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Dramatic Publishing

PASTORALIA

PASTORALIA

"A wickedly potent stage transfer ... hilarious flights of linguistic fancy ... dazzling humor ineluctably gives way to an unflinching, wordless take on those who put money over people ... chilling ... excellently unctuous and evil."

-The Village Voice

"This stage adaptation of George Saunders' brilliantly entertaining and brazenly off-kilter novella [is] ... inspired ... Director and adaptor Yehuda Duenyas ... creates a ... heartbreaking ... and absurd comedic style."

-The New York Times

Comedy/Drama. Adapted by Yehuda Duenyas from the novella by George Saunders. Cast: 5m., 3w. with doubling. May be further doubled to 3m., 2w. or expanded to 8m., 5w. *Pastoralia* brings to the stage *New York Times* best-selling author George Saunders' heartbreaking and hilarious vision of betrayal, loyalty and humiliation in a decaying American theme park. In a twisted yet recognizable version of corporate life, Ed and Janet work as cave-men re-enactors in a second rate Disney-like amusement park teetering on the brink of financial ruin. Both have family troubles back home and are desperate to keep their jobs in the face of company-wide layoffs and morally dubious practices. It's the 21st century of corporate bosses, fax machines, drugs and tourists, a dystopia that explodes with dark wit and razor-sharp intelligence. "*Pastoralia* is quintessential George Saunders the fiction writer's allegory of the cave as totally American workplace hell ... [a] wickedly potent stage transfer ... a flurry of verbal pleasures ... an unflinching take on those who put money over people." (*The Village Voice*) "A potent, funny adaptation of George Saunders' biting novella ... both heartbreaking and—despite the bizarre backdrop—acutely familiar." (*The New Yorker*) *Area staging. Approximate running time: 90 minutes.*

DUENYAS/SAUNDERS

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DRAMATIC PUBLISHING

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GEORGE SAUNDERS'

PASTORALIA

A play in two acts
Adapted for the stage by
YEHUDA DUENYAS



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(PASTORALIA)

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IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

Pastoralia was originally performed at P.S. 122 in October of 2005. It was produced by Ariana Smart and stage managed by Madeleine Burns.

Original Cast

Ed Ryan Bronz
Janet Aimee McCormick
Murray Squib/Dylan Klose Peter Lettre
Eleanor Squib/Jeannine/Bibby/Voice of Louise. Alissa Ford
Marty Richard Ferrone
Greg Nordstrom James Stanley
Bradley/Linda Jesse Hawley
Kevin/Cole Klose Dmitri Friedenberg

Production Team

Directed by Yehuda Duenyas
Sets by Michael Casselli
Lights by Ben Kato
Sound by Jody Elff
Costumes by Kirstin Tobiasson
Technical Director Jeremy Lydic
Assistant Stage Manager Rachel Hutt

PASTORALIA

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Note: *Pastoralia* has 13 characters, which can be played by as few as 5 actors. Below is a suggestion for an 8-person cast, the way it was originally performed in New York in 2005.

ED a caveman
JANET a cavewoman
NORDSTROM. Ed and Janet's boss
MARTY a park employee
BRADLEY Janet's son
LINDA a cavewoman
JEANNINE Marty's wife
ELEANOR SQUIB a park visitor
BIBBY KLOSH. a park visitor
VOICE OF LOUISE
MURRAY SQUIB a park visitor
DYLAN KLOSH. a park visitor
KEVIN Marty's son
COLE KLOSH a park visitor

SETTING

An under-attended, historically themed amusement park. The very near future.

ACT I

Scene 1

(Lights slowly rise. Dawn. Cave interior. Loosely hidden in the cave wall are three doors and two feeding slots: one big and one small. A window at eye level reveals distant mountains, sky, clouds, perhaps robots of extinct mammals, a dirt path. On one wall there are cave paintings and pictographs; on the ground, a log and a fire pit with an empty spit. A CAVEMAN is pounding a rock against a rock. Tool-making. A CAVEWOMAN is sleeping by the fire pit. After some time, the quality of light changes, she slowly wakes, stretches, yawns, and turns over.

Dusk. Lights slowly fade out.)

Scene 2

(Lights slowly rise. Dawn. Cave interior. CAVEMAN is pretending to be catching and eating small bugs. CAVEWOMAN is grunting to herself, rocking back and forth, doing some sort of crude weaving.

Some time passes. CAVEWOMAN is irritated. She squat-walks like a monkey over to the wall with the pictographs and marvels at their beauty. CAVEMAN comes

over and admires them with her. They clamor some at each other and erupt shrieking into a heated argument. It quickly passes. They turn their backs to each other. CAVEWOMAN sits near the log and spaces out, bored. CAVEMAN pounds a rock against a rock. Tool-making.

Dusk. Blackout.)

Scene 3

(Lights up. Cave interior. CAVEMAN is doing some kind of primitive ritual dance and shouting with a hunting spear in his hand. Loud clunk from the Big Slot. He goes to the loosely hidden service-type door that looks like a big mail slot. Opens the door, pulls out a cooked goat carcass, does a victory dance about bringing home food, and lugs the goat over to the fire pit. CAVEWOMAN enters, squat-walking like a monkey. CAVEMAN grunts, gestures she should make a fire. They argue, grunting at each other. CAVEWOMAN relents, squats over the fire pit, and rubs two sticks together. CAVEMAN discreetly hits a switch on the wall, a gas fire starts up. He mounts the goat on the prefab spit over the fire. They watch the fire and the goat a while.

Quality of light changes. Dusk. Lights slowly fade.)

Scene 4

(Lights up. Cave interior. Afternoon. A goat is roasting on the spit over the fire. CAVEMAN is sitting by the fire hungrily devouring roasted goat. His face is oily and there is goat in his beard. CAVEWOMAN is almost nauseated, carefully eating some pieces of goat. She is irritated.)

CAVEWOMAN-JANET. Jeez. I'm so tired of roast goat I could scream.

(CAVEMAN-ED shrieks at her. Blackout.)

Scene 5

(Lights up. Cave interior. No goat on spit. ED enters from his loosely hidden door, groggy. He checks the Big Slot for goat. No goat. He decides to work on the pictographs. JANET enters from her loosely hidden door, squat-walking like a monkey. She sees that there is no goat on the fire pit. She tries to inquire about the goat in cavetalk—like: “What the freak?” ED grunts, unresponsive.)

JANET. No freaking goat?

(ED scuttles over, emits a series of guttural sounds while gesturing, as if to say “Big rain come down, and boom, make goats run, goats now away, away in high hills, and as my fear was great, I did not follow.”)

JANET (*familiar with this routine*). Yeah, yeah, the big rain came down and the goats ran away, blah blah... (*JANET scratches her armpit and makes a sound like a monkey. She pulls a cigarette and lighter out from under her log. She lights the cigarette.*) Jesus. (*She sits on the log, takes off her wig.*) What a bunch of shit. Why you insist, I'll never know. Who's here? Do you see anyone here but us?

(*ED gestures she should put out the cigarette and make a fire in the fire pit. JANET gestures ED should kiss her butt. JANET goes to the fire pit and starts rubbing two sticks together.*)

JANET. Why am I making a fire? A fire in advance of a goat. Is this like a wishful fire? Like a hopeful fire?

(*ED gestures for her to blow on the sticks, make the fire more vigorously.*)

JANET. No, sorry, I've had it. What would I do in the real world if there was thunder and so on and our goats actually ran away? Maybe I'd mourn, like cut myself with that flint, or maybe I'd kick your ass for being so stupid as to leave the goats out in the rain. What, they didn't put it in the Big Slot? (*ED scowls and shakes his head.*) Well, did you at least check the Little Slot? Maybe it was a small goat and they really crammed it in. Maybe for once they gave us a nice quail or something.

(*ED goes to a drawer in the wall—the Little Slot—and looks inside. Nothing. He returns to his pictographs.*)

JANET. Well, freak this. I'm going to walk right out of here and see what the hell is up.

(She sits on her log and smokes and together they wait to hear a clunk in the Big Slot. ED asks in cavetalk if JANET will rub the sticks together to make the fire while he pushes the button. She doesn't respond, so he does both himself.)

Lunchtime. ED goes to a fake rock and opens it. Inside are the Reserve Crackers. He doles out some Reserve Crackers and they eat back to back by the fire pit.

Day passes. Quality of light changes. JANET goes to the door of her Separate Area.)

JANET. No goat tomorrow, I'm out of here and down the hill. I swear to God. You watch.

(Blackout.)

Scene 6

(Cave. Next day. Lights up on ED and JANET seated behind the fire, back to back, eating crackers again.)

JANET *(losing it)*. Crackers...crackers...crackers...
CRACKERS CRACKERS CRACKERS CRACKERS
CRACKERS! Jesus, I wish you'd talk to me. I don't see why you won't. I'm about to go bonkers. We could at least talk. At least have some fun. Maybe play some Scrabble. *(ED gives her a look like: Scrabble?)* Bastard!

(She throws a flint hard and hits ED. ED almost says OW! but instead makes a horse-like sound of fury and considers pinning her to the floor in an effort to make her submit to his superior power, etc., and chases her to her Separate Area door.

Dusk. ED goes to his Separate Area.)

Scene 7

(Lights up. Cave interior. ED enters from his loosely hidden door, groggy. He checks the Big Slot for goat. No goat. He pounds a rock against a rock. Tool-making. JANET enters from her loosely hidden door, squat-walking like a monkey, but remorseful.)

JANET. You gonna live? Sorry, man, really sorry, I just like lost it. *(ED gives her a look. She cans the English, then starts wailing in grief and sort of hunkers down in apology for how terrible it was when she threw that rock at him. Then: a loud clunk from the Big Slot.)* Yes!

(ED opens the Big Slot, takes out a cooked goat shank, does a victory dance, and lugs the goat over to the fire pit. A note is attached to the goat. JANET reads it while ED prepares the goat briskly, doing more to it than needs to be done to it with a flint.)

JANET *(reads carefully)*. “Ha ha! Sorry about the no goat and all. A little mix-up. In the future, when you look in here for a goat, what you will find on every occasion is

a goat, and not a note. Or maybe both. Ha ha! Happy eating! Everything's fine!..." Assholes. (*ED mounts the goat on the prefab spit over the fire, gestures she should make a fire.*) Oh, come on. Why do I gotta do this? Who gives a shit?

(*ED shrieks and grunts. JANET relents, squats over the fire pit, half-heartedly rubs two sticks together. ED discreetly hits a switch on the wall; the fire starts up.*)

JANET. Wippy-dip. Look how talented I am. I made a freaking fire.

(*Then, from outside, footsteps and voices. ED and JANET can't believe it. This is a rare occasion. ED panics for a moment, then stands expectantly, smooths his caveman robe, gets ready to finally do his job and shine. JANET panics and runs around racing to find and put on her wig.*)

In the window appear the faces of MURRAY SQUIB and ELEANOR SQUIB.)

MURRAY SQUIB (*pokes his head in*). Whoa! These are some very cramped living quarters. This really makes you appreciate the way we live now. Do you have call-waiting? Do you know how to make a nice mushroom cream sauce? Ha ha! I pity you guys. And also, and yet, I thank you guys, who were my precursors, right? Is that the spirit? Is that your point? You weren't ignorant on purpose? You were doing the best you could? Just like I am? Probably someday some guy rep-

resenting me will be in there, and some punk who I'm precursor of will be hooting at me, asking why my shoes were made out of dead cows and so forth. Because in that future time, wearing dead skin on your feet, no, they won't do that. That will seem to them like barbarity, just like you dragging that broad around by her hair seems to us like barbarity, although to me, not that much, after living with my wife fifteen years. Ha ha! Have a good one!

ELEANOR SQUIB (*pokes her head in*). Stinks in there.

MURRAY SQUIB. That's the roasting goat. Everything wasn't all prettied up. When you ate meat, it was like you were eating actual meat, the flesh of a dead animal, an animal that maybe had been licking your hand just a few hours before.

ELEANOR SQUIB. I would never do that.

MURRAY SQUIB. You do it now, bozo! You just pay someone to do the dirty work. The slaughtering? The skinning?

ELEANOR SQUIB. I do not, either.

MURRAY SQUIB. Ever heard of a slaughterhouse? Ha ha! Gotcha! What do you think goes on in there? Some guy you never met kills and flays a cow with what you might term big old cow eyes, so you can have your shoes and I can have my steak and my shoes!

ELEANOR SQUIB. That's different. Those animals were raised for slaughter. That's what they were made for. Plus I cook them in an oven, I don't squat there in my underwear with smelly smoke blowing all over me.

MURRAY SQUIB. Thank heaven for small favors!... Joking! I'm joking. You squatting in your underwear is not such a bad mental picture, believe me.

ELEANOR SQUIB. Plus where do they poop?

MURRAY SQUIB. Ask them. Ask them where they poop, if you so choose. You paid your dime. That is certainly your prerogative.

ELEANOR SQUIB. I don't believe I will.

MURRAY SQUIB. Well, I'm not shy. *(Silence from the window, hushed discussion. Then MURRAY SQUIB sticks his head in.)* Okay, so where do you poop?

(ED cowers and shrieks in the corner in fear of this strange visitor.)

JANET *(whispering)*. We have disposable bags that mount on a sort of rack. The septic doesn't come up this far.

(ED can't believe JANET is speaking English, to a Guest, in the cave. He gives JANET a look.)

MURRAY SQUIB. Ah, they poop in bags that mount on racks.

ELEANOR SQUIB. Wonderful, I'm the richer for that information.

MURRAY SQUIB. But hold on, in the old times, like when the cave was real and all, where then did they go? I take it there were no disposal bags in those times, if I'm right.

(ED cowers and shrieks as if aliens have descended and intruded on his caveman way of life.)

JANET. In those times they just went out in the woods.

MURRAY SQUIB. Ah, that makes sense. (*MURRAY pulls his head out and fills out the Client Vignette Evaluation form.*)

(*ED gives JANET a harder look.*)

JANET. Oh, he's okay. He's no narc. I can tell.

(*MURRAY SQUIB's face reappears.*)

MURRAY SQUIB. Hokay. Nice job. Do you guys get this? Do we give this to you? Here it comes!

(*He throws the form, folded into a paper airplane, through the window. JANET picks it up. The SQUIBS leave.*)

MURRAY SQUIB (*O.S., as they go*). Where to? Russian Peasant Farm? Sheep May Safely Graze? Navaho Wedding Feast?

JANET. Under "Overall Impression": "A-okay! Very nice." Under "Learning Value": "We learned where they pooped. Both old days and now." (*Silence.*) I just about shit myself when they came up, you know? I ain't used to it anymore. How long's it been, like three months?

(*Quality of light changes as ED and JANET make their way to their Separate Area doors. Lights out on the cave and lights up on ED's Separate Area. ED puts on his footies and makes some cocoa. He takes out some paperwork from an envelope that has the letters "DPPEF" written on it in big letters. He fills out a form silently,*