

## Spicy and Kinky: an inspiration for sex

**Gwen Grimes\***

Department of Biology, Lake Forest College

Set up in a Dear Abby style, *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* allows species ranging from a yellow dung fly to a manatee ask Dr. Tatiana for advice on the one question that is on everyone's mind; "are my sexual habits normal?" Dr. Tatiana examines each question and responds with a detailed scientific explanation to what is happening.

Although giving sex advice to all creatures may seem like a difficult task, author Olivia Judson does it with flair. Judson currently does research at Imperial College London, but previously attended Oxford University where she received her doctorate in biological sciences. She wrote the best seller *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* in 2002 and was awarded the Samuel Johnson Non-fiction prize for her work. Her book has been published in multiple countries around the world; however, in the United States you can purchase her book for \$15.00. *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* gives captivating, yet educated, responses to why we do the things we do.

Section one is titled "Let slip the whores of war" and is all about the promiscuous activities of both males and females. Throughout this section it becomes apparent that humans are not the norm when it comes to choosing a sexual partner. Many species question the way their partners act and come to find out that most partners are not faithful or are attempting to prevent them from being unfaithful. For example, a queen honeybee asks why the male honeybees leave their genitals inside her. Dr. Tatiana's explanation for this activity is that the males are attempting to prevent other males from fertilizing her. Other species have problems pleasing and keeping their mates around, a lion writes to Dr. Tatiana about why his lioness want to copulate multiple times when she comes into heat. Although each question has an individual answer, the overall theme is; there is a war among the sexes for the success of sexual reproduction and this battle creates a wide variety of strategies to succeed.

"The evolution of depravity" is the second section of the book and is filled with murder, rape, and seduction. The strategies that species evolve to keep their mates are questioned here, and the outcome is a clash between the female and male desires. The very first letter in this section is from a female European praying mantis asking if biting her mate's heads off before sex is normal. For the praying mantis, and apparently other species, the males tend to be a casualty of sexual reproduction. In human females are considered to be gentle and need to be "loved", however, for many species females are hostile and prefer violent sex to cuddling. Violence between the sexes continues through the section and then shifts to ways to keep your mate around. Females have learned ways to make the males stay by either "bossing" them around or through some sort of abuse. Although humorous in many aspects, it becomes apparent again that humans are not the norm, but instead the exception. When it comes to reproduction, females are more hostile than males.

Swinging in a different direction, section three is titled; "Are men necessary? Usually but not always". This section talks about asexual reproduction and how certain species have evolved to reproduce without members of the opposite sex. Hermaphrodites are organisms that have both male and female reproductive organs and reproduce with

themselves. One unique species of hermaphrodites, the Sea Hare, writes to Dr. Tatiana questioning why all species have not become hermaphrodites. The question they pose raises a good thought, why don't more species have male and female parts; it would make reproduction quick and easy. However, like most answers to questions about reproduction, it is all about producing successful offspring. Many species prefer to have genes from another individual in hopes of producing fit offspring. Although reproduction by asexual means or even being a hermaphrodite seems ridiculous to humans, for some species these techniques have become beneficial.

Most people would assume that a book based on biological reasoning that is non-fiction would be meant for an audience of scientists; however, *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* is written in a way that anyone can read it. Although some of the topics discussed could potentially be confusing to someone with no biology background, the layout creates enough interest to keep a person turning the pages. The Dear Abby style allows someone with no biological background to read the book and find it interesting, almost like a good gossip novel with the hint of kinky romance. The quirky humor, sexual innuendos, and subtle hint of advice to the human race is enough to keep the non-scientist reading, while the thorough examination of each question can peak the interest of a scientist reading the book. For a non-fiction book *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* does a nice job reaching out to a broad audience.

When I sat down to read *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* I thought for sure that I would be forcing myself to finish it, and probably just skimming through for enough information to know what was going on. However, to my surprise I found myself laughing out loud while reading and finished the whole book in one night. The book was a very easy read for me, but not because of large type or pictures. I found it easy to read not only because I wanted to know what the next problem a species would have to face, but I never found a question that didn't make me wonder what the answer was going to be. There were many parts of the book that I liked, but my favorite part was the "Guide to Self-Defense". Although this information was meant for other species, I found it very relatable to humans. I think that because the book was subtly related to humans I found the questions and answers more interesting. For a non-fiction book I can say I actually enjoyed the reading.

Biology 220—Ecology and Evolution and *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* are closely related to one another. Evolution is based on natural selection, which is all about sex, and since the book discusses sex, the relationship between the two is all too easy to see. The troubles described by some of the species in the book are examples of sexual selection, which is a large driving force of natural selection. Females and males are in constant competition to get their genetic information passed onto the next generation, and evolving ways to be successful during sex is one way to pass genes along. Mating with many females or males, having unique genitals, or just being attractive are all examples of different techniques species have developed to increase their rate of reproduction. Not only does the book have examples of sexual reproduction, but it also discusses asexual reproduction, which is another topic discussed in Biology 220. Although asexual reproduction isn't the first thought when discussing reproduction, many species have turned to asexual reproduction as a way to continue their species. The Red

\*This author wrote this paper for Biology 220: Ecology and Evolution taught by Dr. Sean Menke.

Queen Hypothesis, as discussed in Biology 220, is an example of organisms that have evolved to reproduce by asexual reproduction. Reading *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* and while taking Biology 220 is a good way to see examples of topics discussed in class.

*Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* is a non-fiction book that has the attention grabbing ability of a fiction book. After reading the book, I would definitely recommend it to any of my friends, biology student or not. The most amazing theme I found while reading the book was that humans are the exception to what is normal. Humans see that the norm as being monogamous with one person; however, for most species this is not what they practice. Humans also see rape and homosexuality as bad things; however, many species survive successfully with brutal sexual encounters or homosexuality. When considering all the different techniques for reproduction that species try, being monogamous seems boring in comparison.

In conclusion, after reading *Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creation* I would recommend it to my friends. I thought it was a well-written book that had the perfect amount of humor with a lot of scientific information. The message I leave you with is, if you are looking for any new ways to please you mate, maybe picking up this book could give you some inspiration.

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