

The Curve of Your Spine Is My Home

//Olivia Billings

NOTE

The following should make you feel uncomfortable with melancholic nostalgia. Like when you pretend you're in a music video in the car and your dad catches you in the mirror. Or when you are absently picking your nose in public and a teenage girl scoffs at you. There are certain coincidences that occur throughout the play. They should feel like only you notice them.

TIME

Anytime in the present, but preferably now.

PLACE

A suburb in western Pennsylvania. It should feel like there is a vacuum turned on the entire play, sucking all the air out of the space that is our town.

PEOPLE

Balaam (bAy-lum)- the soothsayer.

23, aspiring poet but currently working at an indoor trampoline park, a fierce gemini.

Gomer (gO-myrh)- the harlot.

20, a student at Carlow, loves mac n'cheese more than anyone or anything.

Habakkuk (hAb-uh-cook)- the musician.

24, a viola apprentice with the Pittsburgh symphony, collects adult coloring books.

Jezebel (jEz-a-bell)- the queen.

25, christian, tucks in her children and husband every single night. She is kind.

Part I//

Balaam is swinging on a rusty swing set. She looks way too old to fit on it, but she is very comfortable swinging. It's 3:27am. She is smoking a mango-flavored juul. The pack runs out.

Balaam: fuck.

She throws the juul on the ground. Bored, she twists herself on the swing and lets it go free. We watch her do this three times. Perhaps she sighs a long, obnoxious 'ughhhhh.' After the third time, she lays face-down, starfish style, on the damp grass.

Gomer enters, sucking on a key necklace around his neck.

Balaam: (face still in grass) thank you for showing up Godot. really appreciate it.

Gomer: no problem. I literally had nothing else to do in my childhood home at 3 am. except maybe jackoff to the poster of Ashley Tisdale on my wall. I thought I'd pass. so. you rang?

Balaam: (sitting up, criss cross applesauce) I called you here because I decided I'm going to murder you with my bare hands.

Gomer stares. Balaam seems manic.

Balaam: joking. I'm fucking joking. jesus christ. trying to lighten the--

Gomer: well I'm sorry I'm not really in the mood to joke around. and quite honestly it weirds me out that you are? I mean seriously B are you okay?

Balaam: I'd actually rather not have a therapy session with a man-child in a full-length leather coat right now so ya, I think I'm okay.

Gomer: come on I thought you liked this thing

Gomer twirls like an amateur ballerina. It's embarrassing.

Balaam: ohhhh my god

Maybe they laugh.

Gomer: so why am I here?

Balaam: we need to talk to her

Gomer: who

Balaam: Jez

Deafening silence. Gomer picks up a pebble and tosses it off stage.

Gomer: (really asking) do you realize how shitty this is for me? like I'm genuinely wondering if you do. I'm not trying to be a dick but like she was my sister. my blood. I don't know if you're in denial, or insane, or just coked out but I need you, for my sake, to use your brain.

Balaam: Gome—

Gomer: she's dead B. she's not coming back. in fact, her body was cremated, and her ashes are in my trunk right now so it's real. It's very real to me. my sister is inside a box. Jezebel is dust. I could feel her between my fingers if I wanted to. breathe her in. so no. we can't talk to her. and I don't really understand how you can be so fucking—like--casual about this. this happened. this is real.

Balaam: okay. I know. I know it's real. but there's like this— weird burning in me. I know that sounds cliché or—I don't know I just--I need to know, I gotta know what she meant—

Gomer: meant by what—

Interrupted by the entrance of Habakkuk. Nearly running into the swing set, Habakkuk is desperately texting what feels like a five-paragraph essay on climate change.

Balaam: YES you're here. so how's life in luxury?

Habakkuk: hello, Balaam. okay I need to get home, preferably nowish or in the next three minutes so what do you need?

Gomer: what for? you got a dick to suck I don't know about?

Habakkuk: okay I'm gunna leave--

Balaam: no no no wait look I'm sorry. he sucks but just look at me. look at me. It's okay. I need you.

Habakkuk: you need me?

Balaam: yes I need you

Balaam pulls Habakkuk awkwardly in for an odd side hug that turns into an embrace. Habakkuk breathes for the first time in days. They close their eyes, forehead to forehead.

