

In the ballet, *The Cage*, a tribe of female insects consumes their male counterparts with obvious sexual pleasure.

Their hair is wild and frizzy. Their dance is a creepy, insectoid frenzy.

My wife, Elsie, danced the title role. I sat in the audience and watched with stupefaction as she became a new insect born into the tribe, as she killed for the first time. Afterward, sated, she wandered the stage and fell through long musical strokes into the arms of a new male stranger, where she found affection. Animal attraction. Maybe love.

What ensued was a languid *pas de deux* like I might expect in ballet. The dancers twined. The audience swooned in relief.

Until the female tribe returned. Then my wife ate her new lover. She stood near his corpse with legs spread apart. In a gesture of satisfaction she bent her knees and rubbed the insides of her thighs.

These are the moments you don't anticipate when you marry a ballet dancer. Although you get used to them. Sort of.

All the years of physical and emotional transformations. I felt like they transformed me as much as her. Dragged through one role after the next. The emotional rollercoaster. Elsie would come home at night at eleven. Exhausted and bruised. Thoughts still far away in the mind of her character. She would shower and then sit on my lap, small and weightless, with her arms around my shoulders. I'd hold her, press my face into her neck. Let her unwind into the real her. Breathe her smell.

Sleep next to her warm body. Love her.

Miss her when she'd be gone again for hours, every day. Almost. Six days a week. Holidays.

Then forever.