

# WHAT'S BEEN BUGGING STUART?

by Chloe Hannah – March 2019

## SYNOPSIS

A mosquito wants to sting Stuart just as he's settling down to sleep the night before an important PowerPoint presentation. The mosquito gives Stuart some advice on how to become a better presenter; and win the woman of his dreams.

## CHARACTERS

STUART (corporate guy, approx. 25-45)

THE MOSQUITO (lively female, 20-60)

EMMA (slightly off-beat, attractive corporate woman, approx. 25-45; silent role)

## STUART'S BEDROOM

*Central to Stuart's bedroom is his bed with a bedside table and lamp. A small table with a chair stand near the front of the stage. Music plays. STUART is sitting in his bed, tapping away on his laptop. He yawns, closes his laptop, and snuggles into his duvet before turning off his bedside light. The lights go off and the music fades out. A few moments pass, and we hear the buzz of a mosquito. Stuart sighs loudly.*

STUART

Oh no.

*Stuart turns on the lamp, the lights go back on, and as he does, we see the MOSQUITO, dressed in tight, black clothes. She is frozen as she was in the middle of tiptoeing towards Stuart's bed, a guilty look on her face.*

STUART

There you are!

*Stuart grabs a magazine from his bedside table and stands up. He rolls up the magazine and slowly approaches the mosquito, who, still frozen in place, looks up at the magazine with her eyes only. Stuart attempts to hit the mosquito with the magazine, but she evades him easily and glides to the other side of the bed. The buzzing starts up again as she moves.*

MOSQUITO

Ha!

STUART

That always happens!

*Stuart clambers across his bed with the magazine still in his hand. He tries to hit the mosquito again.*

MOSQUITO

I can also fly to the ceiling if you want to make things more challenging. I can stand upside down from the ceiling, you know.

STUART

Don't do that, I hate having to jump up from my bed.

*Stuart turns away from the mosquito and goes to his bedside table. He pulls out a spray, which the audience sees clearly but he keeps hidden behind his back when he turns towards the mosquito and approaches her again. All of a sudden, he sprays the mosquito smack in her chest.*

STUART

Gotcha! That ought to do the trick!

MOSQUITO

Mhhhh that smells nice! *(sniffing her top)* I smell nice!

STUART *(looking at the spraying can)*

Deodorant? Damn it!

*The mosquito takes the can from Stuart and sprays herself some more, this time under her arms.*

MOSQUITO

I'll have some hair gel to go with it if you've got some on offer.

STUART

What would you need hair gel for?

MOSQUITO

To feel good about myself.

*The mosquito moves across the stage and her buzzing is audible again. She tosses the deodorant back to Stuart.*

STUART

Would you stop making that irritating noise?

MOSQUITO

What noise?

STUART

Bzzzzzzzzzzzz...

MOSQUITO *(affronted)*

That's not the noise I was making! I sound like this: Love me tender, love me sweet. *(pulling out a ukulele from under the bed and accompanying herself with it)*. I'm serenading you!

STUART

I don't want to be serenaded by you! And anyway, why would you make so much noise while you're attempting to sneak-attack me? It's like a thief trying to break into the house while playing the trumpet. It makes no sense. I don't know how your species has survived.

MOSQUITO

We survive on a healthy balance of intelligence, exercise, and human blood.

STUART

Well I'm not giving you my human blood. What makes you think you can just barge in here and demand my blood? Do you realise this is my bedroom? This is my private place!

MOSQUITO

I expect it to be spectacularly boring here tonight. You're all on your own, Stuart.

STUART *(shocked)*

How do you know my name?

MOSQUITO (*pointing at the table with documents on it*)  
It's on your tax return. You'll be wanting to file that soon, by the way, you're overdue.

STUART  
You've been reading my tax return?

MOSQUITO  
Like I said, it's *spectacularly* boring here.

STUART  
My life isn't so boring! Tomorrow's an important day for me.

MOSQUITO  
It is? What's tomorrow?

STUART  
I'm giving a PowerPoint presentation on...

*The mosquito snores loudly, cutting off Stuart.*

STUART (*plonking down on his bed; crossing his arms*)  
It's important and fascinating to me! Which is exactly why I wish you would leave me alone. I need a good night's sleep.

