

# THE MATING SEASON OF FLYING MONKEYS

by ANN WUEHLER

## CHARACTERS

BELINDA, elderly woman, never married, a nurse.

MAJORIE, her sister, also elderly, in sixties or above. Uses a cane. Also never married. A retired bus and farm truck driver.

## SETTING

The front porch of the two sister's shared trailer house. Two rocking chairs, potted plants that clearly need some TLC, a stack of paperbacks by each chair. Light is sunny and bright. Time is now.

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[ Belinda sits on one of the chairs, checking her heavily made up face in a mirror. She shakes her head, her hair elaborately fixed. Marjorie dozes in the other chair, wearing sweats, a big sweatshirt, a book open and resting on her chest. Her cane is within reach. Belinda tries to be very quiet. She puts the mirror down on the floor of the porch, checks Marjorie, sets her shoulders as if for a very hard duty. ]

MARJORIE

Where ya going, Belinda?

[ Marjorie sits up, yawns hugely, the book falling to one side. Belinda sniffs, but makes a show of going through her purse, a giant purple affair that could house a city, the proverbial old lady purse, if you will. ]

That's my purse. We need some eggs. Throw these plants out! Why do you have my going-to-town purse? Where are you going without me?

BELINDA

None of your beeswax, you nosy cow. Those plants are fine, perking up, you let them alone.

[ Marjorie makes a grab at the purse but Belinda steps just out of reach. ]

MARJORIE

Gimme back my purse! If I have to get up, you are not getting your cup of Lipton tonight.

BELINDA

I might not be here tonight...so...so there. And we share this purse. I'm sharing it. So go back to your nap. Maybe I hate Lipton, maybe I've always hated it.

MARJORIE

Where are you going? Hate Lipton? Pig's whiskers you do. You don't have night shifts anymore. Are those bruises on your cheeks?

BELINDA

[ Rubbing at one cheek, a deathgrip on the purse with the other. ]

It's just not blended in yet. I never wear makeup. I'm not very good at it. I'm taking the car. I'm taking the car and might be out all night, all night! So. Don't call the police. I'll be out all night, and, the police do not need to be called.

MARJORIE

You are not taking the car. It needs oil. And tires.

BELINDA

I'm stopping to get tires. It only needs one new tire. You're so negative! And...and I put some oil in this morning, when you were still in bed. I've always put the oil in, ever since we've had that car. I'm going.

[ Marjorie picks up her book from floor, looks through it for her place, then bends the page. ]

Ignore me all you wish. I'm going to do this.

MARJORIE

No, you're not. I'm a year older than you. I'm still the boss here. What exactly are you NOT going to do? Wearing clown makeup.

BELINDA

Marjorie. You can't tell me what to do anymore. I'm...an old woman now. You're my sister, not...not my mother. I've decided to have a one night stand, if you absolutely must know.

[ Silence. Marjorie gropes for her cane, and then gets to her feet. Belinda backs off.  
But still rather defiant. ]

MARJORIE

But. You've hated men since Jack Klingerholfer broke your heart when you were sixteen.

BELINDA

Well, better late than never. I'm going to a bar and...picking someone up.

MARJORIE

What is this, mating season for flying monkeys??

BELINDA

I have no idea what that even means, but I am not a monkey. I have my best nightie and that perfume I got at the Dollar Store. I am ready for love!

[ Gets behind chair as Marjorie advances. ]

MARJORIE

Belinda, have you gone plumb stone crazy? They cut down on your hours at the hospital, so what. Learn to knit. Good women don't go to bars, or go home with some stranger.

[ Stops, begins to smile. Goes back to chair and sits carefully. ]

Cause we're old witches, we should have flying monkeys. You're plumb stone crazy.

BELINDA

I'm not crazy. I am headed out to...follow my heart.

[ Belinda sits in the other chair, purse on her lap. ]

And it's not a man...I'm not looking for a man. I meant that. Never again for men.

MARJORIE

Then what are you blathering about? Maybe you just need some sleep.

BELINDA

I'm...queer.

[ Marjorie coughs, chokes, bangs her cane on the floor as she tries to get her  
powers of speech back. ]

I must be. I've hated men since I was sixteen. I live with my sister. I like women. Are you okay?  
Do you need some water?

MARJORIE

I just swallowed wrong is all. What's got you so stirred up? Did you take my heart pills again?

BELINDA

I have never taken your heart pills, that was a dream you had.

MARJORIE

You took them, you hid them and then ate them like candies.

