Hymenopus coronatus, the orchid mantis, is a remarkable creature. Against any opponent but a careful entomologist with a cardboard box, the mantis is a lethal hunter and master of camouflage. Its four front legs, head and thorax are covered in delicate structures resembling colorful flower petals. In appearance, it looks like nothing so much as a praying mantis covered in beautiful painted fans.

As for its behavior, like any good mantis, it is an ambush predator. It takes full advantage of its unique appearance, settling amongst the petals of orchids and awaiting visiting insects. It favors butterflies and moths for its meals, but will happily take any insect on offer. Indeed, it need not even be an insect: particularly voracious orchid mantises have been known to feed on small lizards, frogs, mice and even birds.

Its behavior among its own kind is no different. Like many mantises, orchid mantises are opportunistic cannibals. They don't go out of their way to devour their own kind, but should one stray into striking range of another when it's feeling peckish, it may well become a meal. H. coronatus is not recorded as performing the praying mantis's infamous reproductive cannibalism, however.

Its relationship to humans is neutral, verging on positive. H. coronatus is not an ally of the committed gardener like the aphid-devouring ladybug, but it will nibble on any pests that present themselves. Aside from that, the orchid mantis is only valuable to humans for its extraordinary beauty.

Hymenopus coronatus is an example of a unique form of beauty that exists only in nature, careless of human judgment, designed for function rather than form, but still capable of making an observer catch their breath at its strange loveliness.

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