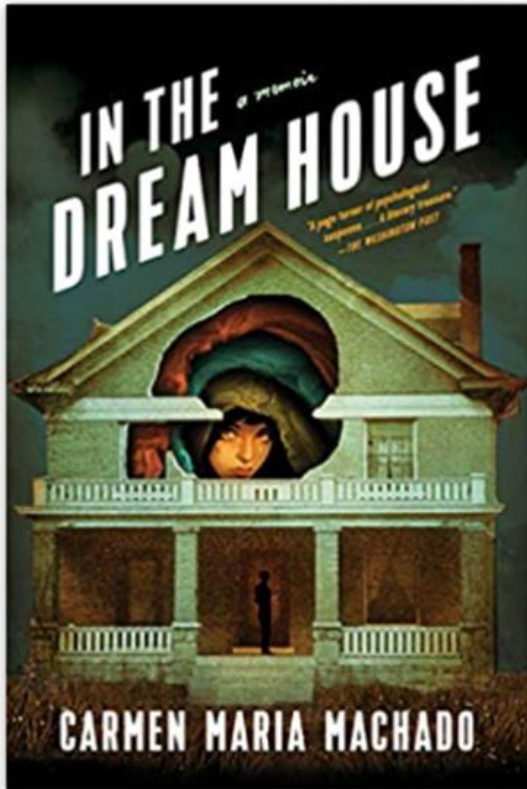


In the Dream House: a memoir

By Carmen Maria Machado



What You Should Know

In the Dream House: a memoir is in the adult section of the Kirkwood Public Library. It contains extremely graphic descriptions of sexual experiences.

This book is **freely available to KSD students as young as 14 years old**. The KSD Board of Education and Senior Administrators are aware that it is available to students in the KHS Library.

Sample of Language (# of occurrences):

F*ck/F*cking (40)	Sex (15)	C*nt (8)
Porn (1)	Dildo (1)	Sh*t (5)
B*tch (5)	C*ck (4)	P*nis (2)

WARNING:

The below pages include graphic sexual content.

Because of the nature of these sample pages this was a tough book for us to post, but the community deserves to know what is available to our children at school.

Proceed below with caution and responsibility, and only if you are an adult!

EXPLICIT CONTENT

Dream House as Romance Novel

A week after you get back from Savannah, you are fucking on your bed and you come and she says, "I love you." You are both sweaty; the silicone strap-on is still in your body. (When dating men, you always loved feeling a cock soften inside you afterward; now, you pant on her chest and slide off and it springs back to where it was, slick and erect but spent just the same.)

You look down at her, confusion muddled with the vibrations of orgasm,³ and she claps her hand over her mouth. "I'm sorry," she says.

"Did you mean it?" you ask.

"I didn't mean to say it just now," she says, "but I meant it."

You are silent for a long beat. Then you say, "I love you too." It feels stupidly, sickeningly correct, and you don't understand how you didn't know until now.

"If I don't get into Iowa, I don't know what I'll do," she says. "I want to stay here with you. That's all I want."

3. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, Type C942.3, Weakness from seeing woman (fairy) naked.

Dream House as Erotica

In the late spring, you surprise yourself by asking her to cover your mouth as you come. She does, pressing a firm palm against your crescendoing howl, and it's as if the sound is being pushed back into your body so that it might suffuse your every molecule. When you are ebbing, and try to inhale but can't, she lets go, and you can feel the lingering tingle of unlanguage.

After this, you ask her to talk to you in a low, raspy stream while she fucks you, and she does: switching effortlessly between English and French, muttering about her cock and how it's filling you up, pushing her hand over your face and grabbing the architecture of your jaw to turn it this way and that. She shaves her cunt smooth, and it glows like the inside of a conch shell. She loves wearing a harness; you suck her off that way and she comes like it's real, bucking and lifting off the mattress.

You don't know what is more of a miracle: her body, or her love of your body. She haunts your erotic imagination. You are both perpetually wet. You fuck, it seems, everywhere: beds and tables and floors; over the phone. When you are physically next to each other, she loves to marvel over your differences: how her skin is pale as skim milk and yours, olive; how her nipples are pink and yours are brown. "Everything is darker on you," she says.

You would let her swallow you whole, if she could.

Dream House as Legacy

She goes on a ski trip to Colorado with her parents, and you are not invited. She calls you from the lodge while you are at home, writing.

