy?"

--Amy

## The Sex Life of the Praying Mantis

*(AT RISE: The stage is dark. Amy and Michael are in bed giggling and kissing.)*

AMY: Oh, baby.

MICHAEL: Was that good?

AMY: Oh, yes.

MICHAEL: I'm glad.

AMY: You know what I want now?

MICHAEL: What's that, Amy?

AMY: You.

MICHAEL: Really?

AMY: Really.

MICHAEL: I thought you just did.

AMY: I want more.

MICHAEL: More?

AMY: More.

MICHAEL: How do you—? Oh, that tickles.

AMY: Uh-huh.

MICHAEL: Oh yeah... Ow! Oh, your teeth are sharp.

AMY: Uh-huh. *(We hear Michael scream, followed immediately by a loud chomp. Loud chewing sounds are heard and then a gulp. Lights up. Amy is in bed. The form of a headless body can be seen beside her.)*

Damn! I did it again. I hate it when I do that. Every time, too! I'm going to regret this in the morning. I can just tell, I'm going to regret this. Damn! *(She sighs, and leans over to the nightstand and begins searching for something.)* Where's the...? What's the...? Where did I put those...? Wait, a minute. I gave up smoking. Damn, what a time to give up smoking! Why'd I have to go and give up smoking? *(She opens a drawer and searches.)* Damn, and I'm out of chewing gum, too. Now what? I need more vices. No, fewer vices. No, more. Wait. Well, whatever...I need something. Well, may as well get up and fix some coffee.

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Caffeine. Caffeine will settle my nerves. *(She gets out of bed.)*  
Oh, geez. Oh, geez. Look at the mess. Oh, yuck. Now I'm  
going to have to change the sheets. Why do I always do this?  
Why, Lord, why? I need to talk to somebody. I need to talk to  
Molly. *(She yells at the body.)* I sure can't talk to you, now can I?  
Yuck! *(Pause.)* Molly. I need to talk to Molly. She'll know what  
to do.

*(Amy picks up the phone and dials. Sound of phone ringing. The lights  
come up on Molly, who looks at the caller ID and then answers the phone.  
She's wearing a bathrobe and curlers.)*

MOLLY: *(Into phone.)* So, how was he?

AMY: What do you mean, how was he?

MOLLY: You know what I mean, Amy. How was he?

AMY: You don't mean—?

MOLLY: Of course, I mean! What are girlfriends for if we can't  
share naughty little secrets?

AMY: I don't know. That's awfully personal.

MOLLY: Come on, it's not like it's something you haven't done  
before...once or twice, or 20 dozen. *(Molly giggles.)*

AMY: I know. It's just that, I don't know—

MOLLY: Oh come on, just spit it out. Was he crunchy, or not?

AMY: Crunchy?

MOLLY: Yeah, you know. Crunchy.

AMY: I can't believe you said that.

MOLLY: Why not? *(Sound of kids screaming and crying. She yells  
offstage.)* Will you kids hold it down in there? I'm on the phone!  
*(Into phone.)* Yeah, you know. Crunchy. Some girls like the  
crunchy ones.

AMY: Molly! I bit his head off!

MOLLY: Well, duh! Of course you did. That's the best part.

AMY: And you're asking me if he was crunchy?!

MOLLY: Well, yeah! I always thought Michael would be kind of  
crunchy. He just had that look about him, you know? Not that I  
ever had a chance to find out, of course.

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AMY: My boyfriend is laying there dead—with his head eaten off—and now I've got to clean it up, and all you can think to ask is whether he was crunchy?

MOLLY: Yeah. What should I ask? Was he a screamer?

AMY: Molly!

MOLLY: Yeah, you know, did you take his head off in one clean bite or did you have to chew on it awhile?

AMY: I can't believe you.

MOLLY: You know, some girls like to tease a bit, make them suffer. I was never into that, mind you. Not that I haven't tried it, oh, once, or twice, or—

AMY: Molly!

MOLLY: You know, my last boyfriend screamed a lot, too.

AMY: Look, I really don't want to know this!

MOLLY: He was one of the crunchy ones. But Victor—you remember Victor, don't you? Victor, bless his soul, he was just all mushy and gooey inside. No crunch to him at all, hardly.

AMY: Molly! I didn't call you to talk about crunchy or gooey!

MOLLY: All right, I know. Well, look at it this way, Amy. You won't go hungry for awhile. I hear the heads are full of protein.

AMY: Oh!

