

elight, full of tall tales and broad humor and sly, subtle wit."

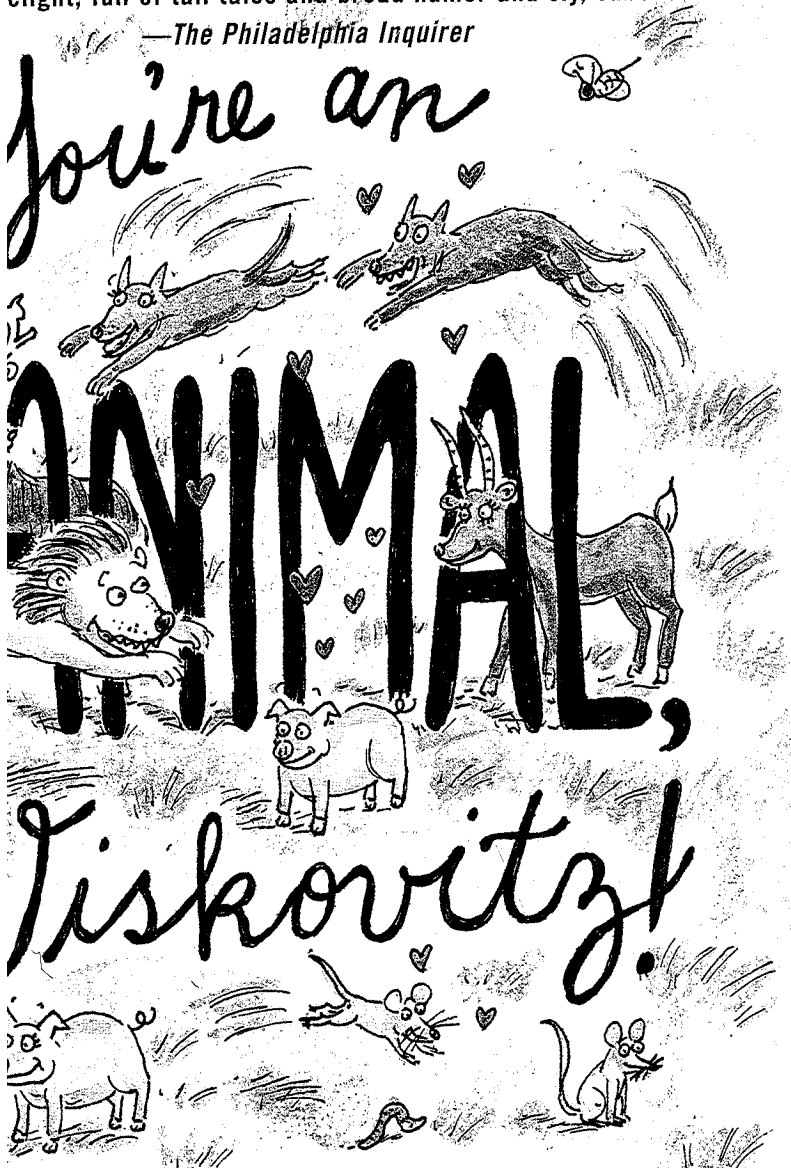
—The Philadelphia Inquirer

You're an

ANIMAL,

Liskovitz!

LESSANDRO BOFFA

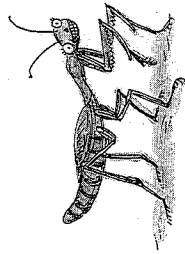


I stood still for a moment of recollection before his tomb, that is to say my mother, and said a Miserere,

After a bit, since thinking about death never failed to give me an erection, I figured that the time had come to catch up with Ljuba, the insect I loved. I'd met her about a month earlier at my sister's wedding, which was also my brother-in-law's funeral. And I'd remained a prisoner of her cruel beauty. Since then we'd kept on seeing each other. How had that been possible? God had blessed me with the most precious gift he could give a mantis: premature ejaculation. A necessary condition for any love story that isn't ephemeral. The first week I'd lost a pair of legs, my pincers. The second week the prothorax with the connectors for flying. The third week . . .

My friends Zucotic, Petrovic and Lopez started yelling from the higher branches where they'd settled: "Don't do it, Visko, for the love of heaven!" For them, females were the devil, misogyny their mission. They had been sexually deviant or dysfunctional since metamorphosis. They had taken priestly vows, and they spent the whole blessed day chewing petals and reciting psalms. They were very religious.

But there wasn't a prayer that could stop me, not once I heard the icy sigh of my mistress, the hollow rustling of her membranes, her funereal, mocking laugh. I moved frenetically in the direction of those sounds with the one leg I had left, using my erection as a crutch, making every effort to visualize the glory of her curvaceous shape,



YOU'RE LOSING YOUR HEAD, VISKOVITZ

I asked my mother, "What was Daddy like?"

"Crunchy, a bit salty, rich in fiber."

"Before you ate him, I mean."


"He was a little guy, insecure, anxious, neurotic—pretty much like all you baby boys."

I felt closer than ever to the parent I had never known, who'd been dissolved in Mom's stomach just as I was being conceived. From whom I had gotten not nurturing but nourishment. I thought, Thank you, Dad. I know what it means for a mantis to sacrifice himself for the family.

YOU'RE AN ANIMAL, VISKOVITZ!

which I couldn't see since I no longer had ocelli, which I
couldn't smell since I no longer had antennae, which I
couldn't kiss since I no longer had palpi.

By now I'd lost my head.



YOU'RE
LITTLE CUCKOO

After a lot of migrating
beech grove in Upper Bay
territory with a nice view
two wing beats away from
grain. I don't know about
granivorous. I can get along
and I *can* eat snails and things
we talented finches end up
them you put us in. I've told
take my word for it—the
right here. It was time to

"Yes, Visko. You don't ever think about me, you're an egoist, a parasite, you only know how to take, you live at my expense, you don't have an active life or interests, you're draining me, you irritate me all the time. When are you going to stop torturing me?"

A shudder of revulsion and disgust ran through her, shaking her whole body—then another and then another again.

To make it through the spasms I got a good grip with my scales on the mucus of her intestines. I wiped the blood off my proboscis and asked:

"And what would you say are my defects?"



HOW LOW YOU'VE SUNK, VISKOVITZ

"Ljuba, why don't you love me?" I asked.

"Because you're a worm, you're vile, you don't have a spine, you don't have any guts."

"And?"

"Because you're insipid. Because you have no head, no character, no sensitivity."

"And?"

"You don't know how to love, you have no heart."

"And?"

"You have a tiny penis."

"Anything else?"