

SEVEN HOMELESS MAMMOTHS  
WANDER NEW ENGLAND

an academic sex comedy

by Madeleine George

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Production Draft, TRTC

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## **CHARACTERS**

DEAN WREEN, née Cindy: F, late 40s

GREER, née Gail: F, late 40s

ANDROMEDA, née Andrea: F, 20s

THE CARETAKER: M, 60-70s

EARLY MAN 1: M or F, early 20s

EARLY MAN 2: F or M, early 20s

## **TIME**

Present.

## **SETTING**

College town, New England.

Suspicion is a philosophy of hope. It makes us believe there is something to know and something worth knowing. It makes us believe there is something rather than nothing. In this sense, sexual jealousy is a form of optimism, if only for philosophers.

--Adam Phillips, *Monogamy*

'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;  
Strike all that look upon with marvel. [...]  
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him  
Dear life redeems you.

--*The Winter's Tale*, 5.3

*Black.*

*Late summer night noise: crickets, hush of breeze.*

*In the blackness, fireflies. Low to the ground, blink-glow, blink-glow--ankle level, knee level, all around the space.*

*From off right, the rhythmic swish of a push broom approaching.*

*Crickets fade. Inside.*

*THE CARETAKER enters, sweeping. As he crosses, he flicks a lightswitch, bringing dim, formalin-yellow safety light up on the Diorama, a display case floating up and center in the stage space. Around the Diorama's edges, hints of mahogany wood paneling--Victorian natural history museum architecture--barely visible in the half-light.*

*THE CARETAKER reaches up with a dingy chamois, spot-touches a fingerprint on the wall-text plaque beside the Diorama.*

## TABLEAU VIVANT 1

*In the Diorama:*

*EARLY MAN 1, hairy-chested Neanderthal in a loincloth and headband, and EARLY MAN 2, Neanderthal with one hairy boob hanging out of her asymmetrical, belted Jennifer-Beals-in-Flashdance shift, frozen mid-conflict.*

*There's something funny about these Neanderthals. They are sort of Paleolithic and sort of contemporary at the same time--early hominids from a suburban rec room.*

*Their physical posture is stiff and barbaric. But their voices, when we hear them, are easy and contemporary, discontinuous from their doubly anachronistic bodies.*

*They do not move as they speak.*

EARLY MAN 2

*(she--slacker first-year)*

You know, I'm in like, a ton of debt.

EARLY MAN 1

*(he--slacker junior)*  
Me too.

EARLY MAN 2

No but I mean like a ton.

EARLY MAN 1

Me too, totally.

EARLY MAN 2

Coming here has totally fucked me.

EARLY MAN 1

Yeah me too.

EARLY MAN 2

Sometimes I'm like, why did I even fucking come here?

EARLY MAN 1

I know, it blows.

EARLY MAN 2

I know, what's the point of my parents paying approximately a *billion* dollars a year for me to *not* go to U of M when this place is like a total sinking ship, like *worse* than U of M? At least at U of M I would already *know* I was on a sinking ship and I would be paying approximately a *billion* dollars a year less to go down on it.

EARLY MAN 1

Yeah. *(beat)* "Go down on it."

EARLY MAN 2

*(beat)* Go *down* on it, like a ship, go *down*, like--shut *up*!

EARLY MAN 1

Heh heh.

EARLY MAN 2

Shut *up*, you're such a pervert, your mind is so perverted you don't even have a *one*-track mind, you have a *no*-track mind. You're gonna flunk out of here before they can even *kick* you out for defaulting on your loans.

EARLY MAN 1

You can't default on your loans until after you graduate.

EARLY MAN 2

*(curious)*  
Oh. Really?

EARLY MAN 1

Yeah. You don't even start paying till then.

EARLY MAN 2

Oh. Huh.

*They look at different stuff for a second (without moving).*

EARLY MAN 2 *(cont'd)*

I have to say, I don't get what those guys are doing in there. Is he like stalking her or are they hunting like, prey?