“I’m taking a hot bath,” she says. “Drinking a gin and tonic. Thinking about you. I’m going to get myself off. I miss you.”

“I miss you too,” you say.

“Do you want to get off with me?” she asks. The idea is tempting—your cunt clenches and relaxes, a reflex—but your roommates are in the kitchen, feet from your door, and you don’t trust yourself to be quiet.

“I don’t know if I can, right now.”

“You know,” she says, her voice leaking through the receiver like gas, “if you’re not turned on by me, you can say so.”

“I’m not—what?”

“If you don’t find me attractive, maybe we shouldn’t be together at all.”

You are sitting up straight now. “Are you breaking up with me?”

“I’m saying that it’s really hard to be with someone who isn’t into you, and I don’t think I should be.”

“You are breaking up with me.” You feel a sudden ballooning in your chest, somewhere between panic and elation. You hang up the phone. She calls back immediately, and you reject the call. Again, and again. You start sobbing, and John comes in. He asks you what’s going on.

“I think she just broke up with me,” you say.

The phone keeps chirping. John gently pries it out of your hand. “Why don’t we turn this off?” he says. You try to turn it off but you are having trouble remembering how, so you open up the back and remove the battery. The whole thing goes black, mercifully silent. You are sobbing in disbelief, your body aching from the whiplash turn of the conversation. He hugs you tightly, and you sit there together.

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She leans in to your ear. What are you doing, she says. It doesn't sound like words, like a question; it sounds like a purr.

"Don't," you say.

She tightens her grip on your arms. "I fucking hate you," she says. She sounds, suddenly, drunk, even though you've been watching her and you know she's had only the one beer. But you've had beer, too, and you don't know what to do. "I fucking hate you," she says again. The sounds of the bowling alley are coming from very far away; you feel like your heart is going to stop. You are not a parent; no one has ever told you that they hated you.

You stand up and look around wildly at the others, who are studiously looking elsewhere. "I think we need to go," you say. "I think—"

But when she stands, she does look drunk. How will you get home? You reach for your wallet, but you have no cash, and after a few minutes one of the poets comes up to you. "I'm so sorry," he says a few times, his speech slurred, though sorry for what he does not specify—but then he presses a twenty-dollar bill into your hand for a cab. You tell him you'll pay him back, but now that you think about it, you never did.

When the cab pulls away from the bowling alley, you see her car gleaming in the parking lot and pray that it doesn't get towed before morning. In the back of the cab, she closes her eyes, begins to mutter a monologue that lasts for the entire drive home. *You fucking cunt I fucking hate you goddamn you Carmen fuck you fuck your mother fuck everything you cunt you goddamn fucking slut.fuck you . . .*

The sensation of pulling a sheet from the bed is terrible. You will sleep on the couch. That's what people do, when they're mad at the person who would otherwise sleep next to them. You've never done it but you have heard of it happening. You've seen it in movies. You can't find your pajamas. You go out to the living room, strip down to your underwear, and curl up on the broken couch with the springs pressing into your side. You pull the sheet around you. It's that soft, wonderfully stretchy jersey fabric, the same type you had in college.

She peels the sheet away from your body; you shiver.³⁰ "What are you

30. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, Type E279.3, Ghost pulls bedclothing from sleeper.

Dream House as Prisoner's Dilemma

Many years later, you stick a memory card into your SLR and find dozens of naked photos of the woman in the Dream House. You jerk involuntarily when the first image comes onto the preview screen.

You remember the afternoon so clearly: how the soft, indirect natural light filtered into the room; how she was naked and pale and lounging, and how her cunt was flushed maroon with blood. (It was either just before fucking or just afterward.) You got down between her knees and took dozens of photos, loving the ombre of her, from white to pink to purple. The memory is not sexual; it is distant and removed, as if you are watching a movie about someone else.

You sit there for a while, thinking about the photos. You could keep them, but there is no reason to, good or bad. You have no desire for blackmail or the kind of revenge they could make possible; you do not find them erotic anymore. (How quickly your desire curdled when you saw her for what she was, like the scene in *The Shining* when Jack Nicholson pulls away from a sexy woman to find a decomposing creature in her place.) They are simply a memory, and as you overwrite the data card, erasing them forever, you feel an irrational twinge of loss.