



DIVIDED

D I V I

Other titles by Linda Frank

Cobalt Moon Embrace

Insomnie Blues

Kahlo: The World Split Open

INDIED

Linda Frank



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As always, for Ken, Allison and Caitlin

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Jewel Wasp

She delivers her first sting into his midsection
and his front legs buckle. The blood-red
thighs of her second and third pair of legs flash
her beauty. She twists her metallic
emerald body around him, glitters with captured
light, wrestles her way to his head, slips
her stinger through his exoskeleton, injects
her venom directly into his brain
probing until she reaches the sweet spot.
She hijacks his will to move, pulls
on his antenna, leads him back to her burrow
like a dog on a leash. She needs
his cockroach life, will lay her white egg
on his live abdomen, block the exit
from her den with pebbles. He can only lie there
while her larva hatches, watch it
chew a hole in his side and consume
his internal organs one by one
to keep him
alive the longest.

Praying Mantis

It's a small sacrifice to make
isn't it? The male loses his head
to ensure the future.

He's a slave to his hormones
and the nervous system in his abdomen.
The sensoria in his brain

inhibit him. When he loses
his head, all control is lost.
He can perform.

The female waits in a posture
of supplication, her pincers
poised for action.

Her head swivels three hundred
degrees, her huge eyes track
her moving lover.

Jesus Bugs

Striders live upon
 reflection. An aquatic
 glissade. Skip like rain.

Is the sky water
 or the water sky?

At night they spider
 dance on the milky way.
 Hunt their living prey.

The Art of Deception

Like the wings of the electric blue morpho, you
are iridescent, your underwings dark.

When the morpho flies through flickering light
in the forest or slides across the slice of sun
in a meadow, it seems to disappear.

When last we spoke, you promised to call again soon
to tell me everything. Months and months
and nothing. Today, your voice
as if no time had passed.

The green hairstreak mistaken for a leaf, the hoary
comma swallowed by a tree trunk. They
camouflage themselves to survive.

Perhaps true deception is not about disappearance
but the capacity to reappear, the sudden
replacement of one presence by another.

Origin

They call him the Devil's chaplain.

They say he killed God.

But those years on the *Beagle* sometimes felt
as if we were in the Garden of Eden, swimming
in coral lagoons, riding through tropical forests
full of birds, lying on our backs under a sky
rich with stars up in the Andes.

I swear God was all around us.

And the time we were in the Galapagos,
all those iguanas, giant tortoises, mockingbirds, boobies.

He was in awe, so close to a hawk he could touch it.

He was always collecting – birds, animals, sea creatures,
insects, fossils, ricks and plants.

He trained himself to *see*.

I shot that bird for the cooking pot, the bird half eaten
when he realized it was the unknown species
he'd been searching for, the rhea,
some sort of South American ostrich.

He said this was the moment he knew creation
didn't make sense. There had to be some sort
of evolution, a common origin, even for humans.

Captain FitzRoy was a Christian man
and he took that young Darwin on a voyage
that destroyed the idea God made every one of us.

Von Frisch's *Ten Little Housemates*

The housefly he calls a trim little creature. A man would have to leap from the Westminster Bridge

to the top of Big Ben to compete with the flea. All living creatures are equal in the great law

of life, he writes. Even bedbugs. Lice can carry two thousand times their body weight with their forefeet.

Cockroaches are a community that has come down in the world. Silverfish, entirely harmless sugar guests.

The spider's actions differ in detail according to the weaver's character. In gnats, the organs of flight have reached a high level of perfection. We cannot blame the tick for her bloodthirstiness. Anyone who has to hatch a few thousand eggs deserves a good meal.

Moths are useful scavengers. What else would happen to all the decaying hair and feathers that disintegrate so slowly?

Von Frisch's little housemates are extraordinary, in their own way exceptional. At the end of each affectionate chapter

he recommends in equally good-natured tone and detail how each could best be exterminated.

The Glanville Fritillary

ele anOr Glanville, 1654-1709

Did she think herself mad for her obsession
with the tumbling motion of
kaleidoscope flight? For wanting to collect butterflies?
She didn't believe they were the souls of the dead.

Women accused of an unhealthy relationship
with the natural world still burned at the stake
as witches. A brave woman then, described
by neighbours as beating the hedges for *a parcel of wormes*.

When she left her husband, he set her children
against her by claiming she was mad. Surely
for a woman to forsake domesticity for a life of science
was a sign of insanity.

Her Glanville fritillary spends most of its life
as a black spiny caterpillar. One of Britain's rarest
butterflies, it lives only a few weeks.
Orange/brown latticed wings beat rapidly
before it glides.

Envoy

after Jane Hirshfield

One day in the winter yard, a brown rat
eating seeds the birds had scattered
beneath the feeder.

A few days later, a falcon flew off in a huff
of wing, leaving behind a small pile
of entrails and tufts of fur.

I don't know if the falcon ate the rat.
There was no sign of a tail.

All week I watch from the window, on guard
against possible rat invasion.
I hold my life on pause

in those moments when I have to look, to see
if the rat is still there, scuttling
back and forth between the cedars.

The Kranstein Forest

for Edward and Andrea

It was surely one of the last summers
before the wild was tamed
before the weeping willow and maples
in the vacant lots were bulldozed, before
the creeks were bled dry

before the garter snakes left
no trace and the bullfrogs fell
silent, before the monarchs disappeared
though we were reverent with them, never
touched them, fearing to disturb the fine dust
on their wings, believing that would prevent
them from flying.

Our bikes were our horses and every morning
our mothers turned us out the back door
to ride free, and it was the last summer
the three of us, nine or ten years old, rode
further than we had ever ridden before
left the last paved street behind
biked a rough-hewn path we found
for the first time.

It was the last summer
the path we rode opened
onto a wild orchard, masses of pure
white apple blossoms, the scent of heaven.

And it was the last summer
we named our forest, never arguing
about what order to combine our names.
That last summer, it didn't matter
who's name would come first.