MOSQUITO  
I'll let you sleep if you let me drink some of you.

STUART  
I won't let you *drink some of me!*

*The mosquito starts approaching Stuart on the bed, slowly moving behind him, massaging his shoulders.*

MOSQUITO (*softly*)  
You're exactly my type, you know. You're handsome. You smell amazing. And you're Rhesus-negative. You come highly recommended.

STUART (*pulling away*)  
What? Recommended? By whom?

MOSQUITO  
By my great uncle. He hung out here from July through September two summers ago!

STUART  
That little bugger. I remember him!

MOSQUITO  
Awww!

STUART  
*Not* fondly!

MOSQUITO  
Well, Vlad had only nice things to say about you.

STUART  
Vlad?

MOSQUITO (*massaging Stuart once again*)

I take after great uncle Vlad. I have a certain *draculin* quality about me, don't I? Quite the seductress... (*she performs the typical Dracula move, parts her lips and attempts to bite Stuart in the neck*)

STUART (*jumping up*)

Oh no you don't! I don't cuddle with mosquitos.

MOSQUITO

Don't be such a prude, you know you want someone to share your bed with.

STUART

I'll stay celibate.

MOSQUITO

But I *love* you. I just want to be with you.

STUART

The feeling isn't mutual.

MOSQUITO

Why can't you treat me like your pet? You love that cat of yours.

STUART

My cat is cute and fluffy. And she doesn't go after my neck.

MOSQUITO

All I'm asking for is a few drops of food.

STUART

You mean blood!

MOSQUITO

Blood – food. It's nearly the same word. You never turn down any food for Pebbles, and she could actually do with losing a few pounds.

STUART

Hey! Don't fat-shame my cat. Wait, how do you know Pebbles' name?

MOSQUITO

From your tax return.

*Stuart looks from the mosquito to the audience with a half-confused and half-exasperated glance.*

MOSQUITO

All I'm asking for is a little snack. I bet *you* had a nice dinner.

STUART

M-Budget ravioli.

MOSQUITO

I stand corrected.

STUART

Oh good, now you're judging my lifestyle. (*He grabs the magazine again and holds it up threateningly*) You're asking to sting me. So I get to kill you.

MOSQUITO (*unfazed, already convinced Stuart won't hurt her*)

How is that fair? You sentence me with the death penalty for just wanting to feed myself.

STUART

What about disease? You could give me Malaria!

MOSQUITO

Malaria hasn't been seen here in over thirty years!

STUART

Okay, well then some other unthinkable disease.

MOSQUITO

I'm disease-free. I've recently been tested. You should never have too many partners before being tested, that's what they taught us at school.

STUART *(dropping the magazine, resigned and frustrated)*

My presentation tomorrow is really important. Why can't you just... buzz off?  
My life depends on a good night's sleep!

MOSQUITO

So dramatic...

*The mosquito moves closer to him and gently places her arms around his waist. Stuart looks alarmed, but the mosquito lightly shakes her head.*

MOSQUITO

Sh-sh-sh. Don't worry, I don't bite.

STUART

Technicality!

MOSQUITO

I will make you a promise. I won't sting you without your permission.

STUART

Really?

MOSQUITO

All I want to do for now is talk.

STUART

You promise?

MOSQUITO

Mosquito's honour. Relax. Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your super-important PowerPoint presentation.

STUART *(suspiciously)*

You... want to her about my PowerPoint presentation?

MOSQUITO

Nothing I'd like more.

*Stuart is suddenly energised, as he grabs an umbrella and points at the back wall behind his bed, where a PowerPoint slide is shown: It has a very corporate layout with a non-descript picture of an office building on it and a title in bold Calibri font saying: 'Stuart's boring presentation'.*

STUART *(walking back and forth)*

This could be my big break in the company! It's my bid for a project management task, pooling suppliers along the entire value chain and ensuring they generate the assets in a timely, efficient and cost-effective manner.

MOSQUITO (*to herself, sitting down on the bed, disgruntled*)  
This had *better* pay off.

STUART  
My boss, my boss's boss and even the vice president for sales in the EMEA region will be there.

MOSQUITO (*suppressing a yawn*)  
The vice president for sales in the EMEA region. Truly exciting.

