

The Return of Jezebel James

Written By

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - FOYER/LIVING ROOM - MORNING

THE FOYER OF A BROWNSTONE IN HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY. BLOSSOM DEARIE'S "RHODE ISLAND IS FAMOUS FOR YOU" IS PLAYING LOUDLY. THE FRONT DOOR OPENS. BRADLEY "BUDDY" MCKNIGHT ENTERS. BUDDY IS 22 YEARS OLD AND FRESH OUT OF COLLEGE. FULL OF ENERGY WITH A BLINDING DESIRE TO PLEASE, HE'S IMPECCABLY DRESSED IN HIS INEXPENSIVE SUIT AND HIS ARMS ARE FULL OF MANUSCRIPTS.

BUDDY

(calling upstairs)

I'm here! Klein canceled breakfast so

I brought Zabars.

BUDDY MOVES THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM, WHICH IS ODDLY ONLY HALF-FURNISHED. NO COUCH OR COFFEE TABLE, BUT THERE ARE END TABLES AND A CHAIR AND OTTOMAN. A STANDING LAMP IS STANDING NEXT TO NOTHING. THERE'S A STEREO AND A PILE OF CDS ON THE FLOOR BUT NO TELEVISION OR ENTERTAINMENT UNIT. THE DINING ROOM TABLE, THAT HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A MAKE-SHIFT OFFICE, HAS AN OPEN LAPTOP AND STACKS OF MANUSCRIPTS STREWN ALL OVER IT. BUDDY CLOSES THE LAPTOP, GRABS THE MANUSCRIPTS, SWEEPS THEM INTO A LEATHER BAG, SLINGS THE BAG OVER HIS SHOULDER AND HEADS INTO THE KITCHEN.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

BUDDY GOES TO THE DISHWASHER AND TAKES OUT A TRAVEL MUG. HE TAKES THE MUG TO THE COFFEE MAKER AND FILLS IT UP. WE HEAR THE CLICK CLACK OF A PAIR OF HEELS HEADING IN.

BUDDY

Milk or cream?

SARAH THOMKINS ENTERS. SHE'S A YOUNG-ADULT BOOK EDITOR. SHE IS MID TO LATE THIRTIES, BRIGHT, SUNNY, AN ETERNAL OPTIMIST AND THE MOST DETERMINED LADY YOU COULD MEET.

SARAH

You tell me...

SARAH TURNS AROUND, HER BACK TO HIM, AND POSES, STARING AT HIM POINTEDLY OVER HER SHOULDER.

BUDDY

I hate when you do this --

SARAH

Just tell me --

BUDDY

I think you always look fine --

SARAH

...If I look tiny then I can take some
cream. If not --

BUDDY

You always look --

SARAH

But if you tell me I'm tiny when I'm
not and I take cream, then one day I
really will be tiny, but in an ironic
sort of way --

BUDDY

It's a lot of responsibility for me to --

SARAH

I hired you to have an opinion, Buddy.

BUDDY

Cream.

SARAH

(pleased).

Really? Excellent.

BUDDY GETS A GLASS BOTTLE OUT OF THE FRIDGE AND
POURS SOME OF THE CONTENTS IN THE TRAVEL CONTAINER.

BUDDY

Are you going to put a jacket over
that? You have the...

SARAH

Librarians Association at three. I
forgot. I'll grab one on the way out.

THEY HEAD OUT OF THE KITCHEN.

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THEY CHARGE TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR.

BUDDY

You know, a quick stop at ABC Furniture
and I can have a couch here by noon.

SARAH

No, thanks.

BUDDY

You've had half a living room for eight
months. It's either a couch or a cat.

SARAH

I like it like this.

BUDDY

Matt's not coming back.

SARAH

I certainly hope not. I finally got
the place to smell entirely like vanilla.

BUDDY

Sad.

SARAH

Not sad.

BUDDY

Little sad.

SARAH

Not at all sad. I don't want to go to Thalia's for lunch again. Move my lunch with Chip somewhere different.

BUDDY

Steak?

SARAH

Anything. Not steak. Or Italian. Somewhere I can get a salad.

BUDDY

Pastis?

SARAH

Anyplace is fine. 21 or Craft.

BUDDY

21 at noon.

SARAH

Craft at one.

BUDDY

Got it.

SARAH GRABS A COAT AND LOOKS AT BUDDY FOR A BEAT.

SARAH

So... you like this song?

BUDDY

Yes. This is a great song.

SARAH

I don't think you like this song.

BUDDY

No, I do. I really like this song.

SARAH

Doesn't look like you really like this
song.

BUDDY

But I... I said I...

SARAH STARES AT HIM EXPECTANTLY. FINALLY HE STARTS
TO MOVE TO THE MUSIC JUST AS AWKWARDLY AS YOU WOULD
EXPECT A YOUNG HETEROSEXUAL MAN TO MOVE TO BLOSSOM
DEARIE. SARAH WATCHES HIM DANCE A BEAT.

SARAH

Wishing you'd taken that internship at
ESPN?

PARKER

Just a little.

SARAH TAKES HER BAG OFF OF BUDDY'S SHOULDER.

SARAH

Okay. That's enough.

BUDDY

Thank you.

BUDDY BOLTS OUT. SARAH TAKES A SIP OF HER COFFEE.

SARAH

(yelling off)

Hey! This is milk!

SARAH EXITS OUT AFTER BUDDY, AS WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONESCENE ONE

FADE IN:

INT. NINTH FLOOR OF RANDOM HOUSE BOOKS - MORNING

CUBICLES AND OFFICES THAT LOOK LIKE ANY OTHER OFFICE BUILDING EXCEPT THAT SINCE THIS IS THE CHILDREN'S BOOK FLOOR THERE'S A LOT MORE COLOR. PICTURES AND POSTERS EVERYWHERE. ALL OFFICE DOORS ARE OPEN. THERE ARE FLOOR-TO-CEILING BOOKSHELFS STOCKED WITH THE COMPANY'S LATEST PRODUCTS. SARAH AND BUDDY STEP OFF THE ELEVATOR, THEIR ARMS FILLED WITH UNREAD MANUSCRIPTS. THEY BOTH READ AS THEY WALK THROUGH THE HALLS.