Gomer: (laughing) k can we stay on task here? freaks?

Balaam: (under her breathe) shut up

Habakkuk: alright. so what do you need me so desperately for?

Balaam: we need to talk to Jez—okay before you cut me off—her death was a symbol. it was symbol of the way society betrayed her. she could've been a hero, a leader—

Habakkuk: come on Balaam. come on. she died from choking on a fucking cough drop. don't pretend like this was some human rights movement. she was a conservative white woman who didn't vote. yes she was cool, she was more than cool, she was everything. to all of us. and she was *kind*. but we can't keep like replaying our memories with her and pretending her life meant more than it did. if we're being honest, no one will remember her after Sammie dies. she's not in any history books. she's dead. she's dead and she wasn't special.

Balaam: clearly you don't get it. neither of you get it. I *need* something from her. information. and you know what if you won't help me get it, I'll do it my fucking self.

Balaam stomps offstage.

Habakkuk and Gomer awkwardly sit on the swings together.

Habakkuk starts laughing at seemingly nothing.

Gomer: (through a smile) what

Habakkuk: remember when you were a freshman, and you walked into my chemistry class all flustered and were like 'quick you're needed in the main office right now it's an emergency' and I thought my grandma died or I had detention or someone found out I plagiarized my creative writing essay or something and then you took me to the girls bathroom on the third floor. and then haha--then you gave me a freaking weed gummy bear--and I thought I was suuuuuch a baddass. we spent the rest of the day laying on the scalding hot concrete outside, staring at stars that weren't there.

Gomer: you remember all of that?

Habakkuk: of course I do. I may be a cold bitch now but I do still have a heart. I think.

Gomer: hm. wasn't aware.

Beat.

Gomer: (fishing) so...how's the hubby

Habakkuk: oh my GOD

Gomer: what!

Habakkuk: don't do that. don't do that Gomer.

Gomer: do what

Habakkuk: call him my ~hubby~. like some weirdo. like he's not my literal husband. we're married G. and it's serious.

Gomer: (making fun) oh its serious now is it?

Habakkuk: yes it is. It's serious Gomer

Gomer: well it didn't really feel serious a month ago. did it.

Habakkuk: don't go there.

Gomer: no I'm gunna go there. I'm allowed to. It's my life. it affects me. I care about you. I CARE about you. you and your music and your frizzy hair and the scar on your nose and the softness of the skin on your thighs. I care about it all. every inch. let me in. please. you're not happy. like really happy. I can see it. (studying her desperately) look! jesus christ look I just saw it now. in the corners of your beady little eyes. so why are you trapping yourself in this like-this façade of a relationship? get out. I'm offering you *me*, I'm offering you a way out. take it Habakkuk.

Habakkuk: that's not how it works. I have a life Gom-

Gomer: it is how it works—it's how it can work—

Habakkuk: I'm pregnant. Gomer.

Gomer: oh. oh my god.

Habakkuk: ya.

Gomer: (formally) um, that's—that's incredible.

Habakkuk: ya. thanks.

Gomer: wait so—

Habakkuk: (sternly) nope. no. we're not going to do that.

Gomer: okay.

Silence.

Habakkuk: okay well—um, I don't know where Balaam is so I'm gunna—

Balaam enters, panting, looking as if she's seen a ghost.

Balaam: sit. now. quick quick in a circle. Gomer gimme the key.

Gomer: what

Balaam: the key, around your neck, come on

Gomer: no it was hers

Balaam: exactly, give it to me, now

Gomer: okok

Balaam grabs the key and draws a circle in the dirt with it. She guides our unlikely trio to sit in a ceremonial, yet awkward fashion, holding hands.

Balaam: um, hey jez. hey. it was here. it was right here, on this dirt, where we first talked about it. we had just gotten back from freaking bible study, and you told me, you told me you thought that you were possessed by god. do you remember that? crazy bitch. you said it wasn't as dramatic as it sounds, but it just felt like, it felt like he was in you. like when you sat down to pray, you were praying to yourself. (laughing) you said it was even like you were psychic or like—all knowing or something. like you would ask god for something and it would just happen and it just like—it felt like too much power. too much responsibility. I guess that was your downfall. you were both the holy and the fallen angel.