STUART (*after a beat, wistfully*)  
She has these ear rings...

MOSQUITO (*suddenly perking up*)  
She?

STUART  
They're tiny studs, but if you look carefully at her lobes, you see that they're miniature cupcakes.

MOSQUITO  
You've been studying her lobes, eh?

STUART  
No... I just really like cupcakes.

MOSQUITO  
Nonsense! You like Madam EMEA!

STUART  
She's not called Madam EMEA.

MOSQUITO  
What is her name?

STUART  
Emma...

MOSQUITO  
Okay, so EMEA is special because she wears cupcake-shaped earrings? (*Stuart nods*) God, your workplace sounds boring!

STUART  
You're not doing a very good job of buttering me up, you know.

MOSQUITO  
I'm no longer trying to butter you up. Screw my empty stomach: I have a new purpose in life that is greater than my dinner. I'm going to win you over EMEA.

STUART  
Emma.

MOSQUITO  
Let's get this set up. You're standing here in front of your presentation, yes? And EMEA will be sitting... there? (*pointing to the table*)

STUART

I suppose so.

*EMMA enters stage wearing a corporate outfit but still managing to look a little off-beat, and sits at the table, staring ahead of herself, not yet fully present. Stuart goes bright red when he sees her.*

MOSQUITO (*lying down on the bed with her hands behind her head, enjoying the show*)  
Go ahead, start presenting.

STUART

I'm in my pyjamas...

MOSQUITO

You're also discussing your love life with a mosquito. Let's just abandon any pretence of normality here.

STUART (*Looking at Emma very uncomfortably, unable to talk*)  
Right...

MOSQUITO

You are so smitten with her!

*Stuart launches into a speech in order to stop the mosquito from commenting. Emma looks at the slide while Stuart speaks.*

STUART (*also staring at the slide*)

Dear colleagues. Thank you, um, for giving me this opportunity to talk to you today. I, ah, I have been thinking about this topic ever since I joined the company, back in... When was it? 2012? Or was it 2011? Wait, let me think for a moment, in 2011 I got that parking ticket...

*Emma starts yawning and looks at her watch.*

MOSQUITO

You've killed EMEA.

STUART

Not literally.

MOSQUITO

If you want to make an impression on EMEA, you need to actually look at her when you talk.

STUART

This presentation is about the future of my career.

MOSQUITO

Yes, yes, whatever. Now, lock eyes with EMEA when you talk. Take it from the top.

*The slide now changes to 'Stuart's topic, still boring'. It has a picture of a different office building.*

STUART (*looking at Emma, who now also looks at him*)

Dear colleagues. Ummm... Yes. It's a pleasure being here today to talk to you. Uh... Where was I? (*He looks at the slide*) Ah yes, Stuart's topic. I joined the company back in 2005 and...

*Emma has pulled out her phone and started tapping on it.*

MOSQUITO (*standing up*)

You looked away and now she's playing Candy Crush!

STUART

Well I can't think when I'm looking at her! It's those damn earrings.

MOSQUITO

You were *not* looking at her earrings.

STUART (*opens his mouth to protest, then changes his mind*)

Is it that obvious?

MOSQUITO

That you're madly in love with EMEA?

*Stuart looks mortified, throws himself onto his bed and covers his head with a pillow. The mosquito sits down beside him and pats his shoulder.*

MOSQUITO

Don't worry, I'm going to help you through it.

STUART (*muffled but still audible*)

I'm taking advice from an insect.

MOSQUITO

Don't despair. EMEA has no idea that you are crushing so hard on her. She just thinks you're a bumbling, babbling corporate geek.

STUART (*removing the pillow*)

Oh, good.

MOSQUITO

But we can change that. First question: What is your obsession with ugly buildings?

STUART

The slide? That's our offices. I have no control over their aesthetics!

MOSQUITO

Why are you starting out by showing that? Show something attractive and interesting!

STUART

Like what?

MOSQUITO (*grabbing the umbrella from him*)

How about this?

*A new slide goes up, with the same title but a picture of cupcakes. Emma looks at the slide, amused.*

STUART

I can't show cupcakes!

MOSQUITO

EMEA likes it.

STUART

Yeah, but my presentation has nothing to do with cupcakes...

