

Its All Songs in Love and War

He had been wandering for hours, calling all the while in hopes of attracting a female. None had come and neither had he stumbled across one. The sun had dropped below its zenith a few hours ago and it wouldn't be long until the evening chill would set in, putting paid to any chance of striking upon a receptive mate until tomorrow. He'd decided to head for shelter when he was halted by a sound, the summoning call of another male, attempting to attract a mate. Unfortunately for this new rival, not only could our male detect from his song that it had a burrow, but also that he was likely significantly weaker than himself. The truth of this not easily hidden when singing.

Our male made his way towards the sound of his new rival. After a few short minutes he broke through the dense tussocky grass into a small clearing, still lit by the last rays of the evening sun. There, across the clearing, the source of the foreign song, a male just short of average size perched in the mouth of his burrow. This real estate a prize well worth competing for. In a sudden rush he was there, at the mouth of the burrow head to head with the rival male, whose song instantly changes from long Intermittent thrumming's to a series of short sharp chirrups. Their antennae flicked forward and began to lash those of their opponents, assessing while trying to intimidate the other into submission. While it was indeed true that the rival was smaller, what he lacked in strength he made up for with his defensible position. Being in the mouth of his burrow he limited the direction of assault to a full frontal one. It was soon evident that the rival, bolstered by his fortified position, was not going to surrender quickly. Rocking back and forth our male tried to strike an imposing form, aggressively lurching toward his opponent. Not shaken in the slightest the rival chirped loudly, rubbing the raised ridge of one wing across the serrated edge of the other in sharp quick motions. Not to be out done our male also began to stridulate. This barrage of sound continued seemingly with no end in sight. The frequency and volume of their chirps decreasing, the evening chill settling around them. This confrontation had to end soon if our male was to have any chance of mating today. In a sudden snap of motion our males' mandibles flew open gaping wide displaying to his rival just how big his impressive jaws were. Somewhat rattled by this display his rivals' song ceased, but he couldn't afford to surrender yet, after all, this burrow was his best chance of increasing his attractiveness to mate beyond what his smaller stature could engender. He too splayed open his jaws attempting desperately to put off his adversary. At this lack luster show of defiance our male saw his opportunity, locking jaws with his rival he wrestled him out into the open, ceding ground and drawing the rival out of his burrow. With final crushing pressure the rival uncoupled his jaws from his adversaries and made a hasty retreat into the grass reluctantly surrendering his burrow and all the hard work that it represented. Victorious, our male strode into the burrow, exultantly claiming it as his own.

Exhausted from the confrontation, he settled on one last bout of song in a last-ditch attempt to attract a female before days end. By luck or chance soon after he had resumed his song a stranger entered the opening. Was this a new rival or a potential mate? The distance too great to know for sure. The stranger crossed the expansive clearing investigating the source of the song. Our male stood in the opening of his new home, his antenna flicking forwards grazing those of the new comer, the sensory hairs upon them tasting, smelling. At last. It was certain, the chemical signature being produced by the newcomer were undeniably that of a female.

With a surge of energy, he started to court the female singing in a low buzzing stridulation, interspersed with high sharp chirrups. Walking out of his burrow he turned presenting his back to the female while continuing to sing to her, if he was lucky, she would find him attractive enough to mount. If not, she would leave. The female, obviously interested, brushed her antennae over the male's cerci, the two projections arising from his rear end, pushing back enticingly the male lowered his abdomen. Finally, she climbed on top of him. Ceasing his song, the male quickly coupled with her, not allowing her to change her mind, producing his sperm packet and attaching it to her. Success! Now he will guard her to make sure that she doesn't devour his sperm packet before there is time for enough to be absorbed and to fend off any other potential suiters and in the hope of precurng more matings, fertilizing more of her eggs and ensuring more of her offspring will be his. If he does his job well, his line will continue.