



MADAME MANTIS

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MADAME MANTIS

A SHORT PLAY

Paris. Lawyers Office. Desk and chairs. Computer.

Monsieur Steinberg, middle aged, sitting reading national geographic magazine. French Fashion magazines on the table.

Enter Mademoiselle Robert, young woman, very French, very chic, carrying a number of files and folders.

MADAMOISELLE: *(French accent)* Ah Monsieur Steinberg, sorry to keep you waiting. Madame Mantis will see you shortly but in the meantime, if you wouldn't mind, there's just a couple of things I need to ask, as I do with all new clients before they meet Madame Mantis... I presume you're aware...

MONSIEUR: *(American accent)* Oh yes, fully aware...

MADAMOISELLE: So you won't be....

MONSIEUR: No, no, of course not...

MADAMOISELLE: Because, obviously...

MONSIEUR: Obviously...

MADAMOISELLE: You'll no doubt have read, or possibly seen the reports so we don't expect you to be...

MONSIEUR: No, no worries, you need have no worries on that account.

MADAMOISELLE: Good. Because some people, as you'd expect, have a tendency when first meeting Madame....

MONSIEUR: Oh no, not me, no tendencies... Be assured I absolutely respect Madame Mantis' right to self-identify in any way she chooses to.

MADEMOISELLE: Strictly speaking, it's not a question of self-identification as such. Madame Mantis is actually a human sized praying mantis.

MONSIEUR: As she has every right to be so. If Madame Mantis wishes to be regarded as a human sized praying mantis then good for her. Good for her I say. Let me assure you I was drawn here to consult with Madame Mantis purely on her reputation as a first class lawyer not her choice of... erm, speciality? Is that the correct term? Trans species?

(pause)

MADEMOISELLE: I'm just a little concerned that you may not have quite grasped the nature of Madame Mantis'... condition. It's not really a matter of transmogrification. Madame Mantis has undergone a metamorphosis.

MONSIEUR: Really? Well, I'm very pleased to hear it. I imagine these procedures must be very gruelling.

MADEMOISELLE: It's not a procedure Monsieur. Madame Mantis has spontaneously metamorphosed into the form of a praying mantis.

MONSIEUR: I know, I know, I pride myself in keeping abreast of all the modern trends. Look, I'm here to press my law suit and whether I'm represented by a human being or a praying mantis is frankly immaterial. I've every confidence in Madame Mantis' abilities as an advocate and what's more I hear she cuts quite a figure in court.

MADEMOISELLE: Indeed she does. Juries regularly find in her favour. Only, before I ask her to join us, please, whatever you do, don't talk about mating habits.

MONSIEUR: Mating habits? Why would I talk about mating habits?

MADEMOISELLE: It's something of a sensitive subject.

MONSIEUR: I certainly won't be referring to anything of that nature. I came here for a consultation not to discuss mating habits.

MADAMOISELLE: Good. I'm glad that's clear. *(presses an intercom)*
Madame? Your client is ready to see you now.

Enter Madame Mantis who is costumed in business suit but needs to adopt the typical movements of a praying mantis, especially with regard to legs and raptorial forelegs. She will sway slightly and turn and tilt her head at irregular angles and she will be periodically grooming her forelegs. Monsieur Steinberg gasps at her appearance and is clearly taken aback.

MONSIEUR: Oh. My. God

MADAME: Oh dear, I do hope my appearance has not startled you?

MONSIEUR: Startled? Startled? Why nonsense no. Quite unstartled.

MADAME: Only you look a little...

MONSIEUR: No, not at all, not at all. I'm perfectly... perfectly composed.

MADAME: So pleased to meet you Monsieur Steinberg.

MONSIEUR: And I you. It's an honour, it's a privilege, it's a...

MADAME: Very strange encounter. Oui?

MONSIEUR: It is. It is. I confess I did approach this meeting with some trepidation. It's not every day... I was worried you might consider...

MADAME: What, you were worried I might bite your head off?

MONSIEUR: *(alarmed)* Bite my head off? Why of course not. Why should you bite my head off?

MADAME: It's just a turn of phrase. Now how can I be of assistance?

MONSIEUR: *(looking at Mademoiselle)* I was rather hoping for a private consultation?

MADAME: Ah. Mademoiselle Robert. One of the conditions of my returning to practice is that my handler be present at all meetings. I do hope that's not a problem.

MONSIEUR: No, not a problem at all.