

SMASHING

Brooke Berman

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brooke Berman's plays have been produced and developed across the U S at theaters including: Primary Stages, The Second Stage, Steppenwolf, The Play Company, Soho Rep, Williamstown Theater Festival, Naked Angels, M C C, WET, S P F, New Dramatists, New Georges, The Hourglass Group and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. In the U K, her work has been developed at The Royal Court Theatre, The National Theatre Studio and Pentabus. Plays include: HUNTING AND GATHERING (Primary Stages, named one of the 10 Best Plays of 2008 by *New York Magazine*); SMASHING (The Play Company, The O'Neill); UNTIL WE FIND EACH OTHER (Steppenwolf, The O'Neill); THE TRIPLE HAPPINESS (Second Stage, The Playwrights Center, The Hourglass Group), SAM AND LUCY (S P F, Cleveland Playhouse), A PERFECT COUPLE (WET), OUT OF THE WATER (Cape Cod Theater Project, ARS Nova), THE JESUS YEAR (New Dramatists Creativity Fund), The Liddy Plays (Rising Phoenix Rep, The Hangar Theater Lab, Williamstown Theater Company), and others.

Brooke is the recipient of a Berilla Kerr Award, a Helen Merrill Award, two Francesca Primus Awards, two LeCompte du Nuoy awards and a commissioning grant from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. She is an alumna of New Dramatists, where she served

on the Board of Directors and developed countless plays. She has received support for her work from the MacDowell Colony and the Corporation of Yaddo and commissions from Arielle Tepper Productions and C T C in Minneapolis.

Her short play DANCING WITH A DEVIL was a co-winner of The Heideman Award at Actors Theater of Louisville in 1999, presented in *Life Under 30* at the Humana Festival, and nominated for an American Theater Critics Best New Play award. It has been published in numerous anthologies. Her short play DEFUSION has been produced in a number of festivals and as part of Christine Jones's Theater for One project at New York Theatre Workshop. (www.theatreforone.com/gallery/img_0470.htm)

Brooke attended Barnard College and is a graduate of The Juilliard School. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild, PEN and the M C C Playwrights Coalition.

Her memoir, *No Place Like Home*, is published by Random House and available in bookstores. More information: www.brookeberman.net.

SMASHING was developed at The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center in Waterford, CT, and with M C C Theater’s Playwrights Coalition.

SMASHING received its world premiere by The Play Company. The cast and creative contributors were as follows:

ABBY	Catherine Powell
CLEA	Merritt Weaver
JASON.....	David Barlow
JAMES.....	Joseph Siravo
NICKY	Lucas Papaelias
<i>Director</i>	Trip Cullman
<i>Set design</i>	Erik Flatmo
<i>Costume design</i>	Michael Krass
<i>Lighting design</i>	Paul Whitaker
<i>Sound design</i>	Scott Myers

CHARACTERS

ABBY
CLEA
JASON
JAMES
NICKY

NOTE

This play takes place in three very distinct levels and time-frames. The first is the present reality. The second is the fictional world of the book. The third is the past. These areas should be clearly indicated in the design or lighting of the play, so that it is clear when and where we move. Also, Jason should have some sort of podium or “reading” area when he reads from his book.

Everything speaks their text very well and very accurately. Use the language as a driving force. The play should move very quickly with no break between scenes. Everything happens on top of itself. It is a rhythmic, hypertext influenced structure. Characters speak directly to the audience, narrating themselves, and acting as the “link” on a website. The text of Jason’s book may be wound through or looped in a soundscape.

All of this is intentionally theatrical. The characters love to perform, and the act of telling is a major part of the story itself. In a very active and literal sense, the telling is the story. These characters, writers all, use language as a weapon, an instrument to manipulate in order to get attention and sustenance. Embrace the act of telling.

“I think I’ve unconsciously chosen people who are emotionally crippled, who need mothering. I’m really good at it, and it mirrors something in me that needs mothering.”

Madonna, *Truth or Dare*

“I wanted to make people happy, I wanted to be famous, I wanted everybody to love me, I wanted to be a star. I worked really hard and my dream came true.”

Madonna, *Truth or Dare*

ACT ONE

overture

(The stage is bare. Enter JASON STARK, an average looking, skinny, writer. He reads from his novel:)

JASON: Book Number One. Jameson Addie. The Girl.

(Lights up on ABBY MEADOW. A beautiful thin girl in her very early twenties. A student. She is rational, gutsy and self possessed.)

ABBY: Every day you can wake up new. There's nothing permanent about the self. "Reality" either.

(Add CLEA, ABBY's best friend, slightly rougher around the edges, marches to a different drummer. Also twenty-one. Obsessed with two things—Madonna and ABBY.)

CLEA: Says my best friend Abby—

JASON: Says the Buddha through the mouth of Jameson Addie.

ABBY: It's always shifting.

CLEA: At least, this is the position put forth by numerous schools of thought, mostly coming from the teachings of the Buddha. Abby says:

ABBY: Impermanence is key.

Nothing's fixed—except your projections in the moment, which is eternally now.

(*Lights up on JAMES MEADOW, a charismatic novelist and ABBY's dad.*)

JAMES: It's called *Eternally Now*. Which is a comment on one of my earlier novellas, *Now, Eternal*. The new piece uses a character from *The Eden Trilogy* and takes him into the far reaches of Bhutan; it's the last Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas.... You see, I should probably mention that my daughter went to India this past year and I started to think about, see kids are just great for bringing up ideas because they're basically search engines.

ABBY: So every day you can wake up new.

CLEA: It's summer now.

ABBY: Without attachment or projection.

CLEA: She's back at her dad's brownstone, sleeping late. I work in Admissions. And in the evenings, we meet.

ABBY: No past, no future, nothing holding you to who you were a day ago, an hour ago—

JASON: She will always be sixteen. She will always be The Girl.

ABBY: Except—

JASON: Beautiful. Smashing.

CLEA: And here is the exception.

JASON: "With a mean streak. A talent for hurting, for hitting, for driving a stake. At least that is how I remember her, this vicious Jameson Addie. I remember her wet. Dripping. Sixteen and mean. Out for blood. Out for my blood. And I remember liking it."

ABBY: The exception is if you fucked some guy when you were sixteen and he wrote a book about it and this book is roughly everywhere. I mean, if some asshole you slept with when you were like basically still in

high school writes a best-selling book all about your pussy and what a bitch you are and reveals things to the world, aren't you kind of forced into being someone you got through being a long time ago?

If a tree falls in the forest—

CLEA: And it's reviewed by *The New York Times*, by *The New York Review of Books*, by *People* magazine even—

ABBY: If actresses you don't like at all are considering doing the movie, well, you're just stuck with this projection, aren't you?

jason is a hero, to himself

(JASON *talks about himself like he's a superhero.*)

JASON: In the fabulous cities of the New World, the Young Writer Jason Stark reads from his fabulous new book. *Cherry Pie @ the Hungarian*. The young writer Jason Stark, the celebrated young—okay, so I'm twenty-nine but I still get grants for “emerging”—writer is on his American book tour, giving readings, attending cocktail parties, answering “questions” about his second book because he has a three book deal—only he's preoccupied. Thinking only of her. Wondering if he will run into Her, The Girl. He sees the ghost of her sixteen-ness everywhere, on every subway, at every bookstore and every café. But she misses her entrance. She (Deliberately? He thinks, deliberately due to the revealing nature of his scandalous debut) refuses to be seen. And he returns to London—that's right, London—the city where he makes his Young Writer Home—ready for Books Number Two and Three. But what are Books Number Two and Three going to be about? Norman Mailer says that writer's block is a failure of the ego. Yeah, well my fucking ego is fucking failing. I kind of said it

with Book Number One. Love turned sour. Fucked up fucking with sixteen year old muse/tornado/Lolita-girl—

(ABBY cuts him off before he can say her name.)

ABBY: Abby. Abby Meadow. Once it was Medowski but my dad, the famous novelist James Meadow changed it when he was a hippie and my mom, whose name was originally Daphne changed hers to Dandelion or something that sounded like that in French, she was French, well she died when I was a little girl, yeah, it's okay, I mean I'm fine about that, but anyway, I'm sixteen and kinda running wild, alone in the house when you come, this guy working for my dad. Who's just not around much that Spring and Summer. But you, Jason, are around. Doing whatever it is you are being paid to do. Which is not, I gather, to crush out on the daughter of your boss.

You read me poems.

JASON: e e cummings.

“inane, the poetic carcass of a girl”

ABBY: And we have sex—

JASON: Mad passionate sex—

ABBY: —all over my dad's black leather writers chair while he's in Prague. My dad says Prague's his favorite city. And we fuck on his chair. A lot. And then I break your heart, which just really can't be helped, and you go away.

JASON: Until now.

she touches things and they move

CLEA: Madonna Marathon. Three whole days of nonstop Madonna on your favorite music video network. One must stay in for events like this. One must ferret out the people one knows with television sets and cable. To absorb all the imagery surrounding Her. The most famous woman in the world. Self-made, self-invented and totally self-serving. Unapologetic. Fierce. A goddess. She touches things and they move. She shifts and the culture shifts with her. She gets everything right, even when she's wrong. Clearly, she is my hero. I mean, she would be if I believed in that kind of thing, which I don't because Abby says they break your heart, but if I did, she'd be it. She helps me persevere in the face of great odds. And a girl alone in college in New York City with an insufficient Pell Grant and an overdeveloped inner life does face these odds. Rather a lot. But She walked this path before me. Alone in the City without resources. Getting into the groove.

(Scene. The girls watch VH-1.)

ABBY: She's all about herself.

CLEA: So?

ABBY: So, that's ego.

CLEA: So? *(Beat)* I mean, don't you think that's a bold statement? She's not self-effacing. Or self-punishing. And her drive is like, you know, we should support drive. And blonde ambition.

ABBY: Sure. But for good causes. Her cause is just, herself.

CLEA: Not true. She does a lot for AIDS groups and— she totally raises money for AIDS groups. Besides, some people have to get themselves out of a bad

place and into a better one before they can be like, a statement for larger forces.

ABBY: Maybe.

CLEA: I took this religion class last semester where they said that the sacraments were conceived on this totally patriarchal model and that for women it's a different thing altogether. I mean, like, for us, anger and drive and ambition, all that stuff female characters always get totally punished for? Those might be our sacraments.

ABBY: What class was this?

CLEA: Women and Religion.

ABBY: I see.

CLEA: It was a good class.

ABBY: I'm sure. *(Changing the subject)* Hey, do you want this stuff? *(Points to a bag of clothes)* Just isn't me anymore. Maybe you'll find something.

abby at sixteen

JASON: Jack Kerouac says the girls in Iowa City are the prettiest in the whole damn country. But what does he know about it? He was passing through in a hot rod car with Dean Moriarty. He never had to live there. No, no. Jack was Jack and I was Jason, someone else entirely, and I couldn't wait to get to New York. The girls in New York, especially the ones who grew up there, are my favorite in all the world. Abby at sixteen. My favorite in all the world.

(She becomes ABBY at sixteen. There is a shift indicating we are now in the past, or possibly the novel.)

JASON: Short for Abigail?

ABBY: I wish. I had weird parents.

JASON: *Absalom, Absalom?*

ABBY: Not Faulkner. You didn't really think...

JASON: I was joking.

(ABBY *twirls a little, flirting. She, everything about her, already mesmerizes* JASON.)

ABBY: So you wanna know what it is?

JASON: Sure.

ABBY: Absinthe.

JASON: Really?

ABBY: That's what's on the birth certificate. Ask my dad.

JASON: Wow. Mine's just Jason. Like, I don't know. I think I was named after someone on a soap opera.

ABBY: My dad's a freak.

JASON: Your dad is my hero.

ABBY: That's stupid.

JASON: Why is it stupid?

ABBY: It just is.

JASON: His books changed my life.

ABBY: Which ones?

JASON: The Eden Trilogy.

ABBY: Yeah. They're pretty good. Still though. I don't think you should have a hero. Heroes are dangerous.

JASON: Why's that?

ABBY: They break your heart. They just do.

JASON: How old are you?

ABBY: Sixteen.

JASON: Wow.

(ABBY smiles. They share a moment. Danger, Will Robinson.)

CLEA: Abby and I have been friends since the first day of school. Her house is AMAZING. Life is good when you get invited to the brownstone. They have these dinners all the time with writers and artists, and you never know what poet you'll meet or who will tell you embarrassing things about their love lives and rehab experiences, and what things were like in "the Factory days". They talk about "movements" in literature and culture. This is very different than where I come from. I listen. I take it all in. I absorb. I don't say a word. If I talk, they'll notice me, and they may ask me to leave. And I can't leave. I have too much at stake. A whole life. Waiting and at stake.

(This is broken as JASON returning to the present, picks up his novel and reads—)

JASON: Her name was Addie, though on the birth certificate it said "Jameson". But this was no Jamie, no Jan, she was Addie short for Jameson, because she liked it and she had always been allowed to do as she liked. She was named after her father's favorite drink, a drink he liked when he was young, an expatriate hippie, but he was old when I met him, when I met them both, and she was just Addie. For addiction, addled with guilt, address the problem. A dirty little girl with a truck driver's mouth and the face of a saint. A poor little rich girl. The daughter of a literary legend—

james is a famous writer

JAMES: (*As if lecturing to a class*) *The Eden Trilogy. Eternally Now. Daphne/Delphine, that one's about my wife who died very young. Genius in the Heartland. A River in the Sun. Grass in the Blade.* That's my personal favorite, though I didn't care much for the movie adaptation. I mean, I just didn't understand some of the casting. But, you know, the movies. They seem to take great pleasure in getting things wrong.

(*To JASON*)

JAMES: I was wondering if you could do me a favor.

JASON: Sure.

JAMES: Good. I'll pay you extra if you can hang out with my daughter, keep an eye on her.

JASON: Like baby-sit?

JAMES: Just keep her busy. She's fairly self-sufficient. But I travel quite frequently, and it would help me out a lot if you'd be willing to "like baby-sit," as you call it, while I'm away. Just keep an eye on her. She's a great kid. Smart. Doesn't eat much. Knows all those writers you like. A good editor, too. You can show her what you're working on. Take her to a movie here and there. On me. I'd appreciate it.

JASON: Sure. I don't mind at all.

(*The scene switches almost immediately as JASON turn to ABBY, and—*)

abby at sixteen, carpe diem and all that

JASON: Your dad said to keep you busy. Want to go to a movie?

ABBY: Do you want to kiss me?

(JASON *maybe stammering*)

ABBY: You do, don't you? I know. You've been looking at me like that all week and it's making me sort of impatient. So, I think you should just do it. Carpe Diem, and all that. (*She waits.*) Well?

(JASON *makes no move to kiss ABBY.*)

ABBY: Come on. Just fucking kiss me.

JASON: Not when you put it like that.

ABBY: Fine.

(ABBY *kisses JASON. He kisses her back. It's good.*)

the things you are missing

CLEA: When Abby was in India, I took notes. So we'd be on the same page when she got back. (*She opens a notebook or journal.*) The Things You Are Missing (This starts out lame, but gets better) (*She looks at her notes, then begins.*)

Coffee prices increase at University Food Market.

Kissed Nietzsche Surfer Guy (*finally*) in front of Avery library. Not memorable. Followed by Hungarian Pastry. Also not memorable. Really wish I could call you. You'd say this is not a sign of things to come, and frankly, I hope you are right.

Okay, this is interesting. Went to Times Square to see "The Next Best Thing" and—well, it's disappointing but she looks great. Only she's talking like a Brit. Do you think is a conscious appropriation for some meta-purpose we don't yet understand? You'd say no, but I

might disagree.

Nietzsche Surfer Guy has defected to the Dark Side. He's dating Barbie Girl. It's a mess. Again, *really* wish I could call you.

Oh. Started writing my first short story. Or novella. It might be a novella. It's about this girl Louise. Louise has a best friend, Veronica, who's the center, the absolute center of—everything—

Anyway. I never read the list to Abby.

**obsession is a perfume, not a way to live your
life**

JASON: I call. I'm drunk. It's late. But who can sleep when you're on the verge of fame but have nothing to say in books number two and three? And you need to talk to the inane carcass of a girl you wrote about and loved and loved and got hurt by and wrote about. (*He picks up the phone—*) Is it you, Pretty Girl? Inane Carcass?

(*ABBY answers the phone. Stage goes split screen.*)

ABBY: Jason?

JASON: Have you seen it?

ABBY: Seen what?

JASON: The book. Have you seen the book?

ABBY: Uh-uh. What book?

JASON: What book? My book?

ABBY: You have a book?

JASON: You don't know about my book?

ABBY: No. Where are you? Are you in New York? I thought you were, like, weren't you living somewhere else?

JASON: My book got published. It's huge. There was a piece in the—I'm in London.

ABBY: What are you doing in London?

JASON: Didn't you get the letter?

ABBY: No. You wrote me a letter? What did you say?

JASON: I can't believe you didn't get the letter.

ABBY: Well. I didn't. I was in India. Traveling and stuff. Did you send it to my dad's? Cause he's been away too. Or school? Traveling was amazing, it was just amazing, I saw all these—

JASON: You were supposed to get my letter.

ABBY: Yeah, well I didn't. I was traveling. In India. Wait, can you hold on? That's call waiting—

JASON: Abby, I am calling you from London. England. I cannot just hold on—

ABBY: Okay, hold on. *(She clicks flash)* Yeah?

CLEA: Hey. What's wrong?

ABBY: Oh, God, just come over.

CLEA: Why?

ABBY: Remember that guy I told you about who I slept with when I was in high school while my dad was in Prague?

CLEA: Yeah?

ABBY: Well, I'm on the phone with him, so just come over.

(Overlapping, they speak "just come over" at about the same time)

CLEA: Okay, I'll just come over. I'm at the deli. You want anything?

ABBY: No. Yeah. Diet Coke.

CLEA: No, bad for you. Aspartame. It actually creates this insulin release effect in the body which then subsequently makes you crave—

ABBY: Fine. I gotta get back to this weird guy. He's weird.

CLEA: Weird how?

ABBY: Obsessive.

CLEA: Dangerous?

ABBY: No. Just obsessive. Okay, I gotta get back to him. Just come over.

CLEA: (*Aside*) Things like this happen to her all the time.

(*ABBY clicks back to JASON—*)

ABBY: I'm back—

JASON: So I have to write another one.

ABBY: So write another one. What did you say in this letter?

JASON: You don't understand. They want me to write another book.

ABBY: Yeah. You said.

JASON: Well, I can't just do that.

ABBY: Why not?

JASON: I don't know.

ABBY: Why are you calling me?

JASON: You really haven't read the book? You didn't even notice it? It's huge. There are movie rights— I have a three book contract—

ABBY: I told you. I was in India. Do you want to hear about India? India was—

JASON: Chloe Sevigny wants to play...the girl.

ABBY: What's the girl like?

JASON: It's getting good reviews.

ABBY: What do you want from this conversation?
I mean, it's not like we're in touch—

JASON: I just want to talk to you.

ABBY: Well, you're talking to me.

JASON: I just, I can't, I mean, it's great, and I'm really lucky, it's just that now with this contract and—you know they want me to write—and I just—

ABBY: Oh. You have writers block. Deal with it. My God. Writers are so self-indulgent.

(The following occur simultaneously—overlapping to the public school line, then overlapping again until ABBY breaks it.)

JASON: *(Sparring, liking it)* Don 't—

ABBY: WHY ARE YOU CALLING ME, JASON?

JASON: I mean, you just—that's like reductive, just because,

ABBY: I don't really want to talk to you. Or have you yell at me, okay?

JASON: *You're yelling at me!*

ABBY: I mean, there are poor people, I have seen people in India—

JASON: Yeah whatever with your "poor people in India" you were just this white tourist anyway and it's not like the poor people in India give one rat's ass about—

ABBY: I mean, you are just this totally over-privileged, I mean, freaking out because you have a book contract—

JASON: Look who's calling who over-privileged. *I went to public schools you know.*

Just don't call it "writers block" like it's this totally pat ordinary thing—

ABBY: WHATEVER. (*Breaking the simultaneity*) You called me. Why did you call me? Right before you picked up the phone, you probably had a thought about something. What do you think it was? Try to remember—

JASON: Well, I didn't go and call it "writers block" That's so dismissive.

ABBY: I'm hanging up.

JASON: No. Don't go. Nothing is happening in my life besides being a writer, Not even writing, just being a "writer". And, I'm sure that, I'm having these—I can't write, I think about you all the time. And I need to see you. Okay? I need to see you.

ABBY: You want to see me?

JASON: Need. Not want. Need.

ABBY: Oh.

JASON: I just think that it would help me right now. I think I'd write again. There. Okay? There. I just need to see you, Abby.

ABBY: Well. You're in London.

JASON: Come here.

ABBY: I can't—

JASON: You're my good luck charm.

ABBY: That's dumb.

JASON: It's not. Why is it dumb?

ABBY: It just is.

JASON: You're my muse. Is that dumb?

ABBY: You haven't seen me in—a long time. Years.

JASON: Yes. That is the point. That is the whole point exactly.

ABBY: Yeah. That *is* the point.

JASON: I have a picture of you in my mind. Do you think about me? Ever?

ABBY: No. I'm sorry. But, no. I never think about you.

JASON: You're lying.

ABBY: Maybe. Okay, so maybe I think about you. So? Maybe every now and then. But not a lot. I mean, I do not think about you a lot.

JASON: You recognized my voice.

ABBY: You called me "inane carcass".

JASON: So? Come here. Please? I want to see you. I want to touch you. I'm a novelist. Don't you want to see me be a novelist?

ABBY: I grew up with novelists. I don't need to see another one.

JASON: (*Direct, not pathetic*) I'll beg. Want me to beg?

ABBY: No.

JASON: Where are you right now?

ABBY: In my apartment, Jerk-off, where do you think I am? You called me.

JASON: I know. But. Tell me where you are. So I can see it. Describe it to me. The room, what you look like...

ABBY: Jason, I'm not having phone sex with you. Go fuck yourself.

JASON: Come here.

ABBY: I'll think about it. Okay? I will think about once I've read your stupid, pathetic little book. Where can I get it?

JASON: Anywhere. You can get it most anywhere. There was a piece in the—It's huge.

(Somewhere during this sequence CLEA enters, silently, carrying her bag from the store. She tries to interest ABBY in water or some non-aspartame-based soft drink, ABBY shakes her head no, CLEA listens, silently to rest of conversation. ABBY and CLEA gesture to one another in appropriate moments.)

ABBY: Great. Are you happy? You should be really happy.

JASON: I'm still in love with you.

ABBY: No you're not.

JASON: : I am, though. You're the only thing that makes me want to write.

ABBY: Thing?

JASON: Look. Okay, I'm older than you—

ABBY: Not that older—

JASON: And at my age, my friends have had relationships that were good and then went bad. And, they're ready, this makes them ready for the one that works. And I think, it's you. Okay? The good one. I think it's you. For me. You're old enough now. It wouldn't be weird. Your dad's out of it. What if we had, or even tried...? What if it's You?

ABBY: Jason. It's not me. It wasn't me then. And it isn't me now. Go find someone in England. There are plenty of girls in England.

JASON: I want you.

ABBY: You don't want me.

JASON: Don't tell me what I want. I do. I want you.

ABBY: I say this with great compassion. Go fuck someone in England and write about them. It's what my dad does when he can't think of what to write.

JASON: Yeah?

(JASON *considers this. It is a worthwhile option....* ABBY *hangs up.*)

(ABBY and CLEA *share a moment.*)

ABBY: Obsession is a perfume, not a way of life.

CLEA: Too bad he's not dangerous.

ABBY: No, not dangerous. Just obsessive.

CLEA: Obsessive?

ABBY: Yes. And there's a book—

a book about being numb

JASON: —about pain. It is a book about pain. About being numb and then waking to pain. You are numb, then you are shocked into awareness and once you're aware, you are aware of pain. You were perhaps in pain all along but you were numb so you didn't feel it. Anything. You didn't feel anything. This is what the book is about. And the catalyst for all of this is The Girl. The Girl is really important because she is the Thing that shocks the Guy into awareness.

a dangerous hobby

CLEA: We make heroes. We can't help it. We kill our heroes. We make words about them. I'm only just starting, and let me tell you, it's a dangerous hobby.

on fancy stationery from london

JAMES: (*Reading a letter*)

Dear James,

No doubt you have seen my best-selling debut *Cherry Pie @ The Hungarian* which in my mind, if not in print, I dedicate to you and all you taught me. You are my literary hero, and although it has been said that heroes are dangerous and break one's heart, I am writing to you in hopes that you will read my book and possibly review it for a special feature on writers and their protégées...

reading said book

(JAMES holds a copy of JASON's book. The cover is obscured, perhaps it is a "review copy" —in any case, not yet the picture of ABBY.)

JAMES: Have you seen this book?

ABBY: No.

JAMES: Do you know what it's about?

ABBY: No. What's it about?

JAMES: I think it's about you.

ABBY: Me how?

JAMES: You naked.

ABBY: Really? How strange.

JAMES: I'm going to pretend it's fiction.

ABBY: Yes. I'd do that.