MOLLY: And, you know, it'll probably help clear up any zits you have, too.

AMY: I don't have zits!

MOLLY: (*Giggles.*) Neither do I, have you noticed?

AMY: Molly, it's not funny! I do this to every boyfriend! It just seems like when things get to a certain stage, when things are going really well, and we're like, you know—

MOLLY: Oh, I know!

AMY: Well, we get to that stage, and we're really into it, you know—

MOLLY: Uh-huh!

AMY: And it's like something in me just snaps, and I don't know...I just bite his head off!

MOLLY: Yeah, so?

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AMY: Oh! You don't understand! I don't mean that I've done this a few times. I mean, I've done this to *every* boyfriend I've ever had.

MOLLY: Hey, boyfriends come, boyfriends go. You'll find another one.

AMY: But I don't want to find another one.

MOLLY: Give it time. You'll get over it.

AMY: But I liked the one I had!

MOLLY: So, tell me, was he crunchy?

AMY: Molly! You're not being very supportive!

MOLLY: Sorry. I just don't see the point of getting all hot and bothered about it. Speaking of hot and bothered, tell me again about how you did it...how you took his head off, I mean.

AMY: I guess we just see this in very different ways.

MOLLY: So do you see it from the top? Or from the bottom?

AMY: I'm not going to answer that!

MOLLY: Well, you were the one who brought it up.

AMY: See, I'm not like you. I worry about my reputation.

MOLLY: Oh, I worry about my reputation too, Amy.

AMY: You do?

MOLLY: But who's going to tell? Certainly not what's-his-name, right?

AMY: Well, I—

*(Sound of kids screaming and fighting.)*

MOLLY: *(Yells offstage.)* Hey, I said, keep it down in there! Can't you tell I'm on the phone? *(Into phone.)* Now what was that? I missed the last thing you were saying.

AMY: Oh, you're no help! I've got to go.

MOLLY: All right, catch you later.

*(Molly hangs up the phone and exits. Lights down SR. Amy hangs up the phone. She sits and frets. She looks over at the body.)*

AMY: *(To headless corpse.)* And you're still there! Oh! What am I going to do? What am I going to do? Oh, why do I always do

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this? I'm going to hate myself in the morning. *(Pause. Thinking.)* Lexie, I'll call Lexie. She's always so cool and calm about everything.

*(Lights down on Amy SL. Lights up on Lexie SR. She is on the phone with a male.)*

LEXIE: *(Into phone, flirtatious.)* So yeah, I got another tattoo. No, I'm not going to tell you where. Let's put it this way: If I told you, I'd have to kill you. Just joking. I think my favorite is still the one on my tummy, though. Don't you think? *(She shows off the red and yellow tattoo on her tummy.)* I think that's my favorite. Sort of my own personal symbol. I mean, lots of people have spider webs and hearts and barbed wire and roses and those little Chinese symbols. *(She shows off one of each.)* I probably have a whole alphabet, if I knew how to read Chinese. *(Pause.)* Piercings? What about them? Well, you're just going to have to find out the hard way, now aren't you? Do you remember that girl Claudette? The one with the really short hair? She told me one time she had nine below the neck. Nine! I've tried counting...two, three...four! There's no way I can get to nine. Do you know how she got nine? I thought I was wild sometimes, but that Claudette, she's crazy! *(Pause.)* What? Me? No, I don't have anywhere close to nine. Well, not there anyway. The ears don't count, okay? We're just talking below the neck. Well, what do you think? All right, go ahead, try me. Okay...uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well, that's an easy one. Ummm, maybe. Umm, I'm not telling. No, I told you, I'm not telling. You'll just have to figure it out sometime. If you dare. Uh-huh. Speaking of dare...you gonna let me tie you up sometime? No, I mean really tie you up. Oh, I've got plenty of things to tie you up with. Some silk thread. Nice and tight. Oh, you'll be surprised how strong it is. I could wrap you up so tight in it you wouldn't be able to move. Do you think you'd like that? Oh, you say that now, but what about when I've teased you and let you lay there for, oh, a few hours. *(She giggles.)* Or a few days.

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*(She giggles.)* Until I'm good and ready to deal with you properly. *(Loud call-waiting beep is heard.)* Hang on, I've got another call coming in, but I'll get rid of it quick, I promise. *(She puts the caller on hold.)* Hello, you've reached Lexie's machine but Lexie's all tied up right now...

AMY: Lexie! This is Amy!

LEXIE: ...and can't come to the phone, so...