SARAH

(off manuscript)

Nope.

SHE TOSSES THE MANUSCRIPT OVER HER SHOULDER AND OPENS THE NEXT ONE ON THE PILE.

BUDDY

(off manuscript)

Nyet.

HE TOSSES THE MANUSCRIPT OVER HIS SHOULDER.

SARAH

(off manuscript)

Oh, more talking penguins. Thank you,

Morgan Freeman!

SHE TOSSES THE MANUSCRIPT AND OPENS THE NEXT ONE.

BUDDY

Hold on, hold on, hold on...

SARAH

You got something?

BUDDY

No, but, the first sentence used a
semicolon properly so I got excited.

HE TOSSES THE MANUSCRIPT, ALMOST NAILING A PASSING
WOMAN.

WOMAN

Hey!

SARAH

Sorry. Just catching up on some
reading.

(to Buddy re: manuscript
she's reading)

Good first page. I want you to read
the rest of this.

SARAH HANDS BUDDY THE MANUSCRIPT. HE LOOKS AT IT.

BUDDY

"Diary of a Young Novice." Oh, I hope
she can fly by chapter three.

SARAH TOSSES THE LAST MANUSCRIPT OVER HER SHOULDER.

SARAH

Okay. Reading is done. Judy Blume
can keep her crown for now.

THEY PASS BY AN OPEN DOOR TO A SMALL OFFICE. SITTING
AT A DESK IS MOLLY RAINES. SEVENTY YEARS OLD, A
LITTLE GRUMPY, WITH A SNAPPY GRAY PAGEBOY HAIRCUT.
MOLLY WAS A FORMER PUBLISHER WHO NOW EDITS THREE
DAYS A WEEK. SHE'S AN IDOL TO SARAH.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Molly...

SARAH TOSSES MOLLY A MANUSCRIPT.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Take a look at this. It's a really charming tale about a talking mothball. Too young for me but might be right up your alley.

MOLLY

1954. Seuss comes in, wants to do a story about a talking mothball. I said, who the hell wants to hear a mothball talk? Make it an elephant. Bam! "Horton Hears A Who". Never even got a freakin thank you note. By the way, I had to bring my granddaughter in again today.

SARAH

(genuinely delighted)

Zoe's here? Great.

MOLLY

I stuck her at your boy's desk. If she bugs you, kick her out. She should know the subways by now.

(picks up manuscript)

I'll read it just in case.

SARAH AND BUDDY MOVE ON DOWN THE HALL.

BUDDY

(annoyed)

Your "boy" has a name and a job.

SARAH

Buddy -- Molly is a pioneer. She was one of the first women in publishing. She's the reason I'm here, hence she's the reason your desk is here, hence she's the reason you're here. Got it?

BUDDY

All roads lead to Molly. Got it.

SARAH

Good. Listen, I need you to make me a reservation for two at La Esquina. Nine o'clock.

BUDDY

Great. With whom?

SARAH

Another person.

BUDDY

Whose name is...

SARAH

Doesn't matter.

BUDDY

But I need it for my records.

SARAH

No, you don't.

BUDDY

But I log everyone you eat with.
(MORE)

BUDDY (CONT'D)

I log everyone you meet, everyone you talk to...

SARAH

Look, J. Edgar Hoover, I appreciate the attention to detail but this is one name that I don't want you to log.

BUDDY

Oh. I get it. It's the mystery man again.

SARAH

Yep.

BUDDY

That's the third time this week. Are you getting serious?

SARAH

No. I am not getting serious. I am never getting serious. That's exactly the point. Marcus is not that kind of relationship.

BUDDY

Marcus!

(happily writes it down)

I got a name.

SARAH

Look, this relationship is not about getting serious. This relationship is about nice dinners, fancy drinks and sex. We don't talk about our lives, we don't meet friends or family. It's simple, it's clean, it's uncomplicated and it's exactly what I need at this point in my life.

BUDDY

Sounds like the perfect transition guy.

SARAH

He's not a transition guy.

BUDDY

You end a ten year relationship, you're going to need a transition guy.

SARAH

He is not a transition guy!

BUDDY

I'm filing "Marcus" under "T" for transition guy.

THEY REACH THE END OF THE HALLWAY. IN THIS CORNER IS "SARAH THOMPSON BOOKS" -- SARAH'S IMPRINT. THERE IS A CARDBOARD CUTOUT BOOK DISPLAY OF THE FIRST JEZEBEL JAMES BOOK STANDING PROUDLY NEXT TO SARAH'S OFFICE DOOR. BUDDY'S DESK SITS IN A CUBICLE RIGHT OUTSIDE OF SARAH'S DOOR. TEN YEAR OLD ZOE SNOWDEN, MOLLY'S GRANDDAUGHTER, IS CURRENTLY AT HIS DESK. SERIOUS AND INTELLIGENT, ZOE HAS GROWN UP AT RANDOM HOUSE AND IS DESTINED TO WORK THERE SOMEDAY. SHE AND SARAH ARE GREAT PALS.

ZOE IS READING A GALLEY OF A BOOK ABOUT TO BE PUBLISHED.

SARAH

(to Zoe)

What's the story, morning glory?

ZOE

What's the word, hummingbird?

BUDDY LEANS OVER ZOE TO HIS PHONE.

BUDDY

(resentfully, to Zoe)

Just forwarding my calls, Yosemite Falls.

ZOE

I had no choice, Buddy.

BUDDY

(uber-sarcastically)

Oh, I'm sure.

(to Sarah)

I'll be in your office.

BUDDY CROSSES AWAY. SARAH SITS ON THE DESK, FACING ZOE.

SARAH

So, no school today?

ZOE

Day off. School board meeting.

Teachers are screwing the kids again.

SARAH

Okay, see, in my day we'd only get a half-day off for that. By the way, I didn't teach you that word, right?

ZOE

Nope. Grandma. You taught me penis and vagina.

