

The Bug Collector
By Melanie Quezada
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SYNOPSIS

A bug collector, obsessed with beauty, must figure out what to do with his pet tarantula.

Desmond is a lonely man terrified of aging. He must decide the fate of his ill tarantula.

Characters

DESMOND, a man in his 30s.

LULU, a female tarantula, her voice is pleasant and gentle.

Playwright's Notes:

Lulu's actress can be either be in the darkness or off-stage.

She is not the focal point of the character, her voice is.

Lulu's movement and presence will be pantomimed by Desmond.

Scene

DESMOND's apartment.

Time

Present-day.

Curtains open to a room that is lived in by a reclusive individual with a bug collection. The room reeks of loneliness. Center stage is a desk and chair. On top of the desk is a terrarium for a pet spider. The tank can have plants inside or nothing at all. Beside the tank is a corkboard with images/figures of realistic bugs. A bottle of nail polish remover sits on the floor.

DESMOND creeps towards the terrarium with a glass jar in hand. He moves slowly so not to wake LULU. She wakes.

LULU

Good morning!

DESMOND

You're up! I was just, uh, going to clean your tank...I was hoping not to wake you.

Desmond tries to hide the jar
behind his back.

LULU

Oh, Desmond, you're so sweet. A warm tank. Scrumptious food
every day. You spoil me. What more can a spider like me wish
for...

DESMOND

Haha. Yeah, I know I'm pretty gre-

LULU

I know what you're up to.

DESMOND

What do you mean?

LULU

You were trying to kill me!

DESMOND

It sounds terrible when you say it like that.

LULU

You even brought out the kill jar. Couldn't even get rid of me
with dignity. Shame on you. What do you think? You can just
drown me in a bit of acetone like the other bugs in your
collection? Do I mean nothing to you?

DESMOND

No, Lulu, no. You're my best friend...my only friend. I love you.

LULU

Well, you have a funny way of showing it. Why, Desmond?

(pause)

It's because I'm sick, isn't it?

DESMOND

I want to preserve you.

LULU

Jam.

DESMOND

What?

LULU

Pickles.

DESMOND

What are you going on about?

LULU

Dried-up superworms.

DESMOND

Lulu!

LULU

Those are things you preserve. Not people you care about.

DESMOND

You're deteriorating, Lulu--you have been for months.

LULU

So what? I may be weaker than I was before but I'm still kicking.

DESMOND

You barely eat. You're lethargic. But you're still beautiful. The most prettiest tarantula I've ever seen. Don't you want to stay that way? The bugs up there...

Desmond points to the bug collection.

...most, in the wild, barely make it one day. Thanks to me, they live forever.

LULU

But I am not like all those other bugs. I can talk.

DESMOND

I don't even know if that's true. You could be in my head for all I know. When you pass, you'll still be in my head. Maybe in the form of a toaster or something.

LULU

Did your therapist tell you this?

DESMOND

No, he didn't. I've been thinking about it. Maybe you're not an actual talking spider. Maybe you're just something my brain made-up to help me after Arthur. Different people deal with trauma differently.

LULU

Yes, but I bet those people don't deal with it by killing their friends! Who will you talk to?

DESMOND

I honestly don't know.

LULU

Who will you eat dinner with? You wouldn't remember to eat if it weren't for me.

Desmond picks up Lulu.

Who will you turn to when you have nightmares?

Desmond watches as Lulu scurries from one of his shoulders to the other.

Who will stop you from feeling lonely?

DESMOND

Stop it, Lulu! I'm not changing my mind!

Desmond puts her down on his desk.

I'm not changing my mind. Look at you. Your hairs are falling out.

LULU

I'm just shedding. It's natural!

DESMOND

We both know that's not true. I just-I can't-it's just too much for me to handle. Watching you fall apart, getting sick...that is worse than death.

LULU

No, it's not. I could live for another twenty years and not regret it. I rather fall apart than be nothing at all...What are you doing?

DESMOND

Pouring in more polish remover. I don't want you to suffer and this will be over and done with.

LULU

How kind of you.

DESMOND

What are you doing?

LULU

Trying to get out of here. You're not in the right headspace.

DESMOND

What am I supposed to do, Lulu?

LULU

Let me live. Let me push through this illness.

DESMOND

That's what my brother wanted to do. He told me to let him "tough it out" and that he could make it if he just "believed he could." Well, he didn't. In the end, he just looked terrible. He was just a ghost of himself.

LULU

He was optimistic.

DESMOND

Yep, he was optimistic...even as he wasted away.

Desmond holds the jar out to Lulu.

Ok, Lulu, it's time.

LULU

Desmond, think this through. What if twenty years from now, you're still alone? If you kill me, you know you will just want to die from loneliness.

DESMOND

I won't be. Cas and me are getting along great. You saw, she didn't even flinch when she saw my collection. For all you know, we could be married five years from now.

LULU

Like that will last long. My love is eternal. Even as you're about to kill me, I can still say, "I love you." Casey's love is temporary. There is going to be a time when you mess up and it will all be over.

DESMOND

What do you mean? Why am I going to "mess up?" Why does it have to be me ruining me and Casey's relationship?

LULU

The moment you get close to people, you run.

DESMOND

I don't run.

LULU

I'm sorry. You never ran a day in your life. You *jog away* from people. You distance yourself the moment they get sick or even worse—a gray hair!

DESMOND

Stop it, Lulu.

LULU

You think that burying yourself in this stupid hobby of yours is helping you with your condition? Puh-lease. You lose friends faster than I lose flies. Collecting dead bugs is just helping you hide.

DESMOND

Please, Lulu.

LULU

You want to hide in your den. Hide away from something all humans have to go through. But guess what? You can't. Humans, spiders, everyone!--We're all going to get sick and ugly one day and no matter how many bugs you collect, you can't stop it.

DESMOND

Lulu!

LULU

All your collection has done is help you play God. Help you hide away and make-believe. What kind of God is so cowardly? You couldn't even be by your brother's side when he died. Your own

brother for Pete's sake. And why? Because he scared you...*You make me sick, Desmond.*

Desmond, in a fit of anger, picks Lulu up and puts her into the jar. All is silent.

DESMOND

This is just my head playing tricks on me. My own self-conscious attacking me. See! I put you in this jar and you quieted right up. You could have screamed or put up a fight but you didn't because your just a tarantula. A regular tarantula!

He turns his head towards the now empty tank.

Right, Lulu?

He stares at the tank and then shakes the jar, hoping for movement. LIGHTS OUT.