

Mothiosa

Amanda is a fun-loving, kind, warm and very pleasant person. She loves people and animals. As a young child she begged to have a cat. She loves dogs, horses and other domesticated animals. But there is one creature she loathes - the moth. The moth is the one thing in this world that can turn Amanda into a stark-raving mad maniac. A moth is as frightening to Amanda as a 15 foot boa constrictor is to a harmless hamster.

Perhaps some background is needed to help people understand the intense phobia over a such a small and gentle creation as a moth. In 1983, when Amanda was just a toddler, we lived in McLean, Virginia. It was a bad year for Miller Moths. The U.S. Government warned residents in the Eastern United States to be especially careful of that year's moth infestation. These moths were a special breed from Sicily, Italy. Without details the government simply said to keep children inside the home and their necks covered should they have to leave the home for any period of time.

Grandpa McKay served in Congress and had access to privileged information as he sat on the powerful Intelligence Committee. As was the case so many times, grandpa shared much of what he learned on that committee with me. There are things I know today that only a handful of Americans have ever heard. One highly secret and confidential matter was the intentional infestation of the nation's capitol with the poisonous Sicilian Slasher Moth by the Mafia.

The FBI has in their possession actual airport security footage to document that Mario "The Moth" Marinera traveled from Sicily to Padova to Rome and then on to Washington D.C. with only a black leather carry on case. Upon further surveillance it was documented that Mr. Marinera released over 10,000 moths in the park located between the Capitol building and the U.S. Supreme Court. "The Moth" was apprehended and placed in a maximum-security prison only known to a few select individuals (myself being one of those people).

While I was at work and Mom was sewing in the basement, Amanda managed to slide open the screen door of the patio and wander into the backyard. Within minutes three Slasher Moths descended from the thick trees. One landed on the left cheek of Amanda. The other two dove straight for the neck. They are called Slasher Moths because they like to insert a knife-like needle into the pores of the soft tissue of the neck. They then begin to slice an opening of approximately 1.7693 centimeters long and approximately 0.33281 millimeters deep. Once the opening is made a female moth will lay its eggs directly into the incision. It is painless and happens in the matter of seconds. Amanda never knew what happened.

Moments later Mom came outside to find her little baby frolicking in the foliage of the ferns, fruit trees and flowers. "Come in you little stinker, mommy can't let you out here by yourself. It isn't safe." Amanda smiled and held her mother's hand. Everything

seemed okay. No one noticed the slight red line that was camouflaged by the baby fat folds of skin in her neck.

Several months later we had moved back to Wisconsin. One night while Amanda lay ever so quietly in her bed, an antennae poked out of her neck. Suddenly the skin around the antennae erupted and the head emerged. Finally the rest of the body of a brand new baby moth. It was cute. It fluttered its wings and was airborne in an instant. It made its way to the closet and nestled comfortably in the pleats of a seldom-worn cotton skirt. There it lived for a long, long time. And...as it ate and ate, it grew and grew. After one year it had a five-inch wingspan. At year two it had well over an eight-inch wingspan.

One night Amanda was cleaning her closet. To her disbelief and horror, the mother of all moths sprang from the closet as she pulled out a wool sweater. The force of the wind from its powerful wings knocked Amanda to the ground. Frightened and confused with the bright bedroom light, the moth flew frantically around the room. Amanda screamed at the top of her lungs. The family ran upstairs anticipating a serious accident and injury.

Amanda, stilling screaming uncontrollably, bolted from her bedroom yelling to me, "Help, Dad please help. There is a giant moth in my bedroom." She ran into the bathroom and to the far wall. While I was trying to assess the situation, the biggest moth I have ever seen came from Amanda's bedroom and turned down the hall straight for me. I turned sheet white. It was a man-eater. My family was in danger. I spun on my heels and tried to block them from coming closer. While I was in the act of protecting my little ones the moth flew into the same bathroom as our agitated Amanda.

As I turned again and walked toward Amanda's bedroom. She was screaming even louder. I shut the bathroom door and told her, "Don't worry sweetheart, I'll shut the door and go kill the big, bad moth. You'll be all right, daddy's here". I went to her bedroom and the moth was nowhere to be found. As I hunted I could not help but hear a terrible commotion in the bathroom next door. It sounded as if something was being thrown from wall to wall to wall. All this time the screaming continued. We knew Amanda was scared, but we also thought she just needed time to settle down. Ten minutes, then thirty minutes past. At midnight the flailing and screaming continued. Mother spoke through the door, "Amanda, when you settle down you can come out and go to bed, but you stop this screaming and silliness first. We are tired and going to bed. Good night."

The experience had taken a serious toll on Amanda. Truth finally be known, Amanda went into counseling for several years from this traumatic trial and time of true tragedy. To this day she has never been able to discuss the ordeal. As wise parents we do not even attempt to bring it up. But, this much we can tell you and you would be very smart to follow our advice: never, never, never ride in an automobile with Amanda when a moth is in the same car!