They wait for a response. Silence. Obviously, nothing happens. Except that maybe the wind blows a little louder, or a car light turns on, or a siren goes off a few blocks down.

Balaam: Jez, please. PLEASE Jez. I'm not fucking around anymore. (under her breathe) did I do it wrong—maybe I should've—

Habakkuk: Balaam it's okay—

Balaam: no I think I should've—I should've made a smaller circle. I think I needed the make it more symmetrical too it's

like—it's like, FUCK I don't know. it should've worked. I'm sorry Jez, I should've—I should've tried harder I'M SORRY—

Balaam cries, surprising herself. She rolls into a ball, in the fetal position, like roadkill.

Balaam: (whispering to the sky) okay, I uh, I guess you're busy. I'm--I'm sorry to bother you.

Gomer: are you—are you okay.

Balaam: ya it's just uh—my, my stupid high is wearing off that's all. It's just--it's just that.

Habakkuk and Gomer quietly watch as Balaam pulls a pill bottle from her pocket and takes probably one too many.

Gomer: maybe we should take you home, okay?

Balaam: nah (cuddling up on swingset) I'll just sleep here. (laughing) wait wait guys—do you remember, at the funeral yesterday, when they played “a thousand years” as like some—homage to her? like literally the song from twilight. did she ever even say she liked that song? like literally what the fuck

Gomer: yo I have no idea, that was probably some evil scheme by my mom.

Balaam: ya, maybe.

Habakkuk: ok I'm gunna show you something. promise not to make fun of me.

Habakkuk pulls out her phone as she continues to speak.

Gomer: oh god

Habakkuk: wanna know a secret

Balaam: I don't know do I? jesus you're so extra it's exhausting

Habakkuk: I was the one playing it. the uh-the song from twilight. I told Cathy that I wanted to play at the service and she insisted I play *this* because I guess it was her favorite song? hard to believe but I wasn't gunna say no. I asked if I could play in the back so no one could see me, it would just, it would kind of ruin my reputation. but I wanted to do it. for Jez.

Balaam: how honorable of you. so why don't you prove it Mozart let's see

Habakkuk presses play on the video. The stupid pop song turns grim as the memories of the funeral come flooding back. As we watch our heroes crowd around the phone, they all of the sudden look very small.

Balaam: okok you can stop now. that was cute, I guess

Habakkuk: thank you. that's what I strive for as an artist. being cute.

Gomer's phone rings, he picks up the second he hears the noise—relieved for a way out.

Gomer: (pretending to have just been woken up) hi what. yes I'm at my dorm. fuck. I forgot you had my location turned on. like a stalker. ok fine. I'm with Balaam. yes I have her-it-in my trunk. ok I will bring it in the morning. what's wrong why are you calling me at 4am. oh. okay I'm sorry. I love you I'll be there soon. (hangs up) okay I need to go. my mom's been—she's been having these nightmares, about Jezebel, I just, I need to—

Habakkuk: no wait. please.

Gomer: now you want me?

Habakkuk: don't make it weird I just—I just want one more night. with us. I know I've been a bitch, and I kind of abandoned you, the past few months but—I love you. both. I think we need this night. just a few hours, to dedicate to her. or something.

Gomer: why are you just now caring? are you trying to live out your little fantasy of pretending we're like some friend group from an A24 movie—or—what's your game here I don't under--

Habakkuk: BECAUSE I FUCKING KILLED HER OKAY

Horrific silence.

Habakkuk: I mean I didn't kill her, I—I don't know. she called me. like two weeks ago. she said she had this nasty sore throat and she had to sing in church that weekend. it was for the offering, like when they ask for money. she just sounded so excited. I haven't heard her like talk like that in a long time. she wanted to know if any of the opera students I worked with

had a quick remedy. it was sweet, it made me feel—important. like she needed me. it reminded me of our freshman year at Oberlin, when I was like—her pseudo mom. I had to wake her up for class almost every day. I loved it. I like—I relished in every moment. so—I asked my colleague and she said there were these cough drops you can get from eBay that will like save your voice—so I sent her some. it wasn't a big deal, it was nothing.

Beat.

