

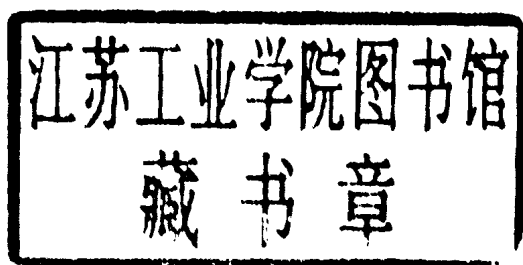
Girl

IN DEVELOPMENT



JORDAN ROTER

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JORDAN ROTHER

DUTTON BOOKS

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To Mom and Dad, with love

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Cousin Jill (my idol), and Cousin Laura (my muse): SCF.

And to Mom and Dad, to whom this book is dedicated. I owe you everything, but all I can offer you is my love. And this book, of course.

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CHAPTER ONE

ROB: *We move to sunny L.A.
All of show business is out there, Max.*

ALVY: *No, I cannot. You keep bringing it up,
but I don't wanna live in a city where the only cultural advantage is
that you can make a right turn on a red light.* —ANNIE HALL



“Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do,”
said Betty Rose to her daughter, Samantha.

At eighteen, Samantha Rose was the spitting image of her mother at that age: pale porcelain skin, jet-black hair, and wide, dark eyes. Sam knew her mother was only half-joking. She also knew that her mother was about to cry. Right in the middle of Boston’s Logan Airport.

“Mo-om, please. We’re in *public*,” Sam whispered.

Sam rolled her eyes and batted her eyelashes, dreading the waterworks that were about to begin. To her horror, she watched as her mother fished around her large pocketbook until she came up with a handful of crumpled tissues, which she used to loudly blow her nose and dab her eyes. Arthur Rose

smiled sympathetically, and put one arm around his wife, the other around his daughter.

“Oh now, Betty,” he said. “And Samantha, you can’t go rolling your eyes at people in Hollywood. They’ll blacklist you!”

“Ha-ha,” said Sam.

“That’s right, it’s not flattering. What if your eyes get stuck like that, then what?” asked Betty. “And you have your sunscreen?”

Sam wiggled out from her father’s embrace. She was about to say “Because they don’t have sunscreen in Los Angeles?” but saw the genuinely concerned expression on her mother’s face and bit her tongue. Only, she actually *bit* her tongue. Now she would have a lisp for the next eight weeks. *Cryptastic*.

“We’re so proud of you, honey. You’re gonna knock ’em dead out there in Hollywood,” said Arthur.

“You’re beautiful, sweetheart, and don’t let anyone tell you differently,” whimpered Betty. “But please don’t wear that bright red lipstick; it’s so unbecoming on you. It’s just so . . . *extreme*.”

Sam put her hand in the pocket of her jean jacket and pawed her crimson lipstick. She smiled.

“Did we tell you how proud we are of you? What are you doing with your tongue?” asked Betty.

“Sorry, I think I bit it. I’m fine. Look guys, I love you both, I really do, but I think we should wrap this up.”

A line was forming behind them including but not limited to an impatient man in a purple T-shirt that read LOVE ME OR EAT ME.

Arthur looked at his daughter. “Now just remember to be polite to your uncle and your cousin Kate,” he said. “It was very generous of Uncle Norman to fly you to Los Angeles and get you an internship out there. Don’t let him down, okay?”

“And don’t forget to go to the Getty—they have a wonderful Impressionist collection. You always loved the Impressionists,” said Betty.

“I know, Mom, but I’m only there for eight weeks, and I’ll be working almost every day.” Sam had heard all this before.

“Please don’t come home with any new piercings or . . . what’s that thing they’re doing out there now, hen tattoos?”

“*Henna* tattoos, Dad. You know, they’re not even permanent!”

“Samantha . . .”

“Okay, okay. No tattoos of any kind. Got it.”

Betty took her daughter’s hand. Actually, she *clawed* it as if she would never hold it again. “And try to read some good books while you’re out there. Don’t only read scripts—they will rot your mind.”

Sam stopped answering. She was more anxious than the LOVE ME OR EAT ME man, who had his eye trained on the Cinnabon stand just beyond security. Sam had never traveled alone on an airplane before and hadn’t been to Los Angeles

since she was six. She had no memory of that trip, just a photograph of herself smiling toothlessly and clutching her jean skirt while standing on Marilyn Monroe's star on Hollywood Boulevard.

Sam gave her parents a final hug and walked into the chaos of airport security without looking back. She knew that if she saw her mother and father staring after her, she would cry. And that was unacceptable to Sam. Never let them see you cry. Anyone. Ever. This mantra had gotten her through four excruciatingly painful years of high school, and she had a feeling she would need it now more than ever. She put on her tough "game face," but inside she was terrified; her mind and heart were racing.

Sam would miss her parents, who, for better or worse, she also considered her best friends. She would miss Northampton, the Massachusetts town where she had grown up and had spent every other summer of her life. The internship at a Hollywood production company was a high school graduation present from her Uncle Norman because her father had haphazardly told him she liked movies. Perhaps Arthur Rose had expected his brother, Norman, to send Sam some VHS tapes (the Roses still did not own a DVD player). Instead, Uncle Norman had set up an internship at Authentic Pictures, a production company owned by one of his clients. Right now, Sam was wishing she could return it for a sweater. Something soft and black with a cowl neck, perhaps?

Sam smiled. For the first time in her life, she really fit in. Who would ever have thought it would be in Hollywood? Sam waved to the girls and headed over to the dance floor. Her vintage pumps were sinking deeper and deeper into the damp soil of the baseball field with each new step, and she almost fell when an arm caught hers.

“Careful,” said Ross.

Sam looked up at him. He extended his arm out toward her.

“Shall we?” he asked.

“Don’t mind if we do,” she said.

Sam linked her arm through his, and they walked toward the dance floor. Once there, Ross clumsily attempted to spin Sam away from him and reel her back in to him. She laughed and gave him a hug. She thought for a moment about the smooth Matt Sullivan who had reeled her in so effortlessly on their very first night together. But now she looked over at her friends who danced around her, and she realized then and there that she just didn’t need him anymore.

“So, Sammy, tell us,” said Kate. “Are you going to be a writer or are you going to be a D-girl?”

“I don’t know yet,” said Sam. “Right now, I’m just . . . a girl in development.”

Sam breathed in the crisp night air and smiled. She was sure about one thing: this was a whole new ball game.

After boarding the plane and settling into her window seat, Sam applied several coats of red Stila lipstick followed by cherry-flavored Lip Smackers gloss from Rite Aid: designer meets ghetto. She pulled out her dog-eared copy of *Jane Eyre* and tried to read. But she was too nervous. She checked out the goods in the seat pocket like it was a gift bag at the Oscars: *In-Flight* magazine, safety card, air sickness bag.

“You can tell that *Hollywood Squares* has-been he can kiss my ass!”

Sam looked up to see a strange man yelling into his cell phone, tugging at his tie and walking down the aisle like he owned the plane. From what she could tell, he was wearing way too much hair gel and was primed within an inch of his life, right down to the loosened Hermès tie, baby blue and pink button-down, and Armani suit. She suspected his eyebrows had just been waxed. He must be the metrosexual poster boy, she thought. Ugh, eight weeks of this.

“I’m in *coach*! Can you believe that? My assistant is so fired when I get back.”

Mr. Cell Phone (as Sam had come to think of him) opened the overhead compartment and shoved the contents to the back while still talking on the phone. Sam heard her bag being crushed under the weight of his compact rolling duffel. He reeked of cologne. Eau de Jerk, perhaps? Whatever it was, he must have used a fire hose to put it on.

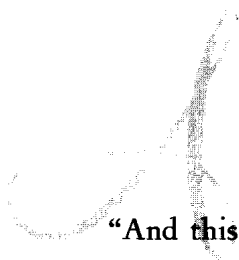
Just then, the flight attendant announced that all electrical items must be turned off for departure. But this warning didn't seem to affect Mr. Cell Phone. Sam wondered if he would ever shut up. She worried that the plane would crash because this guy wouldn't turn off his phone, which was definitely *not* a flight-approved electrical item. She was feeling sick to her stomach. It had been a while since she'd been on a plane, and she had simply chosen to forget how nervous (not to mention nauseated) it made her. Maybe it was the overpoweringly pungent scent of Mr. Cell Phone's cologne? The plane lurched forward. *Eight weeks*. Had she made a huge mistake? Could she still get off the plane? Knowing her parents, they were still in the airport, waiting to watch her plane take off. Her sweet parents. Her lovely town of Northampton. The plane was moving and Mr. Cell Phone kept talking like it was the last phone call he was ever going to make.

Sam's stomach started doing somersaults, and she felt a bitter taste rising from the back of her throat. She reached for her air sickness bag like it was a life raft, but it was too late. Just as the wheels of the plane lifted off the ground, she vomited right on Mr. Cell Phone. And, finally, he stopped talking.

CHAPTER TWO

*The companions of our childhood always possess a certain power
over our minds which hardly any later friend can obtain.*

—MARY SHELLEY, *Frankenstein*



“And ~~this~~ is Marcy vomiting after her third keg stand,” said Kate.

It was noon, the sun was shining over a smoggy Los Angeles, and Kate Rose was sitting by the pool at her father’s house in Beverly Hills. She was wearing her favorite black-and-gold-beaded bikini, proudly showing Tatiana and Dylan the photo highlights of her freshman year at the University of Michigan.

“Ewww,” squealed Tatiana.

“That’s DISGUSTING! I LOVE it, K-Ro!” said Dylan.

“Puking from drinking is soooo 2003,” said Tatiana.
“Straight edge is totally in right now.”

Tatiana slid her red kabbalah string bracelet along her wrist to avoid getting a tan line, while Dylan reapplied her sunscreen and dipped her pudgy toes in the pool.