SARAH

Hold on. I did not teach you penis and vagina. You were confused as to which belonged to whom and I simply set the record straight. In case, you know, the authorities ask.

(conspiratorially)

So... you holding?

ZOE DIGS IN HER POCKET AND PULLS OUT A KIT-KAT BAR.
SHE HANDS HALF TO SARAH.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Excellent.

(re: book)

What do you think?

ZOE

It could use some horses.

SARAH

Yeah. Chicks and horses...

ZOE

It's a constant.

SARAH

Did you, by any chance, read the new
Jezebel James?

ZOE

Yep.

SARAH

(nervously)

And?

ZOE

Even better than the first one.

SARAH

(thrilled)

Really?

ZOE

The end where she joins the carnival
and goes to Canada? Now I totally
want to go to Canada.

SARAH

Yeah. Chicks, horses, and Canada...

ZOE

It's great.

SARAH

You're great.

SARAH GIVES ZOE A HUG. ERIN, A WOMAN IN HER MID-
THIRTIES, COMES RUSHING UP.

ERIN

Barnes and Noble hates the cover.
They say it's too dark, too adult and
it won't display well.

SARAH

Great. Okay. Get the Art Department
and Marketing in the conference room.

ERIN RUSHES OFF.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(to Zoe)

I've got to go to work. You free for
lunch?

ZOE

You buying?

SARAH

Well, until you find a market for your
"Mrs. Jack Sparrow" notebook doodles,
yeah, I'm paying. Thanks for the Kit-
Kat, Kit-Kat.

SARAH HEADS INTO HER OFFICE. COMING AROUND THE
CORNER IS PAGET KAUFMAN, MID-THIRTIES, SERIOUS
CLOTHES, SERIOUS HAIR AND A HAUGHTY ATTITUDE. PAGET
IS AN EDITOR TWO FLOORS UP IN ADULT LITERATURE AND
SHE HAS THE AIR OF SUPERIORITY TO PROVE IT.

PAGET

Oh, Sarah. Perfect. A minute?

SARAH

Hi, Paget. Slumming?

PAGET

(laughing)

Everyone is so funny down here on the children's floor. Must be all the pictures of balloons and birthday cakes on the walls. Listen, do you have any copies of that book with the ducklings on it? My sister's daughter is turning three, four, or five tomorrow.

SARAH

The ducklings is actually Molly's book.

PAGET

Well, I can't talk to Molly. She's terrifying. All that grey hair flying everywhere. Could you ask her for me?

SARAH

I'll see what I can do.

PAGET

Two copies would be great. My assistant is pregnant, so eventually...

SARAH STARTS TO WALK. PAGET WALKS WITH HER.

PAGET (CONT'D)

So, I heard that Jezebel James is heading into it's third printing.

SARAH

That's right.

PAGET

Congrats.

SARAH

Ooh, so heartfelt.

PAGET

Sarah, come on, I'm sure it's fun editing book after book about first periods and training bras but when are you going come upstairs and join the grownups?

SARAH

I'm fine where I am, Paget.

PAGET

Oh please. Editing children's books is wonderful when you're fresh out of grad school but we all have to graduate from Marc to Marc Jacobs eventually. It's just so sad. When we were at Radcliffe, everyone expected such great things from you. And your personal life. All those years with Matt just to have him leave.

SARAH

Wow. Signal when you make a left turn like that.

PAGET

Ten years you spent together. And then you didn't even get married. You didn't have children. And now you're in your late...

SARAH

Mid...

PAGET

Thirties and you have no idea where the next man is coming from. And what about when he does show up? Are you going to wait another ten years before you decide to get married? Because by then you'll be in your late...

SARAH

Mid...

PAGET

Forties and physically the longer you wait to have children the harder it is to conceive. I mean, don't you want children? You seem to. You spend all your time down here in kiddieland, the world where all the typeface is really big...

SARAH

Paget! Did you forget that you came down here for a favor?

PAGET

(remembering)

Oh my God, I did. Thank you for
reminding me. Two copies before six,
okay? Great talking to you.

PAGET TAKES OFF. SARAH STANDS THERE A BEAT. SHE
GLANCES OVER AT ZOE READING. ZOE WAVES TO SARAH.
SARAH WAVES BACK AND THEN SIGHS, PAGET'S ANNOYING
WORDS RINGING IN HER EARS.

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT ONESCENE TWOINT. SARAH'S HOUSE - FOYER/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

IT'S LATE. SARAH COMES HOME. SHE'S CLEARLY HAD A VERY NICE EVENING. SHE WEARS A SLIGHTLY GUSSIED UP VERSION OF THE SUIT SHE WORE TO WORK. HER HAIR AND HER MAKE-UP—JUST MUSSED UP ENOUGH TO SAY THE EVENING WAS A SUCCESS. SHE COMES IN AND CLOSES AND LOCKS HER DOOR. SHE HEADS TOWARD THE STAIRS AND STOPS. SHE STEPS DOWN INTO HER HALF EMPTY LIVING ROOM. SHE STANDS THERE IN THE DARKNESS. SUDDENLY IT SEEMS A LITTLE MORE EMPTY THAN IT DID BEFORE.

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT ONESCENE THREEINT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

SARAH SITS NEXT TO A VERY PREGNANT WOMAN WHO LOOKS UNCOMFORTABLE AND EXHAUSTED. SARAH STARES AT THE WOMAN'S STOMACH, MESMERIZED. SHE SLOWLY REACHES OUT TO PAT THE BELLY. JUST BEFORE SHE REACHES IT...

PREGNANT WOMAN

Don't.

SARAH

Oh. Sorry. It was just... calling me. It's so perfect. Like a perfect half a circle. Did you do something to get it like that?

PREGNANT WOMAN

Yes. I forgot to put my diaphragm in.

THE DOOR OPENS AND A NURSE COMES OUT.

NURSE

Sarah Thompkins.

SARAH

Right here.

(to the pregnant woman)

Bye.

(to her belly,
sympathetically)

Good luck.

THE WOMAN GLARES AT SARAH AS SHE QUICKLY EXITS.