Habakkuk: knowing what I know now, I wish *I* was god. I wish I could turn back the dial and not do something so fucking stupid and mundane. I couldn't have stopped it, I know, in my head, logically--it's not my fault. I just, I supplied her with the thing that became her end. she choked on a cough drop. Jezebel, the christian INFP with a perfect little family died by choking on a cough drop. it just felt—lame. it felt like I subconsciously did it. I—I know I didn't want that obviously but like I also don't really know I mean—what am I capable of? it just--it felt like I was the beginning of her end.

Silence.

Balaam: I—I didn't know that.

Habakkuk: ya. (secrets spilling like word vomit) and I found out I was pregnant the day after she died. so.

Gomer: jesus—

Habakkuk: sometimes I think it's her--god I probably sound insane--inside of me. but I guess that's hopeful. it would be a reward I don't deserve.

Balaam: you didn't tell me

Habakkuk: I didn't think I had to.

Gomer goes and sits down next to Habakkuk, and gingerly holds her hand. She lets him.

Balaam: you know my last night with her was weird. like it was just--weird. she brought her kids to the trampoline park for Sammie's birthday, I guess she knew I was working, and afterwards she asked if I wanted to come over later--she was worried about me I guess. I said I would as long as Tyler wasn't there. as per usual. he's a prick. he was away on some "business trip." that night, she let me put Sammie to sleep. she let me, Balaam, take care of something that is rightfully hers. he felt so fragile, like he could break into a million shards of glass at any moment. I just wasn't--I wasn't worthy. after that I went into her bedroom and she just--held me. she like spooned me. she let me be the little spoon. I didn't feel embarrassed. I didn't feel like I couldn't move or itch my foot or shift my position. she didn't say a word. neither of us did. we didn't have to. I just felt the weight of her body on mine and we slept. I cried. I left the next morning before she even woke up and we never talked about it again. It was like she was this benefactor of comfort--for me. only for me.

Silence. Gomer digs the key out of the dirt.

Gomer: you know what this is for?

Habakkuk: what

Gomer: her jewelry box. how predictable. I mean she could have been a little more creative. I found it in her room the week after it all happened and something in me just told me to take it. eh I guess that sounds stupid, but, it's true. haha do you think she was hiding something bizarre in it like a lock of Tyler's hair or--

Balaam: do you have it? the box?

Gomer: ya it's in my car

Balaam: can we please--

Gomer: yes.

Gomer exits to grab the box, leaving Habakkuk to walk over to Balaam, silently kiss her on the cheek, and sit down next to her.

Gomer reenters.

Gomer: here

He opens the box. Gomer puts on a string of pearls and passes the box to Habakkuk. She pins a broach to her blouse. It's Balaam's turn to play dress up. She digs around, finding a note.

Balaam: It's--it's for me. Habakkuk will you--please read it.

Habakkuk:

dear Balaam,

the shape of your back is my home

at daybreak, it cradles me

tighter

tighter

tighter

I feel nothing

and absolutely everything

I memorize every vertebra

scan your bones with my brain

pressing the picture into my palm

for forever

at least I wish it so

the curve of your spine is my home

sincerely, Jezebel

Blackout//

Part II//

Minutes before Jezebel's death. Jezebel is at CVS. Lights up on her bedroom. Habakkuk and Gomer are sitting, weirdly formally, next to each other on the bed. Silence for what feels like upwards of three years.

Gomer: so do you—

Habakkuk: don't. you. dare.

Gomer tries to hold her hand. She karate chops him away.

Gomer: okay maybe you should just leave.

Habakkuk: goddd don't make me do it

Gomer: do what

Habakkuk: beg for you to let me stay. you know how this goes. I am immediately filled with disgust for you, but mostly me, then I disassociate, then I get really horny, then it all happens again. so let's just acknowledge we both know that and move on with our lives. okay, buddy?

Gomer chuckles. Habakkuk glares.

Gomer: buddy? so I'm your buddy now. interesting. buddy boy—like we're co gang members in the fifties or some shi--

Habakkuk interrupts him with a kiss. A sweet one. It's not sexy.

Gomer: thank you. buddy.

Silence.

Gomer: hah. Jez is gunna be so pissed.