BELINDA

I am a nurse. I know better than to take your blood thinners like candies. You're starting to think what you dream actually happens.

MARJORIE

I'm starting to think you think I'm crazy. I know you're up nights sneaking around the house.

BELINDA

Of course I am. You don't like me drinking milk before bedtime.

MARJORIE

You fart all night. I don't want to smell your farts all night.

BELINDA

It settles my stomach. You know I can't stand the taste of Pepto.

MARJORIE

Who can? You drink it because it works, not for the taste. You don't pour it over ice cubes or...

BELINDA

Fine fine fine! I'm taking this purse and going out. I won't stand here and argue about Pepto. I won't.

MARJORIE

So you can find some queer gal and...and...what would you even do with her?

BELINDA

How do I know? I just know I want to.

MARJORIE

It's sick.

BELINDA

Oh now, things have changed. People have changed.

MARJORIE

No, they haven't. I drove truck for almost thirty years, I got called names. I would have been perfectly happy cooking pot roasts for any of those guys I drove beets and onions and taters to the sheds for. Any one of em! They looked at me and went, ugly bulldyke queer, cause I cut off my hair that one time, I saw it in a magazine, I thought it looked cute.

BELINDA

Oh. That short hair did not look good on you. I never knew they made fun of you. You were better than most men at driving, so what? You were happy driving.

MARJORIE

I was. I could change my own tires, too. Was I supposed to wait around? Worry I'd break a nail. Goddamn it.

[ Both women smile. ]

It's a rough ole world sometimes.

BELINDA

I was once told, by mother, that it was good I didn't have children.

[ She sits, hugs purse to her stomach. ]

Cause I didn't have patience.

MARJORIE

I think she really wanted grandchildren. She should have had prettier daughters.

BELINDA

Yes, she should have. But. I never thought you were ugly. Or I was. Not everyone is meant to marry and have all that. That's all. And we've had good lives. Fun ones at times. We can eat whatever we want, any time we want. We're not being bossed to death. Well, you're a bit bossy, but that's just you, Marjorie.

MARJORIE

I'm the oldest, I'm supposed to be bossy. Don't take my purse. What's wrong with your little yellow number?

BELINDA

It's not big enough for my good nightie, my slippers and my reading glasses, plus my perfume, toothbrush and...

MARJORIE

Good heavens, why not just take a suitcase?

BELINDA

It would look awful strange to be lugging a suitcase about.

MARJORIE

I didn't mean it. I didn't mean you should go and pack a suitcase for your night out with...with the funny women.

BELINDA

I know. I was making a little joke. I tried fitting everything into my yellow purse.

MARJORIE

Why are you doing this?

BELINDA

I told you, your purse is three times the size of mine.

MARJORIE

You think, in all these years, I didn't want to find some stranger and..and find out what all the fuss's about? But it never happened. It wasn't supposed to.

BELINDA

Well then...come with me.

[ Silence. Marjorie makes a sound like a snort. ]

We can go pick out a new tire and...drive somewhere nice. A nice clean friendly bar. And we could have fingersteaks, you love fingersteaks. With honey! And...and take our chances. Have a little fun. We're old now, nobody cares what we do. We're the only ones who care what we do! Come on, sister. I already put oil in. All you have to do is put on those nice slacks you got and you can borrow my silver necklace.

MARJORIE

I do like that necklace. It was on sale.

[ Belinda touches her hand. ]

Oh now...no. I'm not foolish anymore. And my leg hurts. It's going to rain.

BELINDA

My knees say it is, too. Let's be foolish. It could be nothing much will happen tonight...but what if it could? Umm?

MARJORIE

Because we're not foolish women. We went to work when no one would marry us, like you're supposed to when you're ugly and poor. We toughed it out, lived here in this trailer for, what, almost thirty years now. You're still young, you still think life will turn out wonderful...

BELINDA

I'm a year younger, I'm not twenty anymore, you still think I'm twenty. Life is what it is! I know that. But. I want to...to know a few things before I get slapped in a coffin. What it's like to kiss someone and have them want to kiss you back. I want to eat a mango. I've been too afraid to eat

BELINDA

one! I look at them in the store and go, what do you taste like? I dream at night about eating mangoes.

MARJORIE

They're not a real fruit.

BELINDA

Why does it have to be an orange or an apple or a banana to be a real fruit??

MARJORIE

Maybe this is how you act before you have a stroke.

BELINDA

Oh stop. Every time I disagree with you, you tell me I'm sick or fevered or about to have a stroke.