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT ONESCENE FOURINT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

A NICE UPSCALE OFFICE. ONE WALL IS COMPLETELY COVERED WITH PICTURES OF NEWBORN BABIES. DR. KAREN KOE SITS BEHIND HER DESK STUDYING SARAH'S TEST RESULTS. SARAH ENTERS.

SARAH

Boy, that woman out there is huge and mad.

DR. KOE

Being pregnant will do that to you.
So, Sarah, I got your test results back.

SARAH

Great. Because, ever since I decided to do this I've just been so... energized. I'm waking up planning nurseries and I've started sucking up to the mothers who live across the street because they'll know where all the good Mommy and Me classes are. You know, the ones with the good cookies and the hot stay-at-home dads.

DR. KOE

Sarah -- you're not going to be able to get pregnant.

SARAH

(oblivious)

I know, I need to find a donor first.
I just can't decide -- someone I know,
someone I don't... Someone I know could
be nice because I'll see how junior's
going to look when he grows up... But
then again, someone I don't could be
fun because it's kind of like a game
show, you know, are you going to get
Antonio Banderas or Clint Howard or--

DR. KOE

No, Sarah... I mean you're not going
to be able to get pregnant.

SARAH LOOKS AT HER MYSTIFIED.

DR. KOE (CONT'D)

You have something called Asherman's
Syndrome. It's a scarring of the
uterus. Basically it affects your
reproductive cycle. Now in some cases
it can be reversed with surgery, but
in your case it can't. It means you
can't conceive. You can't have
children. Ever.

BEAT.

SARAH

I don't understand what you're telling me.

DR. KOE

Well...

SARAH

Are you telling me I can't get pregnant?

DR. KOE

Yes.

SARAH

No. I can get pregnant. I can.

DR. KOE

Sarah...

SARAH

Look, in high school I really wanted to be a cheerleader, okay? But, I couldn't do a cartwheel and to be a cheerleader you had to do a cartwheel. So one day, I went outside in the backyard and I told myself I wasn't going in until I could do a cartwheel. Perfectly. Both ways. I was back by dinner.

DR. KOE

This isn't a cartwheel.

SARAH

Cartwheels are hard.

DR. KOE

I wish I could offer you a solution.

SARAH

Can I talk to this guy Asherman? Maybe
I can change his mind.

DR. KOE

Look Sarah, on the bright side, other
than this, you are perfectly healthy.
And these days there are many options.
For example, adoption.

SARAH GETS UP AND STARES AT THE WALL OF CHILDREN.

SARAH

(in a daze)

Adoption. Yeah. I don't know. I
don't think I'm the adoption type. I
get freaked out when strangers use my
bathroom, you know. And it won't look
like anyone in the family which will
definitely be an issue with my mother,
and what if it grows up and tries to
kill me? I mean, I kind of asked for
it, right?

DR. KOE

You know, you don't have to decide
this right now. Why don't I just give
you some literature to look over when
you feel like it.

SARAH

Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

DR. KOE HANDS HER SOME LITERATURE.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I can't conceive, I have homework and
you don't validate. Super.

SARAH GLANCES BACK AT THE WALL OF CHILDREN AND EXITS.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOSCENE ONEFADE IN:INT. MARCUS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A VERY UPSCALE AND INCREDIBLY MANLY UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT. THE DOOR OPENS AND MARCUS SONTI ENTERS. SUCCESSFUL AND DRESSED TO PROVE IT, MARCUS IS A NICE-LOOKING CONFIDENT MAN IN HIS LATE THIRTIES, EARLY FORTIES. DIVORCED, NO KIDS. HE IS CHARMING, INTELLIGENT, AND HAPPY WITH HIS LIFE AS IT IS NOW.

MARCUS

So, I have no breakfast meeting tomorrow, Meloni's in Los Angeles till Thursday, my assistant has gone to Philadelphia, so there's no one to witness how incredibly late I'm going to drag myself into the office tomorrow. Now, with all of that information floating out there, can I get you a nightcap?

MARCUS TURNS AND NOTICES THAT SARAH'S NOT THERE.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Sarah?

SARAH STUMBLES IN. SHE SEEMS DISTRACTED AND SHE'S WEARING ONE SHOE.

SARAH

Sorry, my shoe came off in the elevator.

(beat; realizes)

Shoot.

SARAH RUSHES OUT THE DOOR. MARCUS LOOKS AFTER HER.

MARCUS

I'd like to think it's my irresistible animal magnetism that's making you act all flustered tonight, so I will.

SARAH STUMBLES BACK IN HOLDING HER SHOE.

SARAH

What? What about magnets?

MARCUS

You feeling alright?

SARAH

Yes. I worked out today.

MARCUS

(confused)

Okay.

SARAH IS STRUGGLING TO PUT HER SHOE BACK ON.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You know, it's just going to come off in a minute anyway.

SARAH

Huh... it's the wrong foot.

SARAH TAKES HER RIGHT SHOE OFF. SHE PUTS IT ON HER LEFT FOOT. IT FITS.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Well, that explains a lot.

MARCUS

Uh... Sarah?

SARAH

Yeah?

MARCUS

Well... you didn't say anything at dinner, you didn't eat anything at dinner, and apparently you've been wearing your shoes on the wrong feet all night.

SARAH

So?

MARCUS

So... I'm just wondering if there's... something wrong?

SARAH

Marcus, we agreed. We don't ask if there's something wrong.

MARCUS

I know. I just thought, maybe something happened at work....

SARAH

We don't talk about our work.

MARCUS

Yes, but...

SARAH

We don't talk about our work, or our personal lives, or our families...

MARCUS

I know.

SARAH

Those are the rules.

MARCUS

And they are good rules.

SARAH

And I am sticking to the rules.

MARCUS

Okay. You just seem distracted tonight.

SARAH LOOKS AT HIM AND SMILES.

SARAH

Distracted? Well, that's just wrong.

SARAH MOVES TOWARD MARCUS A LITTLE FLIRTATIVELY.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I mean, here I am, all alone with you.
What on earth could be on my mind except
for carnal, naughty, Catholic schoolgirl
uniform kind of thoughts?