Habakkuk: wait really

Gomer: um...ya? we just christened her christian bed with sinner's flesh on flesh. she's gunna be royally pissed

Habakkuk: well in her defense it's fucking weird and kind of gross we did this in her bed when your room is literally across the hall

Gomer: well you refuse to make loooooove to me on my-by your standards- "dirty sheets" so we had to make it work k?

Habakkuk: god you're so typical

Gomer: what does that mean

Habakkuk: the little annoying brother who likes to bother her. all she has ever done is love and accept you and treat you like her own son

Gomer: hey I know. I was just kidding. I know that. don't think I don't know that.

Habakkuk: defensive, are we?

Gomer: I'm NOT defensive. I just—I know. I know she loves me. I know she accepts me. she does fucking everything for me. she's like--my keeper. I don't need anyone else telling me that because I'm aware.

Habakkuk: okay. understood.

Beat.

Gomer: last night she burned my mac n cheese.

Habakkuk: (laughing) um—

Gomer: It's not funny

Habakkuk: (stifling laughs) okok it's not funny

Gomer: (laughing with her now) ok I guess that was extra. sorry. listen she was telling me about Tyler. have you ever heard her even talk about him?

Habakkuk shakes her head no.

During this speech, a burnt smell should enter the theatre. not enough to worry anyone. just enough for you to notice, and lock eyes with your neighbor to see if they notice too.

Gomer: ya. she said they were saying the lord's prayer before they fell asleep, and she--she messed up. she said 'the' kingdom instead of 'thy' kingdom, or something equally as stupid. it made him stop cold. he scolded her. like literally like "tsk tsk" like she's a child. like she said she felt like a child.

she was plagued with this like--intense weight of guilt. it pressed on her shoulders. she kept waking up in the middle of night, and she said it felt like fucking sleep paralysis or something. like jesus himself was sitting on her head. like jesus was poking her. stupid. I don't know. it sounds stupid now but it wasn't. it wasn't stupid it was scary. it was terrifying. and there was something about her that was like--different. like usually she has that 50s housewife robot vibe going when he's around, but he wasn't around. it was just her. and she still--she still was playing that part. like I'm not kidding it felt like she had a lobotomy or something fucking repulsive like that. why are those two living in the 20th century it's honestly embarrassing--for me. and for her. I don't know I'm starting to think it's not a part anymore--that it's--that it's her.

Silence.

Habakkuk: and the mac n cheese?

Gomer: (chuckling) ya well, she was telling me this while she was making my mac but she burned it. I was still pissed at her. like even after she told me THAT, I was still fucking livid that she burned my dinner.

Beat.

Gomer: am I a bad person?

Habakkuk: by who's standards?

Gomer: the christian god

Habakkuk: um yes for sure

Gomer: by you?

Habakkuk: only a little

Gomer wacks her with a pillow. It feels like a sleepover now.

Habakkuk: how dare you!

Gomer: what! I'm no pussy!

Habakkuk: (laughing) ooooh you're gunna regret that you frat boy piece of shit

Gomer: okay how DARE you think I'm in a frat

Habakkuk: hey I don't know what goes down at Carlow, maybe indie losers like you are let into frats there

Gomer: okay get over—

Habakkuk kisses him. They are interrupted by Habakkuk's phone ringing.

Habakkuk: what. yes. now? okay.

Blackout//

Part III//

One day before Jezebel's death. Jezebel is on a plane. Lights up on Gomer and Balaam in Jezebel's room. Balaam is frantically putting clothes away and making the bed. Gomer has beats on, watching something on his phone.

Balaam: scuse me, dipshit, would you like to help?

No response.

Balaam: HELLO. FUCKER. get. up.

Gomer: jesus, okay. since when are you type A

Balaam: since Jez is going to be here in thirty minutes and we left her-or shall I say-YOUR house a goddamn mess. I shouldn't have even stayed here I knew I was gunna fuck up her room.

Gomer: why do you care

Balaam: because she does a lot for us, mostly you, and we should at least attempt to do the same for her

Gomer: okok

Gomer makes a half-assed attempt at folding a blouse.

Balaam: you excited to see her?

Gomer: I guess. I don't know I mean she's my sister

Balaam: ya—you can still be excited

Gomer: I suppose. am I supposed to ask you if you're excited now?