EARLY MAN 1

I think he's like, defending his mate against rivals.

EARLY MAN 2

Oh.

EARLY MAN 1

It shows like, survival of the fittest or whatever.

EARLY MAN 2

Oh.

*(cute flirtations)*  
I like how you know stuff.

EARLY MAN 1

Yeah?

EARLY MAN 2

Yeah. Knowing stuff is hot.

*(pause. No response. Aggro flirtatious)*

I said you're *hot*.

EARLY MAN 1

*(embarrassed)*

Oh, um. Thanks.

*She sighs.*

EARLY MAN 2

*(“whatever”)*

You're welcome.

*The Diorama falls silent as THE CARETAKER crosses, sweeping rhythmically. He flicks a light switch, simultaneously dousing the Diorama in darkness and bringing lights up down right on:*

*DEAN WREEN's office, bright afternoon.*

*DEAN WREEN standing behind her desk in the middle of a fit of giddy outrage, GREER in the victim's chair opposite, listening balefully, cheek in hand.*

*DEAN WREEN is academic soft-butcb--pleated pants, loafers, blazer, not the world's most flattering short haircut. She is radiant with the pleasure of complaint.*

*GREER is intellectual femme--Katha Pollitt glam meets L.L. Bean practical. She exudes a steady, cynical calm.*

DEAN WREEN

*(mid-rant)*

I said if the issue is just which space to repurpose, why don't we attack that monstrosity of a library--

GREER

'They'll never touch the library.

DEAN WREEN

*(overlapping, continuous)*

--that leaning neo-fascist tower of stucco, it's like the earth cracked open in horror to swallow that thing whole and then hell barfed it halfway back up, it gives *eyesores* a bad name--

GREER

'They'll never touch the library, Kennedy spoke there.

DEAN WREEN

*(overlapping, continuous)*

--it is a *miracle* of architectural sadism. *(re: Kennedy)* Yes I know he did but what are we, slaves to nostalgia? Move forward as the way opens, I said to them.

GREER

And then *they* said...

DEAN WREEN

*(continuous)*

Let's renovate *that* building, I said, if the point is just to find more low-value space in which to house the increasing numbers of increasingly mediocre kids we're increasingly being forced to accept to stay afloat. I said Look, we're already compromised up to our small intestine, let's put the books in storage, no one's using them anyway, and move the new crop of unpromising children into the stacks of Ho Chih Minh's tomb!

GREER

You told the Trustees they're compromised up to their small intestine?

DEAN WREEN

I implied it.

GREER

You told them their library looks like Ho Chih Minh's tomb?



DEAN WREEN

I implied it, the point is they said the decision's made, the consultants' analysis was unequivocal: it's the museum.

GREER

Oh, too bad. I always thought it was sort of nice in there.

DEAN WREEN

It does have a kind of charming irrelevance.

GREER

I seem to recall a pleasant hour you and I passed in that little museum, once long ago.

DEAN WREEN

Yes but the College can't make its development decisions based on where you and I did *not* go on dates.

GREER

What'll become of the collection?

DEAN WREEN

I don't know, Dumpster? We haven't gotten that far yet. There isn't really anything of value in there, couple of old ribs and tusks. Chunks of schist.

GREER

Chunks of--?

DEAN WREEN

Schist, schist, chunks of local granites and never mind, listen to me, do you hear how I'm talking? "Throw the collection in the Dumpster," I say blithely. I used to be a scholar.

GREER

I know.

DEAN WREEN

I used to *treasure* a research collection. I used to sit at the heads of seminar tables and conjure worlds. (*she gestures: conjuring*) If they would have told me when I first came here to teach that twenty years later I'd be standing in a windowless conference room in front of that gallery of *animals*, Brooks Brothers *animals*, arguing about which academic building to turn into a four-star resort for privileged teenagers--I could have taught high school on a Navajo reservation, you know. They called me a month before I came here, I was all packed to go.

GREER

So you've told me.

DEAN WREEN

I could have trained with Foucault in Paris. I was accepted, I turned down *Foucault* to come here!

GREER

So I've heard, many many times.

DEAN WREEN

I could have been a firefighter. I could have been a monk.

GREER

Nun.

DEAN WREEN

Anything I wanted! I was full of promise.

GREER

You chose a certain comfort. It's a reasonable choice.

DEAN WREEN

No no, look at me. A dancing dog. It's nauseating. Nauseating. (*sudden shift of thought--warm, attentive*) How are you doing? It's so good to see you.

GREER

Not great, actually.

DEAN WREEN

*(jocund)*  
Yeah? How's the cancer?

GREER

Well. It's back.

DEAN WREEN

*(brought up short)*  
What?

GREER

Sorry, honey.

DEAN WREEN

What? *(still regrouping)* What? Really?

GREER

Yeah, really.

DEAN WREEN

Oh shit. Oh shit oh shit.  
*(she comes out from behind the desk)*  
When did you find out?

GREER

Two days ago. *(gestures to the phone)* That's what the message was about.

DEAN WREEN

Well fuck. This is terrible. This is terrible, what's the game plan?

GREER

You know, same as last time, only more so.

DEAN WREEN

Well how many rounds of this can they expect you to *go* through?

GREER

It's not *their* fault, they're trying to cure me.

DEAN WREEN

I know, but--

GREER

It's not something they dreamt up to *torment* me.

DEAN WREEN

You want to move back in?

*GREER has been thinking about it.*

GREER

I don't know. Do you think that's a good idea?

DEAN WREEN

I mean, it's complicated obviously, there's the new girl.

GREER

Right.

DEAN WREEN

But it makes the most sense. I can't really stay on top of you if you're not in the house.

GREER

I know, but I hate to--

DEAN WREEN

No no it's settled, you'll move back in. It's good, I've missed you.

GREER

But the new girl--

DEAN WREEN

Is *fantastic*, she's *fantastic*, she's a yoga instructor--(*reminding herself*) yogini, yogini--she's absolutely beautiful, Andromeda, née Andrea obviously but she goes by Andromeda, and I don't know, you might hate her a little, probably you will, you'll definitely hate her a little but she's *fantastic*.

GREER

(*wearry*)  
My God, Cindy, really.

DEAN WREEN

I have a stressful job! I accommodate hacks and pedants all day long, entitled alums and bovine foundation functionaries and America's most feckless college president since what's-his-name took off to Argentina with Adelphi's entire endowment, all day *long* I deal with these people and I'm allowed to come home at night to a simple, friendly, extremely responsive girl who is nothing but balm to my tired soul.

GREER

She's not a student, is she?

DEAN WREEN

(*airy*)  
Former.

GREER

*Cynthia.*

DEAN WREEN

Former! *Years* passed between our knowing each other pedagogically and biblically.

GREER

(*a sigh*)  
Christ, honey.

DEAN WREEN

She graduated two years ago at *least* and then about six months back we ran into each other at queer line dancing and--

GREER

The rest is history. Short, short history.

DEAN WREEN

She is of *age*, darling.

GREER

Darling, *you* are of age. She is of *youth*.

DEAN WREEN

I can't wait for you to meet her, you're going to *love* her, she's *fantastic*. I only have her Thursdays through Sundays, so depending on when you come--

GREER

You sound like you're sharing custody of her.

*Sliver of a beat.*

DEAN WREEN

She's with her spiritual teacher every Sunday night through Thursday morning.

*DEAN WREEN waits.*

DEAN WREEN (*cont'd*)

Well?

GREER

I'm not saying anything.

DEAN WREEN

*(exploding)*

You only *wish* you had a spiritual teacher who inspired you and soothed you and let you sweep her ashram and sort her lentils for her! (*off GREER's questioning look*) It's some kind of meditation they do.