MARCUS

You brought the uniform? I thought
that was my Christmas present.

SARAH PUTS HER ARMS AROUND HIM AND KISSES HIM. A
LONG PASSIONATE KISS. THEY PART. SARAH SMILES AT
MARCUS A BEAT, THEN BURSTS INTO TEARS.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

A lot of people get depressed around
the holidays, I guess...

SARAH COLLAPSES ON THE COUCH, CRYING.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Uh... Sarah?

SARAH

(sobbing)

I'm sorry. I'm fine.

MARCUS

You don't seem fine.

SARAH

I'll be fine.

MARCUS

Sarah, is there something....

SARAH

(exploding)

We don't ask if there's something wrong!

MARCUS

But you're just sitting there...

SARAH

Ignore me!

SARAH CRIES HARDER. MARCUS LOOKS AROUND. HE PICKS UP A "MEN'S FITNESS" MAGAZINE OFF THE COFFEE TABLE AND FLIPS THROUGH IT.

MARCUS

(off magazine)

Huh. There's a new dumbbell I haven't tried.

SARAH

Oh God, why am I doing this now? Here?

MARCUS

I don't know. I don't get to ask.

SARAH

I should've done this at the doctor's office. Where there's sedatives and Kleenex boxes. Why don't you have any Kleenex boxes?

MARCUS

Why would I need Kleenex boxes?

SARAH

In case you sneeze! Don't you sneeze?

MARCUS

Yes, I sneeze.

SARAH

What do you do when you sneeze?

MARCUS

I have a box under the sink.

SARAH

You have to go all the way into the bathroom and then root around under the sink every time you sneeze? That's insane!

MARCUS

That's insane?

SARAH CRIES HARDER.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Maybe, I should take you home.

SARAH

No. I'm here to have sex with you.

MARCUS

We can do it another night.

SARAH

Hey! I've had about enough of other people telling me what I can and can not do, you hear me?!

MARCUS

Sarah, I don't really know what I'm supposed to do here. If you want to talk, then...

SARAH

Do you want to talk?

MARCUS

I never want to talk!

SARAH

Okay! No talking! We have an agreement! No emotions! No drama! Just sex! And we are sticking to that! Now, just give me thirty seconds to collect myself and I'll be fine.

SARAH BREATHEs DEEP. SHE BREATHEs DEEP AGAIN. SHE'S CALMING DOWN. SHE SITS THERE A BEAT.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(crying again)

Oh, forget it. The lights'll be off anyway, you won't be able to tell.

MARCUS

Uh... I think I'll be able to...

SARAH STOPS AND TURNS ON HIM.

SARAH

(menacingly)

I'm sorry, are you going to make me
beg?

BEAT.

MARCUS

Right behind you.

SARAH STORMS OFF TO THE BEDROOM. MARCUS FOLLOWS,
NOT SURE IF HE'S GOING TO HAVE SEX OR GET KILLED.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I am oddly and disturbingly aroused
right now.

SARAH

Keep moving.

MARCUS

Yes, ma'am.

THEY EXIT INTO THE BEDROOM.

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT TWOSCENE TWO

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - FOYER/LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

BUDDY ENTERS. HE GOES OVER TO THE ALARM AND TURNS IT OFF.

BUDDY

Sorry I'm late. I stopped by the office because we hadn't received Poppy's signed contracts and the fax machine was down so I went out and bought a new one, I kept the receipt, then I called Poppy, and got the contracts. I'll have them notarized when we get there. Why is your alarm still on?

SARAH WANDERS DOWNSTAIRS WEARING PAJAMAS, BARE FEET, HAIR A MESS. SHE LOOKS LIKE HELL.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

(staring at her, confused)

Stacey called and freaked out about her Amazon ranking and I told her that no one cares but... are you alright?

SARAH

I'm sick.

BEAT.

BUDDY

You're sick?

SARAH

I'm sick.

BUDDY

But... they told me you don't get sick.

SARAH

Who told you?

BUDDY

Human Resources. It's the first thing they said. She never gets sick. You'll never get a day off because she's sick, because she's never sick. It's never happened. They showed me calendars. Timecards. Office pools. A Ouija board...

SARAH

Well, I'm sick now.

SARAH SULKS OFF TO THE KITCHEN. BUDDY FOLLOWS.

BUDDY

Can I get you anything? You need soup?

SARAH

It would have to be a hell of a soup, Buddy.

BUDDY

Barney Greengrass uses dill.

HE EXITS TO THE KITCHEN.

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

BUDDY ENTERS. SARAH IS PULLING A BOTTLE OF WINE OUT OF THE FRIDGE.

SARAH

Buddy, do me a favor, just go through the things that can't wait till tomorrow so I can get back to bed.

SARAH POURS HERSELF SOME WINE AND TAKES A GULP.

BUDDY

Okay, well, I've got the latest draft of "Sugar Flyer." Annalee will need your notes by Friday.

BUDDY PUTS THE MANUSCRIPT DOWN IN FRONT OF HER.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Here's the revised mock-up of the Jezebel James cover.

HE PUTS THE MOCK-UP IN FRONT OF HER.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Ollie called. He wants an update on Gala's's new manuscript. Jeanne Bradley at Penguin is interested, but he would love it to go to you. I read the first ten pages. There's raccoons. And I don't know if this is a plus or not, but they know sign language.

SARAH

I can't paint.

BEAT.

BUDDY

I missed the segue there.

SARAH

And I can't sing. I've never stenciled.
Combustion engines? A complete mystery.

BUDDY

I could Google something, or...

SARAH

Suddenly you realize all the things
that you can't do. You never even
thought about it before because you
were too busy doing other things.
Doing them well. And you just assumed
that, hey, if I can do this I can do
anything, right?

BUDDY STANDS THERE A BEAT. THEN:

BUDDY

Your Uncle Atticus's birthday is next
week. I made a list of possible gifts.
I suppose a copy of "To Kill A
Mockingbird" is a little on the nose...