MOSQUITO

You could bring cupcakes to the meeting. It never hurts to bribe your co-workers, not to mention EMEA, with delicious food.

*The mosquito opens the drawer in Stuart's bedside table and pulls out a box of cupcakes. She places them on the table before Emma. Stuart looks very surprised by this, rushes over to his bedside table and pulls the drawer back open, staring into it. Emma extracts a cupcake from the box and starts eating it.*

STUART *(abandoning his bedside table)*

I can't take cupcakes to a supply chain meeting!

MOSQUITO

Look how much EMEA is enjoying it!

*Emma looks up at the mosquito and nods in agreement.*

STUART

Maybe I can take some croissants, but in any case, we need to change the slide. I'm not talking about cupcakes.

*Stuart grabs the umbrella and points it at the wall. The slide changes back to yet another boring office building.*

MOSQUITO

Seriously, with the office buildings!

STUART

This is the building the CEO sits in, in Münchenstein. It's nicer. It has more windows and is a little taller...

MOSQUITO

The headquarters of your exciting company are in glamorous Munchen-steen?

STUART

It's Münchenstein, not Munchen-steen.

MOSQUITO

I think I'm starting to see the problem with your presentation.

STUART

You are?

MOSQUITO

Yes. Your topic is really boring.

STUART

But I can't change the topic!

MOSQUITO

Well, then I can't help you.

STUART

What?! You barge in here, keep me up late, and tell me my presentation is boring? I'm already anxious about it, I don't need you to tell me I suck!

MOSQUITO

Easy, buddy.

STUART

Don't you buddy me.

MOSQUITO

There is one more thing we can try. But it's going to be challenging, especially with the tight time frames we are dealing with.

STUART

Go ahead, I'm up for it.

MOSQUITO

We need to change your personality.

STUART

At 11.30 p.m. on a Monday evening?

MOSQUITO

I said it wasn't going to be easy.

*Stuart walks over to the table, extracts a cupcake from the box and takes a huge bite.*

MOSQUITO

Now, now. No need to eat your sorrows away, it's not *that* hopeless. We just need to work on your posture a little, and on your voice. You're a bit stiff...

STUART

Presenting is difficult!

MOSQUITO

Let's start with the basics. Put that cupcake down. Good. Now, loosen up.

*Stuart rolls his shoulders a few times.*

MOSQUITO

Come on, a bit looser than that. Do some jumping jacks.

*She shows him. Stuart grudgingly follows suit. Emma looks most amused as the two of them perform jumping jacks. The mosquito stops after they have done a few of them.*

MOSQUITO

Very good! How do you feel?

STUART

Sweaty.

MOSQUITO

That's the spirit! Now, let me see your posture. Hold up the umbrella.

*Stuart holds up the umbrella looking completely uninspired.*

MOSQUITO

Wow, that didn't help at all. You're still stiff, and now you're sweaty too.

STUART

I feel like Mary Poppins. Look, this obviously isn't helping. Please just leave me be, I beg of you...  
(*noticing he doesn't know the mosquito's name*)

MOSQUITO  
My name's Charlie.

STUART  
Charlie?!

MOSQUITO  
What's wrong with Charlie?

STUART  
It doesn't give you much gravitas. Charlie Brown. Charlie Chaplin.

MOSQUITO  
Charlie Manson. Stuart, we can remedy this, I promise. Try to learn from a pro. Look.

*The mosquito stands in a much cooler pose. Stuart tries to emulate.*

MOSQUITO  
And now I'm going to show you how to present.

*The new slide shows an amber-trapped mosquito and is entitled 'Amber: death trap or eternal glory?'*

MOSQUITO (*with gusto*)  
Amber. We've all thought about it secretly. Its seductive scent and golden glint make it an attractive prospect. But with it comes a drawn-out, dramatic, *sticky* demise. However, is a premature death possibly worthwhile if it comes with a pristinely preserved corpse and the chance to be worn around a celebrity's neck. Or bring a forgotten species back to life?

*The next slide shows jewellery and a picture from Jurassic Park.*

STUART  
You know that's not possible, scientifically.

MOSQUITO  
It doesn't matter... dork. Look at EMEA: She's forgotten about her cupcake.