GREER

Frankly, I do wish it. This rational humanism is getting exhausting.

DEAN WREEN

So you'll come. You're not worried about her being there. You'll come home.

GREER

You know honey, I love you, but I have so little respect for you.

DEAN WREEN

I know but what can I do about that? It's my cross to bear. I'm so glad you're coming home. You know how much money I raised for the capital campaign this year alone, sweetheart? This year *alone*?

GREER

How much?

DEAN WREEN

Eight million, eight hundred thousand and change.

GREER

That's extraordinary.

DEAN WREEN

Does it hurt?

GREER

Fundraising?

DEAN WREEN

The cancer.

GREER

Oh.

DEAN WREEN

Are you in a lot of pain?

GREER

Here and there. Mostly here. *(she gestures)* *Metastatic* is the new word they're throwing around.

*Beat. It sinks in.*

DEAN WREEN

Ugly word.

*DEAN WREEN comes around to GREER and stands behind her chair, puts her arms around her shoulders. GREER leans back against her.*

GREER

I wish my parents weren't dead.

DEAN WREEN

Me too, honey.

GREER

I wish I knew what was going to happen.

DEAN WREEN

Me too, honey.

*Lights shift.*

*In his booth down left, THE CARETAKER switches on the old swivel-arm lamp on his cluttered desk. It casts a cool pool of light.*

THE CARETAKER

To the Editor. In regards to your article regarding the closing of the Pratt Museum. The Pratt Museum is an institution. It has been a part of the College for as long as I can remember, and I moved to Town with my mother from Chicopee in 1947. The museum is widely regarded as the jewel of the Town. It ought not to be closed. Yours respectfully, Margaret Whately, 86 Hancock Road, former Town Meeting Member, 1982-89, Town Meeting Moderator, 1986-89.

To the Editor. I read in Thursday's edition that the Trustees of the College, in their infinite wisdom, have decided to close the Pratt Museum. Apparently, their objection is that the



museum is a) out of date and b) unprofitable. My answer to this is twofold. One. The museum features the skeletons of prehistoric creatures and arrowheads from extinct tribes. These things are by *definition* out of date. Two. Museums are rarely profitable. Perhaps the recently opened Museum of Sex in New York City (which I have not visited) turns a tidy profit, but here it is generally understood that museums are institutions devoted to the public good, and are not expected to function self-sustainingly as businesses. Perhaps if the Trustees now require the College to attract tourist dollars to pay for its upkeep, they ought to place a roller coaster and a sideshow with a bearded lady at the top of War Memorial Hill, next to the monument to our fallen alumni. Yours sincerely, Jacob Schmidt Class of '64, Schmidt Group Realty Associates, 66 School Lane.

To the Editor. Recently you ran a short piece announcing the closure of the Pratt Museum, a small but beloved treasure trove of rare prehistoric skeletons, local geological wonders, and dioramas depicting the daily lives of the people who lived peaceably on this land, in harmony with its natural rhythms, before their civilization was exterminated by our own. Given the history of plunder, pillage, and bioterrorism this valley has endured since colonization, I suppose it should not have come as a shock to me to read that this last fragment of a lost world is soon to be plowed under this blood-soaked soil. Nevertheless, must this victim of progress go to its grave un-eulogized by the individuals who loved it? I will be outside the front doors of the Pratt Museum next Thursday at 7:45 p.m. to facilitate a candlelight vigil and leave-taking ritual to bid our museum farewell before demolition begins, and I invite all members of our community to join me. Please, no scented candles, incense, accelerants, open torches, flammable luminaria, et cetera. Signed, Jean Novotny-Newburg, MA, M. Ed., MSW, 94 Hollyhock Drive. Editor's note: This event is not sponsored by the College. For more information, please call Jean Novotny-Newburg directly at 253-4677.

*THE CARETAKER clicks off the desk lamp, dropping himself into darkness.*