SARAH SLUMPS HER HEAD DOWN ON THE COUNTER.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Okay, I don't know what to do. See,
my parents are very, very Protestant.
My brother wet his bed when he was
ten, so we moved. My Aunt Ginny left
my Uncle Frank for my cousin Carol, so
we moved.

SARAH LOOKS UP AND SEES THE JEZEBEL JAMES COVER.
SHE SLOWLY PICKS IT UP, STARING AT IT.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

We moved six times before I was
fourteen. I'm completely ill-equipped
to deal with any sort of emotional
problem without the aid of bubble wrap
and packing tape.

SARAH

(getting an idea)

Oh, Buddy. Oh Buddy, Buddy, Buddy...

BUDDY

What? What did I do? Was it bad?

SARAH GETS UP AND HEADS OUT OF THE KITCHEN.

SARAH

My phone's in my purse. My Palm Pilot
is on the dining room table. Get them
both and meet me upstairs!

SARAH EXITS.

BUDDY

(to himself)

Pick up cardboard boxes on the way
home.

BUDDY SEARCHES FOR HER PALM PILOT.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREESCENE ONE

FADE IN:

INT. CRAPPY LOWER EAST SIDE DINER - DAY

TINY AND DIRTY AS SHIT, THIS PLACE PUTS THE "GREASY" IN GREASY SPOON. THREE BOOTHS LINE ONE WALL AND THERE'S A COUNTER AND A COUPLE OF SAD TABLES. SARAH SITS IN THE MIDDLE BOOTH FACING THE DOOR. TWO GUYS WAITING OUT A HANGOVER ARE SLUMPED AT THE COUNTER. SARAH COULDN'T LOOK MORE UNCOMFORTABLE OR OUT OF PLACE. A WAITER, THURSTON, COMES OVER WITH A POT OF COFFEE.

THURSTON

More coffee?

SARAH

Uh, yes. But in a new cup, please. I think there was something in this one. There were air bubbles coming up a minute ago. They're gone now, so...

THURSTON JUST STARES AT HER.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Yes, a moment of silence does seem appropriate.

SHE LOOKS IN THE CUP.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Give him a proper burial, would ya?

THURSTON

Okay.

THURSTON PUTS THE COFFEE POT DOWN ON THE TABLE, TAKES THE CUP AND WALKS OFF. SARAH PULLS HER JACKET DOWN OVER HER HAND SO SHE WON'T HAVE TO TOUCH THE COFFEE POT HANDLE AND POURS HERSELF A NEW CUP OF COFFEE. THE DOOR OF THE DINER OPENS.

A YOUNG WOMAN, THIRTY-ISH YEARS OLD, ENTERS. A TOUGH EXPRESSION ON A FRAGILE FACE SHE'S A BIT DISHEVELED -- FADED JEANS, WORN SNEAKERS, TEE SHIRT, ARMY SURPLUS COAT AND NEWSIE CAP. SHE SPOTS SARAH. SARAH SPOTS HER. THE GIRL GOES AND SITS IN THE LAST BOOTH, ONE BOOTH AWAY FROM SARAH, FACING HER. SARAH STARES AT THE GIRL INCREDULOUSLY. THE GIRL STARES BACK DEFIANTLY. THEY BOTH STARE AT EACH OTHER A BEAT. THEN:

SARAH

Really?

COCO

Hmm?

SARAH

What are you doing?

COCO

What are you doing?

SARAH

Uh... I'm supposed to be meeting my sister. She told me to meet her here. At this place. I wanted to meet her at the St. Regis with their good bar nuts and cleaning products.

COCO

The last time we had lunch at the St. Regis I ended up in rehab in San Diego.

SARAH

Well, the weather is just so nice there.

COCO

You set me up and shanghaied me.

SARAH

Mom's idea.

COCO

Just following orders? Didn't hold up
at Nuremberg.

THURSTON COMES OVER TO SARAH.

THURSTON

You ordering?

SARAH

Uh, yes, I'll have an egg white omelet,
dry, low-fat cheese and an onion bagel
scooped.

THURSTON LOOKS AT HER MYSTIFIED.

SARAH (CONT'D)

No? Okay. How about toast and a
tetanus shot?

THURSTON

We've got toast.

SARAH

Terrific.

(to Coco)

You?

THURSTON LOOKS OVER AT COCO, CONFUSED.

COCO

Grilled cheese. Extra cheese.

SARAH

Oh, uh...

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

(lowering her voice,
confidentially)

I wouldn't get anything here that
requires refrigeration. Get toast.

COCO

I don't want toast.

SARAH

Toast may save your life.

COCO

Why are you whispering? He's closer
to you than I am.

THURSTON

Wait. You guys together?

SARAH

Yes.

COCO

No.

SARAH

We're debating.

THURSTON

(pointing to Coco's booth)

Okay, but that's not my station.

SARAH

Two orders of toast. I'll just wing
it at her.

THURSTON CROSSES OFF.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(getting annoyed)

Coco, this is silly. Will you just
come sit with me?

COCO

First, tell me why I'm here.

SARAH

Come sit and I'll tell you.

COCO

Tell me and I'll come sit.

SARAH SIGHS, TAKES HER COFFEE, GOES OVER TO COCO'S
TABLE AND SITS DOWN.

SARAH

I haven't seen you in a while and I
thought it would be nice to catch up.
And to do it here in a petrie dish,
icing on the cake.

COCO

You said I could pick the place.

SARAH

I would've come to your house.

COCO

There is no way you are coming over to
any place that I live ever again.

SARAH

You're overreacting.

COCO

You had me evicted.

SARAH

No. I simply made a call to see if it was legal for a person to be living in a Chinese restaurant.

COCO

I was living above a Chinese restaurant.

SARAH

You were sleeping on a shelf over the noodle station. Even in New York that's not considered a loft.

COCO

Hey, I got free egg rolls and the occasional use of their bike.

SARAH

(trying to make nice)

So, you're happy with your place now?

COCO

I'm crashing on a friend's couch.

SARAH

Oh. Well, that can be nice.

COCO

Whatever. That's why we're meeting here. Now, why are we meeting at all?