AMY: Lexie! I know that's you!

LEXIE: ...please leave your name and number...

AMY: I really need to talk to you!

LEXIE: ...at the sound of the tone...

AMY: It's important!

LEXIE: ...and I'll call you back if I feel like it.

AMY: It's a crisis! *(Lexie makes the sound of an answering machine tone.)* Lexie! Don't do this to me! *(Lexie makes the sound of an answering machine tone. Exasperated.)* Oh, good grief! This is Amy. Talk to me, Lexie!

LEXIE: Your message has been left.

AMY: *(Screams.)* Lexie!

LEXIE: Oh, all right. Hang on just a second. Let me get rid of this guy I'm talking to. I left him hanging by a thread. *(She puts Amy on hold, returns to her original caller.)* Look, I've got to go. No, no, it's not you. I've just got to go. Come hang with me sometime, okay? I won't bite...too much. Bye. *(She returns to Amy.)* All right, I'm back. What's up?

AMY: Do you have to do that every time? That is, like, so annoying!

LEXIE: For you maybe. It's fun for me.

AMY: Look, I'm not in a mood to be toyed with tonight.

LEXIE: Neither was Jeremy. That's when I like to do it the most.

AMY: This is serious.

LEXIE: Oh, I'm deadly serious.

AMY: I wasn't interrupting anything, was I?

LEXIE: Nah, let him twist for awhile. It'll do him good. So what's the problem?

AMY: It's my latest boyfriend.

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LEXIE: Oh, I don't do boyfriend troubles. You should know that.  
No boyfriends for me...too much hassle.

AMY: I ate him!

LEXIE: Well then, doesn't sound like he's a problem anymore.

AMY: But you don't understand! I didn't want to!

LEXIE: Sounds like an eating disorder to me. You might be a compulsive eater, Amy. Have you ever thought about that?

AMY: It's not about eating.

LEXIE: No? So what is it about then? Hmmmm. Because if it's not about eating, then it must be about sex, right?

AMY: It's not about sex!

LEXIE: Well, what's it about then? Power, maybe? Maybe you're subconsciously asserting your dominance over the weaker of the species? That's what they taught us in psychology class anyway. That whole dominance and submission thing.

AMY: I just don't want to do it anymore! But I do it every time!

LEXIE: Do what?

AMY: Eat my boyfriend's head off!

LEXIE: Well, then don't.

AMY: But it's like I can't help myself!

LEXIE: Then you need help, Amy.

AMY: I know. That's why I called you.

LEXIE: No, really, I mean you need help.

AMY: But how do you, I mean, you don't seem to have a problem with it. Me, I just feel so guilty.

LEXIE: Guilty about what?

AMY: About, you know, doing it. Well, not it, but the other it...about eating his head off. Don't you ever have any regrets about what you do to guys...the whole stinging them to death thing?

LEXIE: Why would I have any regrets?

AMY: Don't you ever miss 'em?

LEXIE: Nah. Plenty more where they came from. Why should I feel regret over something so natural?

AMY: I guess that's the difference between us. It just doesn't feel so natural to me.

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LEXIE: Exactly. That's why you need help. Personally, I think it's your upbringing.

AMY: My upbringing?

LEXIE: Yeah. You feel repressed. So when you let go, and do what comes natural, you feel, well, dirty about it.

AMY: I guess you're right.

LEXIE: It's not dirty... *(She smiles.)* ...unless you want it to be.

AMY: Oh!

LEXIE: See, there's your problem right there.

AMY: I am not repressed! I just want my boyfriend back! I want all my boyfriends back!

LEXIE: A little too late for that, I'd say. That's why I like to keep mine around awhile. Sorta toy with 'em, you know. You know what they say about paybacks...

AMY: Look, I've had enough of this.

LEXIE: That's what Derek told me, too.

AMY: Listen, Lexie, I've got to go. I don't think this is helping.

LEXIE: If you say so.

AMY: Sorry to have bothered you.

LEXIE: Oh, no bother. See you 'round, Amy. *(They hang up.)*  
She's a strange one. *(Lights down on Lexie SR.)*

AMY: Ice cream. I need some ice cream. Ice cream always makes me feel better. What? No ice cream?! That's it. That does it. I'm going out. That's all there is to it. I'm going out. I'm hungry. I'm thirsty. I'm just not myself tonight. I just need to get this off my mind. *(She looks at the corpse.)* I'll deal with you in the morning.

**[End of Freeview]**