*Emma is looking at both the mosquito and the slide with great interest.*

MOSQUITO  
My point is, it doesn't matter what you say. It's how you say it. Be motivated. Be enthusiastic! EMEA will love you for it. Look at how excited she is! Be the cake to her cup! You can do this!

STUART (*finally getting inspired*)  
I can do this!

*He jumps onto his bed, points the umbrella at the wall, and a new slide shows up, back to a non-descript office building with the title 'Stuart's slightly less boring presentation'*

STUART (*still inspired*)  
Ladies and gentlemen, I have the solution, the only solution! This project is going to be a game changer for our company. I have pooled all the best suppliers, carefully contacting various contractors over the past months and testing them until I figured out which ones are *the best!* You will not be disappointed!

*In his ecstasy, his umbrella opens up loudly. Emma laughs.*

MOSQUITO

She's beaming at you!

STUART  
She is!

MOSQUITO  
You did it!

STUART  
I did it!

MOSQUITO  
And with the boring topic and uninspiring slide!

STUART  
With a boring topic and everything!

*They high-five.*

MOSQUITO  
I liked the way you said *the best!* You've got this, Stuart. You're getting the project and I wouldn't be surprised if EMEA asks to have a coffee with you following your presentation.

STUART  
You think? Maybe I can get her a cupcake.

*Emma nods vigorously.*

MOSQUITO  
Maybe you can! But... just to give you a tip: you may want to wear different underpants tomorrow. The cat paw prints are, well... not very sexy.

*Emma shakes her head in agreement.*

STUART (*sobered*)  
You watched me undress?

MOSQUITO  
Believe me, I didn't want to.

STUART  
Ah, who cares? I made the vice president of the EMEA region smile. I rock! Thank you, Charlie.

*Emma stands up and exits stage. The mosquito grins at Stuart in a way that increasingly suggests she expects payment.*

MOSQUITO  
You couldn't have done it without me, could you?

STUART  
Oh. I guess not. Well... We both know why you're here. I suppose you've earned your dinner. Go on then.

MOSQUITO (*excited*)  
Really? A midnight feast?

STUART

Yes... But don't sting me in the face please, I want to look my best tomorrow. Take my arm if you must.

*Stuart sits down on his bed and rolls up his pyjama sleeve. The mosquito sits down next to him, pulls out a napkin and ties it around her neck. Stuart looks at her with displeasure.*

STUART

Really?

*The mosquito extracts a salt and pepper shaker from her pockets and starts seasoning Stuart's arm.*

STUART

Just do it!

*The mosquito bends over his arm and places her lips onto it. Stuart winces. A few seconds pass and the mosquito sits up again.*

MOSQUITO (*dabbing her lips with her napkin*)

Delicious!

STUART

I'm delicious?

MOSQUITO

Cupcakes have nothing on you, buddy.

STUART

Please don't tell your family that.

MOSQUITO

No worries, I'm keeping you to myself.

STUART

So, are we even now?

MOSQUITO (*patting her stomach*)

Most definitely!

STUART

Good. You'll leave me alone now, yes? So I can get a good night's sleep?

MOSQUITO

Yes, you can get your rest. I'll leave you alone.

*They stand up awkwardly. Stuart finally exhales and gives the mosquito a hug.*

STUART

It was nice meeting you, Charlie. Thank you.

MOSQUITO

It was nice meeting you too, Stuart. I'll see you tomorrow.

STUART

Yeah... Wait, *tomorrow*? You're coming back?

MOSQUITO

Of course I am! There's much more work for us to do. Your wardrobe could do with a good perusal, for example, and don't even get me started on your relationship with your cat.

STUART

Just go...

*Stuart gets into bed somewhat grudgingly, clinging onto his stung arm. The mosquito starts moving towards the other side of the stage.*

MOSQUITO

Good night, Stuart.

*The mosquito sound starts up again and starts to fade. Stuart waits for the mosquito to leave, then sighs and finally lies down in his bed.*

STUART

It's nearly midnight. Better get some shut-eye.

*He turns off the light, and the stage goes dark. Stuart yawns. A few moments pass, and suddenly we hear the sound of a fly.*

STUART

You have got to be kidding.

*Music cues that it's the end of the play.*