THURSTON COMES BACK OVER HOLDING TWO PLATES OF TOAST.
HE PUTS THEM DOWN AT THE EMPTY BOOTH.

SARAH

Excuse me, sir...

THURSTON

That's not my station.

HE EXITS OFF. SARAH AND COCO LOOK AT EACH OTHER.
THEY GET UP AND MOVE BACK TO SARAH'S ORIGINAL BOOTH.

SARAH

Okay. Well, I need a favor.

COCO

(taken aback)

From me?

SARAH

Yes.

COCO

You've never needed a favor from me.

SARAH

Now, I do.

COCO

Wow. What is it?

SARAH

Well...

(takes a deep breath)

Ooh. Okay. I... uh...

SARAH NERVOUSLY TAKES A BITE OF HER TOAST.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Really bad toast. Like they buttered
the ceiling.

COCO

Sarah, come on. What's the favor?

SARAH

Favor. Right. Okay. Well, let's see, how can I put this? It's delicate. Uh... Coco... I need your uterus.

BEAT.

COCO

What?

SARAH

I mean, you can keep it in your...

(indicating her uterus area)

...there, where it belongs... I just want to borrow it for a few months.

COCO

What the hell are you talking about?

SARAH

Well, as you know, I've always wanted to have a family and --

COCO

No. I didn't know that.

SARAH

Yes, you did. You knew I wanted a family.

COCO

How would I know that?

SARAH

What do you mean how would you know that? I've always said that.

COCO

To who?

SARAH

To whoever I was talking to.

COCO

And when was whoever you were talking
to me?

SARAH LOOKS AT HER A BEAT.

SARAH

Anyhow, I've always wanted a family
and I think that now is the right time
for me to have that family that I've
always wanted, so... I would like you
to carry my baby for me.

COCO STARES AT HER, STUNNED.

COCO

Well, didn't see that one coming.

SARAH

I would pay you for this, of course.
It would be like a job. Like that
time you sold lemonade to the
neighbors...

COCO

I know what a job is, Sarah...

SARAH

Right. Sorry. Anyhow, it would be my egg that gets fertilized, so you can keep yours, and the sperm would come from a donor to be named later. Now, the only condition I would impose is you would have to move into my house for the length of the pregnancy, so that I can make sure you don't go to a bar one night and then baby comes out with three heads. But I have a beautiful guest room for you, big bathroom, walk-in closet, you might enjoy it.

COCO

I'm sorry... did you say I might enjoy it?

SARAH

There's maid service.

COCO

Enjoy being knocked up with your baby? Like I'm an incubator?

SARAH

An incubator with Tivo.

COCO

I'll get pregnant. Pregnant. As in a living being will be growing inside of me. Like Alien.

SARAH

Well, not exactly like Alien. It will have a different exit strategy --

COCO

I'll have all the morning sickness. I'll get fat. I'll have to go through hours of pain and sweating and screaming and stretch marks and I don't even get to get laid first?

BEAT.

SARAH

I have chickens out back and their eggs are delicious.

COCO

No.

COCO HEADS TO THE DOOR. SARAH FOLLOWS AFTER HER.

SARAH

This is not so crazy. It's done all the time.

COCO

Not by me it's not.

SARAH

Coco, just think about it.

COCO WHIRLS AROUND ON HER.

COCO

You know, it's almost a year since I hear from you and when I do it's to take part in some crazy medical experiment? Like my life is so crappy that, of course, something like this has got to be an improvement?

SARAH

Like you've been ringing my phone off the hook. I didn't even have an address for you.

COCO

Three years ago at Christmas, you wouldn't let me use your car for ten minutes to go buy cranberry sauce and now suddenly you'll let me carry your kid inside me for a year?

SARAH

Well, it was a Lexus. And you're not the best driver.

COCO

But I'd be a good mother?

SARAH

You wouldn't be the mother. I'd be the mother.

COCO

Then you have the baby!

SARAH

I can't have the baby, Coco!

COCO

Who says you can't have the baby?

SARAH

Asherman. He's got this syndrome...

COCO

I don't understand...

SARAH

I'm broken. My insides are not working properly. I had the tests, the doctor said that I... can't.

COCO

But... did you tell her about the cartwheels?

SARAH

It doesn't matter.

COCO

But cartwheels are hard.

SARAH SITS AT A TABLE. COCO SITS WITH HER.

SARAH

She doesn't care about the cartwheels. She told me to adopt.

COCO

Right. Like you're going to let a stranger use your bathroom.

SARAH

I just... I got it in my head that we're blood, you and me. We're not close, I know that, but we're still sisters and I thought that maybe if you had the baby it would be a little like me having it also... it's stupid. I'm sorry. This was a crazy idea. Just forget I said anything.

SARAH STARTS GATHERING UP HER STUFF.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I should go. I should work. Thanks for meeting me here. Do you need money? Of course you need money. I'll give you some money.

SARAH DUMPS THE CONTENTS OF HER BAG OUT ON THE TABLE.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I know I have a wallet in here.

COCO

You don't have to give me any money. You bought me toast. That's enough.

COCO SPOTS SOMETHING ON THE TABLE. SHE PICKS IT UP. IT'S THE GALLEYS OF THE JEZEBEL JAMES BOOK.

COCO (CONT'D)

What's this?

SARAH

(sees what she's holding)

Oh. That's one of my books.

COCO

(reading the display)

"The True Adventures of Jezebel James."

(looks at Sarah, confused)

Jezebel James. Isn't that...?

SARAH

Your imaginary friend. Yeah.

COCO

(beat)

She wrote a book?

SARAH

No, honey, she's imaginary.

COCO

But... how is she a book?

SARAH

I made her a book.

COCO LOOKS AT SARAH, SURPRISED.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I wanted to develop something with an adventuresome teen heroine. Strong-willed, independent, you know, Pippi with a Blackberry. So, I came up with the idea of basing it on your Jezebel. Feisty rich girl living in an abandoned amusement park with a backpack full of money...

COCO

You wrote it?

SARAH

No, I found a writer. But I worked very closely with her to make sure our heroine came across just like the real Jezebel. Well, the real fake Jezebel. Your Jezebel.

