

‘‘Boreoeutheria’’

Joseph Mack

based on a chapter on tenrecs in "The Song of the Dodo"

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FIRST DRAFT
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Females

MESSENGER

BELIEVER wants to believe there are males with external testicals. sweet and pleasant.

SCEPTIC doesn't think there are males with external testicals. incredulous and critical. thinks the other two females are stupid.

Males

MC can become Male_1 after reading the introduction.

MALE_1, MALE_2 have internal testicals (appear to have no testicals)

MALE_3 has external testicals

ACT ONE

FADE IN

1. EXT. DAY

The three males are upstage with males in numerical order left to right, as in a lineup. None of the males speak.

Male_1 and Male_2 are trying very hard to be attractive to the females. I suggest they pose like Arnold. Maybe Male_1 and Male_2 can be weedy guys, so that their posing looks comedic.

Male_3 is nonchalant, doing things like looking at his watch, reading a book, sipping coffee, looking at his cell phone. For casting, pick Male_3 as a person the audience knows and likes, or will accept as a popular romantic figure, that the women will like and the males won't feel threatened by. Gerald would be good for this. A happy gay guy would do too. Anyone who is a contrast to the guys posing like Arnold will do.

Believer and Sceptic centerstage, act as background to the MC. The stage-converse animatedly, but do not make any sounds.

MC downstage

MC

As I'm sure everyone here knows, humans, being primates, belong to the clade Boreoeutheria, or northern placentals. Naturally, being Boreoeutherians, everything about Boreoeutherians is of interest to us.

MC (CONT'D)

However to have any hope of understanding our Boreoeutherian nature, you need a thorough background in taxonomy, phylogeny, and natural selection.

MC (CONT'D)

Still, taxonomy, phylogeny and natural selection are fiercely complicated concepts. They are so complicated, that you need a PhD in life sciences to have
(MORE)

CONTINUED

MC (CONT'D)

any hope of understanding them. Fortunately, I have a PhD in life sciences, and in order to help you follow this piece, I've prepared a comprehensive tutorial on the subject, explaining everything you need to know.

MC (CONT'D)

So here we go. Are you ready?

MC (CONT'D)

(reading like an
academic lecture)

Since the days of Linnaeus, the taxonomy of mammals had changed little. Mammalian taxonomy was based on anatomy, in particular the very different and complicated female reproductive systems of mammals. An understanding of the mammalian female reproductive system had allowed taxonomists to easily assign mammals to orders, families, genus and species.

MC (CONT'D)

Of course, as we all know, the male reproductive system is much simpler and varies little between mammals. It is no surprise then, that the male reproductive system had proved of little value in understanding taxonomic relationships.

MC (CONT'D)

Recently, information from DNA sequencing has revealed a different and clearer set of relationships between the mammals. This new understanding has overturned the previous anatomy based Linnaean taxonomy, and now humans belong to the large clade of Boreoeutheria or northern placentals.

MC (CONT'D)

Consequently this new clade, the Boreoeutheria, contains groupings of mammals, not previously thought to be related, There was much head scratching amongst taxonomists looking for the anatomical features that might unify the Boreoeutheria. It was clear that the female

(MORE)

CONTINUED

MC (CONT'D)
reproductive system was not the
unifying anatomical feature.

MC (CONT'D)
Then one day, someone realised that
all the Boreoeutherian males had
external testicals.

MC pauses for effect

MC (CONT'D)
Today we go to the Serengeti, back
in the time of the Cretaceous, to
find out what happened, at that
critical and decisive moment in our
evolutionary history, that provided
the Darwinian selection, to produce
the first Boreoeutherians.

MC pauses for effect

MC walks off stage, or assumes role of Male_1. Male_1 and
Male_2 give each other high 5's and look contemptuously
at Male_3, then start posing earnestly like Arnold. Male_3
confidently ignores them and looks nonchalant.