MARJORIE

Your cheeks are all flushed and you're yelling at me, what am I supposed to think? And you're not serious about going out and finding some floozy, maybe that's a joke, too.

BELINDA

I always yell at you. I'm not joking about this.

MARJORIE

Of course you are. You're not going anywhere. You don't have the nerve.

BELINDA

I do. I have just enough nerve.

MARJORIE

No, you don't. Anytime anything goes wrong, you just give up. Look at Jack! One bad time with a boy and you...you gave up until now.

BELINDA

He broke my heart.

MARJORIE

So? You get over it. You never got over it... in fifty years? Has it been that long?

BELINDA

I loved him. I'm not shallow.

MARJORIE

No, you're a scaredy-cat.

BELINDA

I am not. I'm a romantic.

MARJORIE

That's another word for scaredy-cat. You were sixteen. Nothing sticks when you're sixteen, it's not the end of the world, ever, when you're sixteen. You never grew up. Other people...

BELINDA

I grew up. I took up nursing even though I hated it. I worked. I saved my money. What about you? You're not exactly blazing the trails. You've never even been in love. A few men make fun of you and you just...give up. Scaredy-cat!

[ Silence. The two glare at each other. ]

Everything sticks when you're sixteen. Everything gets remembered years later. That's the point. You're supposed to live and love and have adventures so you can remember them years later. Well. I want to have my adventures. I want them. At least one adventure! At least one. And then...and then I'll settle down and drink tea and play canasta with you until I die.

MARJORIE

If you hated nursing so much, why didn't you go back to school?

BELINDA

And do what? Teach?? Oh I hate those horrible monsters, I'd have been arrested. I wanted to be a singer, but I can't sing. I took lessons once, long ago. The lady was very nice, but she told me outright I couldn't sing and it would be a waste of my money. Every dream I've had...has been killed.

MARJORIE

Do you think I wanted to drive trucks and school buses? It was just something I could do until my real life started.

[ Stops, does not look at Belinda. ]

But it never did.

BELINDA

You've had a good life! You always seemed happy.

MARJORIE

I made the best of things. They don't teach that so well nowadays.

BELINDA

They don't teach gumption, either. I have to go out and...see what's out there tonight. Make this your best day ever. I read that phrase in a book yesterday. It...it stayed with me.



MARJORIE

So every day that follows will be terrible or you supposed to do crazy things every day?

BELINDA

I don't know. I just know I want to go out and see what's what.

MARJORIE

Cause of a book. What book?

BELINDA

Just a book.

MARJORIE

You never read. You do puzzles. What book?

BELINDA

I read.

MARJORIE

What book?

BELINDA

A book I found at the Dollar Store. Life Strategies or something like that, okay??

MARJORIE

You read a few pages in this book and...and turned all queer?

BELINDA

I don't think they say queer anymore. I'm not queer. I don't know what I am.

MARJORIE

Belinda. You are giving me a headache. And give me back my purse.

[ Grabs it, Belinda holds on. ]

It's my purse!

BELINDA

You never go anywhere! Let go!

MARJORIE

Mine!

[ Has managed to wrest the purse away from Belinda. Wraps her arms around it. ]

BELINDA

I will hit you with your own cane if you don't give that back. You know I'm not a peaceful sort.

[ Picks up cane. Marjorie makes a face. ]

MARJORIE

Oh. Oh fine.

[ Tosses purse at Belinda, who drops the cane to catch it. ]

Please use my purse when you're out making sure you go to hell.

[ Sits down carefully, snorts. Belinda sighs, makes a face. ]

BELINDA

You're an old crank. You were born an old crank. No wonder the men left you alone.

MARJORIE

Best be careful. This trailer is in my name, missy.

BELINDA

I'm your sister. You'd make me leave?

MARJORIE

I'm a very evil old witch, try me.

BELINDA

If I stay here...I won't ever change. Nothing will ever change.

[ They look at each other, look away. ]

MARJORIE

You do whatever the hell you want.

BELINDA

Marjorie.

MARJORIE

You're the only friend I got.

[ Belinda walks to her, after retrieving the cane. Marjorie takes the cane when Belinda hands it to her. ]

BELINDA

Come with me. Borrow my silver necklace.

MARJORIE

I have to do the dishes.

BELINDA

[ Kisses the top of her sister's head. ]

Thank you for letting me use your purse.

MARJORIE

You'd have beat me with my own cane if I hadn't.

[ Belinda laughs, walks off as the lights dim to black. End of play. ]