COCO

(softening)

I'm surprised you even remember her.

SARAH

Are you kidding? She ate my birth control pills three months in a row.

COCO

(smiles, remembering)

Yes. She told me about that.

COCO OPENS THE BOOK AND GLANCES AT THE PAGES.

COCO (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Bruised up knees and a star-shaped scar."

SARAH

Yeah. You know, from the...

SARAH / COCO

Midnight trapeze production of "The Nutcracker."

COCO AND SARAH LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND SMILE A BEAT.

COCO

You really want a kid that bad?

SARAH

I thought I did but... it's okay.

I'll figure something out. That's
what I do.

COCO

Yeah.

THURSTON COMES OVER HOLDING A BILL.

THURSTON

So... you're not in the booths anymore?

SARAH TAKES THE BILL OUT OF HIS HAND. SHE FINDS
HER WALLET AND DIGS AROUND FOR SOME MONEY.

SARAH

No. We're actually done here.

SHE PUTS SOME MONEY ON THE TABLE AND TURNS TO COCO.

SARAH (CONT'D)

It was nice seeing you. You look good.

SARAH EXITS OUT OF THE DINER.

THURSTON

Hey, I was just asking. The table is
totally in my section.

THURSTON CROSSES AWAY AS COCO SITS THERE, STARING
AT THE BOOK, THINKING.

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT THREESCENE TWOINT. GRUNGY APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

A SMALL, SEMI-DEPRESSING APARTMENT. A COUCH, A COUPLE OF CHAIRS AND A COFFEE TABLE SIT IN THE MIDDLE OF A CLUTTERED LIVING ROOM. A HALLWAY LEADS OFF TO THE BEDROOM IN THE BACK. THE FRONT DOOR OPENS. COCO COMES IN. SHE'S STILL HOLDING THE JEZEBEL JAMES BOOK IN HER HAND. SHE HEADS OVER TO THE COUCH AND STOPS. BUNDLED UP IN A WHITE BLANKET IS A LARGE, MISERABLE, MANGY-LOOKING CAT. COCO STARES AT THE CAT A BEAT. A YOUNG WOMAN, KIM, CROSSES THROUGH.

KIM

Ferlinghetti's sick. You have to share tonight.

KIM CROSSES OFF. COCO GLANCES BACK AT THE CAT. SHE SITS DOWN ON THE UNOCCUPIED SIDE OF THE COUCH. SHE OPENS THE BOOK AND STARTS TO READ. THE CAT SNEEZES. COCO SIGHS.

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT THREESCENE THREEINT. SARAH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A CORNER OFFICE WITH WINDOWS ON TWO WALLS, ALL OF HER BOOKS PROUDLY DISPLAYED ALONG WITH A COLLAGE OF IMAGES RIPPED FROM MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS. THERE'S MANUSCRIPTS AND BOOKS PILED EVERYWHERE. A TAKE-OUT PIZZA BOX IS BALANCED ON ONE OF THE STACKS. A CLEARLY AGITATED SARAH IS SITTING AT HER DESK TRYING TO SOP GREASE OFF OF A PIECE OF PIZZA WITH A PAPER TOWEL. BUDDY IS LAYING OUT THE DIFFERENT COVER CONCEPTS FOR THE JEZEBEL BOOKS ON THE GROUND.

BUDDY

Okay, so we've got the pensive portrait cover for the manic depressive kids, the trees, lakes, and leaves cover for the Walt Whitman per-teen set, the slightly sixties psychedelic version for the kids whose parents loved The Beatles, and the "basically-the-same-cover-as-before-hope-you-don't-notice Barnes and Noble" version.

BUDDY GLANCES OVER AT SARAH.

SARAH

(dabbing ferociously,
muttering under her breath)

Way too greasy, way too greasy, way
too greasy...

BUDDY

Sarah?

(MORE)

BUDDY (CONT'D)

You've been doing that for ten minutes
and you're starting to look like Lady
MacBeth.

SARAH

I don't want to eat all this grease.

BUDDY

But the main ingredient in pizza is
grease. If you take out the grease
there's nothing to hold it together.

SARAH

I can't afford to eat all this grease,
okay? I'll get fat. And not fat for a
good reason, just fat for a fat reason!

(sighs)

I'm too emotional to eat pizza.

SARAH PUSHES THE PIZZA ASIDE. SHE GLANCES OVER AND
SPOTS SOMETHING.

BUDDY

Yes. You really do need to be in a
calm state of mind to eat pizza.

Otherwise you could eat it from the
wrong end or eat anything triangular
or... what are you looking at?

SARAH GETS UP AND WALKS OVER TO THE GLASS WINDOW
THAT LOOKS OUT OF HER OFFICE INTO THE CUBICLE AREA.

SARAH

Well, I'll be....

BUDDY LOOKS UP AND SEES SARAH STARING OUT OF THE GLASS. HE GETS UP.

BUDDY

Sarah?

SARAH

I didn't know she knew where I worked.

THROUGH THE GLASS WE SEE THAT COCO HAS JUST GOTTEN OFF THE ELEVATOR AND IS WANDERING THROUGH THE HALL LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.

BUDDY

Who didn't know where you worked?

BUDDY LOOKS OVER TO WHERE SARAH IS STARING. HE SEES COCO. IT'S LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

(completely smitten)

Wow. Who's that?

SARAH

That's my sister.

BUDDY

She looks so... dirty. Oh my God, I want her to have my baby.

SARAH

Get in line.

SARAH RUSHES OUT OF THE DOOR. THROUGH THE GLASS WE SEE HER APPROACH COCO. THEY TALK A BEAT. THEN SUDDENLY SARAH THROWS HER ARMS AROUND COCO AND GIVES HER A GIANT HUG. COCO CRINGES A BIT, OBVIOUSLY NOT A BIG HUGGER, BUT SARAH, THRILLED, JUST HUGS HER HARDER. COCO FINALLY GIVES INTO THE HUG. THE GIRLS ROCK BACK AND FORTH IN THEIR HUG, AS WE:

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW

