What You Learned from Your Animal Attack

Annie Pulsipher

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You're dashing to Spanish class, the syrupy baseness from this morning's oatmeal, inhaled approximately thirty seconds prior, begging to be quenched by gum. But you don't have gum, just like you don't have a hairbrush—though you desperately need one—or even your Spanish textbook, though to be fair, you don't know that yet. A few moments more and you're officially on campus, which means an end to the dashing business. Late though you may be, there's no excuse for looking like a maniac when there are eligible mates about. So instead, because you really are quite late, you adopt a quick saunter doused in Shakira-esque swayage, though certainly not what you'd see in Vegas. You hope. But just enough to give off the impression that you are a fertile-female-type person who is really going places, and ¡rápida! Because you're late.

Maybe it's because you're focusing so much on this futile sex-appeal business that you are so startled by the sudden attack. The bolt from the blue. Stopped mid-say, you fall to your knees, clutching your chest, choking at the sharp, thin pain—white, fiery needle. During these first moments you're convinced that you're having a heart attack, which really sucks because it means you'll
definitely miss that Spanish quiz. Only, heart attacks normally make people faint . . . right? And you’re awake, awake and acutely aware that the pain keeps happening—another needle, _iquema interna_! So, because pain is more pressing than boys, you pull down your shirt, and there’s the answer: the bee from the blue.

Well, wasp technically, which explains the multiple stings. You’ve always thought there was something noble about bee stings—pain, killer pain, but done for the good of the colony and requiring the ultimate sacrifice. But wasps are pure malice. They can hurt you as much as they please. This wasp even seems to enjoy it; you know because it doesn’t fly out of your shirt even though you’ve left the way wide open. So you reach down and grab the little _bicho sucio_ (yes, all the passing men types can see you reaching down your shirt and apparently groping yourself), and then you strain, prepping to throw him on the pavement and ooze him dead. Only he’s a _monstruito con inteligencia_, and he strikes again. You release him to suck your throbbing hand and he escapes. **Wasp: 1, You: 0.**

You are crying now, just a little, rage tears mostly, but you force yourself to composure, grab your backpack, and limp-dash to class, unable to stop clutching your chest and all the sway gone. The reality of what just happened to you is so embarrassing and odd that you seek for a moral. Modesty is the obvious one: if only you had followed the Honor Code and not worn the scoop neck this wouldn’t have happened. Only, your shirt today is pretty puritanical, collarbone almost covered. It makes you wonder how the wasp even got in. The shirt you wore yesterday, when you had the time to primp—the blue, flowery, waifish thing, which
your mother always insists needs a tank top—is what should have garnered the divine retribution. But really, now that you think about it, it would probably have been easier for the wasp to get out of that top, thus fewer wounds. And you’re stunned by the irony. No, today was the day. The day of your quiz. Vindictive demon. Wasp: 2, You: 0.

You stumble into class, and yes, you’ve missed the quiz. You’ll have to arrange a special time to take it with the professor, points docked of course. And it’s all so senseless and awful that you feel the need to express yourself, to tell the embarrassment and therefore lighten it, to joy in the communion of shared experience. Only, you have no friends in this class. But oh well, what better way to make them? You turn to the girl next to you, noticing peripherally that her hair is immaculate, and say, in the required Spanish (poor though yours may be), “Antes de clase, una avispa voló en mi camisa y me picó muchos tiempos . . .”

The girl turns towards you, bemused; she hadn’t been listening.

“What?” she says.

“¿Qué?”

“Huh?”

“¿Qué? We need to speak in Spanish.”

“Oh. ¿Qué?”

You continue frustrated. Where is her sympathy? “I was saying, Estoy embarazada porque—”

“¡Embarazada!” she laughs. “You’re pregnant?”

No, no, no—now you’ve done it. You’ve gone and made the ultimate false-cognate error. Tengo vergüenza or estoy avergonzada is “I’m embarrassed.” You’ve just said you’re pregnant. Plenty of
people fall into this error, but it never fails to amuse and embarrass. Appropriate really. You’re tired, so you don’t bother explaining to pretty-hair girl that, in fact, *embarazada* once actually meant “embarrassed,” but after being applied to disgraced women for a while it switched meanings, and that really, ultimately, in an archaic way, you’re right.

No, instead you turn away and stare at the cotton-candy peppiness that is your teacher’s slide show. Images of couples kissing (*bésame, por favor*), hugging (*abrázame también*), and otherwise doing coupley things (*dame a alguien, a cualquier persona . . . o mátame ahora*) twirl on the screen before settling tauntingly before your face, and you wish that you could have someone to share this with, to help with the madness of life. But you don’t. So you continue to clutch your chest in the back of the classroom, not caring if you appear to be groping yourself. *Así es la vida.*

World: 3, You: 0.