BELIEVER
(romantically
remembering)
Thagg came around last night.
For dinner, he brought this huge
lizard. It was so big, he had
to carry it over his shoulder.
It was a paleosaurus. I love
paleosaurus; it's my favourite.
We just sat around and talked,
while the paleosaurus roasted in
the fire. For dessert, we had
dodo eggs that I'd collected in
the morning. It was a wonderful
romantic evening together.

Messenger bursts on stage and rushes over to join the other
two females

MESSENGER
(incredulous)
Guess what! Zelda just told me
that she spent the night with a
guy. You won't believe it, but he
had a pair!!

BELIEVER
(hopefully)
No! ... Do you mean ... a pair
(MORE)

CONTINUED

BELIEVER (CONT'D)

... of balls?

SCEPTIC

Oh come on!!! They don't exist.
We heard that, all through grade
school. It was just a bunch of
Fairy Tales.

Messenger and Believer take little notice of Sceptic's
imprecations. They suddenly have other things on their
mind.

MESSENGER

That's what she said.

SCEPTIC

There's no such thing! They were
all just jokes or lies!

BELIEVER

Maybe you could introduce me. He
sounds like someone I'd like to get
to know.

SCEPTIC

Oh get real! No males have a pair.
Everything we heard back then was
lies! Remember, you were supposed
to get pregnant if you kissed a boy
when you were having your period!
They tried to scare us to death.
Nothing we heard back then was
real!

MESSENGER

No hope. I thought the same thing.
She won't tell me who he is or
where he lives.

SCEPTIC

Listen, I checked out all the boys
back in grade school, while you two
were still playing with dolls!

BELIEVER

I checked out my Ken doll. I was
most disappointed. It was the
first thing I did when I got him.
... The boys are grown up now;
maybe things are different.

SCEPTIC

There was nothing there to grow up!
Believe me, I looked!

CONTINUED

MESSENGER

Well it won't hurt to check. Maybe things are different now. All men should have a pair.

SCEPTIC

Oh for goodness sakes. Males only have a pair in Fairy Tales.

Messenger and Believer approach Male_1. Sceptic goes back too, but stands to the side as if she doesn't want to have anything to do with it.

MESSENGER

(to Male_1)

OK relax. We're just here to have a look around.

Male_1 stands still. Male_2 continues to pose but takes an interest in what's happening to Male_1.

Male_3 ignores it all and continues to look nonchalant.

Messenger pulls back Male_1's elastic waisted gym shorts to peer down the front. Male_1 looks puzzled. Once she's done so, Believer pulls back the elastic too, so there's enough room for them both to look at the same time. Both peer around for quite a while (enough to make the audience laugh) so it's obvious that they're having a really good look, but can't find what they're looking for.

Both Messenger and Believer slowly give up, look at each other silently as if to say "oh well", shrug their shoulders, and let the elastic of the gym shorts gently back onto Male_1's body. The women give a "no thanks" wave to Male_1.

SCEPTIC

See! Toldya! There's no Easter Bunny or Santa Claus either. It's your parents.

Messenger and Believer move to Male_2.

Male_1 looks surprised and wonders why they passed him by. Starts posing again but gives up, realising none of the women are interested in him. He looks over to see what happens to Male_2.

Male_2 poses hard to impress

MESSENGER

(to Male_2)

OK you can relax too. We're just looking around.

CONTINUED

Male_2 stops posing and stands straight.

Messenger and Believer investigate Male_2's gym shorts just as they did for Male_1.

SCEPTIC
(palms her forehead,
or whatever a woman
would do here)

See!

Messenger and Believer move to Male_3, who continues to look nonchalant, but now cheerily welcomes the attention of the women.

Male_1 and Male_2 look incredulously at each other and can't believe they've been passed up.

Messenger and Believer repeat the steps from the previous two males, but quickly are wreathed in smiles. They look over to Sceptic to get her to come over and look.

SCEPTIC (CONT'D)
What? You're not kidding me are
you?

she runs over and peers into the held open gym shorts.

SCEPTIC (CONT'D)
Oh I can't believe it, after all
these years thinking it wasn't
true. Fairy Tales DO come true.
He's ours girls!

The three women hug Male_3 and scream like they were at a Beatles concert.

Male_3 looks cheery and happy.

Male_1 and Male_2 can't believe what just happened.

FADE OUT

Author's comments:

In "The Song of the Dodo" (1996) David Quammen, Touchstone NY, ISBN 0-684-80083-7, 2nd chapter, talks about tenrecs. These are mouse sized mammals in Madagascar. Knowing next to nothing about tenrecs, but having heard of them and realising I probably should know what they were, I looked in wikipedia. I found their nearest relative to be the african elephant.

You get used to surprises like this in biology. However even though I'm used to being surprised, I was more than surprised to find this out. I thought I knew all the

elephants.

It turns out that the african elephant belongs to the clade <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrotheria> Afrotheria (african placentals). I'd never heard of Afrotheria. It's a clade, a new clade, first proposed in 1998.

Starting in the 1990s, advances in DNA sequencing have resulted in a new understanding of taxonomy. The taxonomy I learned in the '60's has been abandoned. We (humans) now belong to the clade <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boreoeutheria> Boreoeutheria (northern placentals or northern beasts), which originated in the late Cretaceous in the northern continent of Laurasia, which consisted of North America, Greenland, and Eurasia (including Southeast Asia). Other mammalian clades I'd never heard of are <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenarthra>. There is a cladogram in <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boreoeutheria> showing Atlantogenata, Xenarthra, Afrotheria, Boreoeutheria, Laurasiatheria, Euarchontoglires.

In the old anatomy based taxonomy, tenrecs weren't elephants, but now they're in the same clade as elephants.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euarchontoglires>). The earlier taxonomy was based on anatomical features, but so far, few if any anatomical features that support the clades, e.g. the clade Euarchontoglires, have been recognized. Nor does any strong anatomical evidence support alternative hypotheses. It seems that anatomy is not a good predictor of the clade to which the creature belongs.

The background information, on which this piece is based, that all boreoeutherians have external testicals, is a little stretched; the Cetaceans and the Rhinocerotidae, both Boreoeutherians, have internal testicals.

The premise of this piece, that women are interested in or like men's bodies, is a little dubious. Women don't seem to like men's bodies in the way that men are attracted to women's bodies. Whether this is intrinsic, or the result of growing up through years of sexism and being treated as sex objects, is not clear to me. Here I've cast the women with the power, and they select their mates. I don't know if that helps resolve the issue of whether women like men's bodies or not.

Thanks to Guy for his suggestion, to set the stage back in prehistoric times, by having the two women discuss their romantic lives, before Messenger starts the scene.

Thanks to Yoram Bauman for the bit about having a PhD (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVp8UGjECt4>).

Thanks to Gary Larson for the cavemen name, "Thagg".

I showed this to Anoo and not being a biologist and not

knowing anything about phylogeny, she didn't get it. She wanted it rewritten so that theatre people, who know no biology would have it explained to them along the way. She wanted someone to be comedically doing sign language, like Greg sometimes does at Transactors shows. She also wanted me to tell the audience why I'd written the piece. To me, the audience doesn't care why the author wrote the piece. They get whatever they get out of it. However I wrote the piece because I thought it would be funny for women to have played a role in the selection of men's bodies and for women to be interested in and discussing men's bodies in public. (It's likely that men played a role in selecting large breasts in women.)

I rewrote it Anoo's way, but it seemed like much of the piece was now written for people who didn't get it. I decided that it was pointless to perform a piece in front of an audience who wouldn't get it. Instead, here I've returned the piece to the way it was before I showed it to Anoo.

Anoo did not pick up on the lies involved in the females character's lives and skeptic's role in pointing them out. This is the backbone of the counselling I do. I want people to see the lies on which their lives are built.

THE END