Balaam: yes

Gomer: are you excited Balaam?

Balaam: not really

Gomer: shut up

Both smile.

Beat.

Balaam: bro does this room ever creep you out

Gomer: no

Balaam: really

Balaam starts casually looking through Jezebel's drawers. Not for anything in particular. Just annoyingly snooping.

Gomer: I mean I grew up with it, you know

Balaam: ya

Gomer: sometimes it literally felt like our mom was like hexing the house, or something. like the way she made us go to our knees and recite these fucking fantastical chants. bizarre. the

whole thing. there was this one story she read us in the book of--kings? maybe? it was about a woman who like split her baby in half so her neighbor could have part of it. Or something. like what the actual fuck? but I remember thinking it was fully justified.

Beat.

Gomer: I always found myself thinking coincidences were put in place by god. like I would pray about a test, I'd get a good grade on the test, then I'd be like oh yay love you god! but really I just fucking studied so of course I got a good grade. you know?

Balaam: creepy

Gomer: ya. it was. but Jez still believes it. she really really fucking does. but it's not judgmental. It's not controlling. It's naïve and innocent. I love her for it. she makes me hold onto all of the stories and brainwashing and bullshit. if I'm being honest. who am I to say what's real.

Balaam: ya.

Gomer: I feel kind of guilty we let her go though.

Balaam: I mean I don't feel responsible. it was all Tyler. Tyler knows it's wrong but still does it for clout. Jez is just ignorant. that sounds bad--not in a bad way. she just, she doesn't know any better. she's like some amish kid on rumspringa who just knows what her parents told her growing up and nothing else. besides, she doesn't have a twitter.

Gomer: right. how woke can we expect her to be.

Balaam: I'm just waiting for Tyler to show us pictures of the token children he claimed as his own little minions and be like "ya I built one singular shitty house for them and forced jesus down their throats. gimme a prize! oh! did I mention me building said house put their parents out of jobs? glory goes to god!"

Gomer: dumb bitch

Balaam: I know it's honestly gross.

Beat.

Balaam: do you think like—as the progressive little liberals we are—is it fucked up that we associate with them? like—they're lowkey modern colonizers. It's like they're like collecting pokemon cards of third world countries they've been to like—

Gomer: like "ooh! I brushed a little girl's hair in Kenya! I taught a full-grown adult man how to sing jesus loves me in Haiti! I swept the floor of one orphanage in Honduras! omg! I brought three binders seven pencils and nine notebooks to a middle school in china! let me into heaven! let me into heaven! tell me I'm kind and empathetic and sinless!

Balaam: but I really don't think that's why Jez does it I really don't

Gomer: ya but it's why Tyler does

Balaam: I guess

Gomer: are you defending him?

Balaam: no obviously not literally how dare you think that I just—I feel like there's gotta be some compromise

Gomer: what does that even mean

Balaam: you're his brother in-law. his kid's uncle. don't you feel like it may be time to give up the "who's the bigger man in 2020" fight

Gomer: wow

Ballaam: I'm just saying! like I obviously know it's you. obviously. you're queer and also have gotten four BuzzFeed articles published so like you win by default but that's just—not how his mind works. it might be time to just be the bigger person—not the bigger man.

Gomer: ya. I guess.

Gomer picks up his phone and starts scrolling.

Balaam: really?

Gomer: hm?

Balaam: don't do the shut-down thing

Gomer: what shut-down thing

Balaam: come on that's not fair

Gomer: I don't even know what you're talking about Balaam jesus

Balaam: you're literally scrolling on frickin TikTok while I'm trying to have a conversation about modern colonization and how it directly affects your family life—HELLO

Gomer: HOW DO YOU NOT EXPECT ME TO SHUT DOWN WHEN THAT IS OUR TOPIC OF CHOICE

Balaam: fair. okay fair.

Beat.

Gomer: so how's skyzone

Balaam: shitty. as per usual.

Gomer: how so

Balaam begins to open Jezebel's jewelry box. At some point during the rest of the scene, she tries on an earring, and it disappears. She thinks it fell off, but it's not on the ground. It's just nowhere. She's looking for it for the next however long it takes to find it. She never does. It's not a big deal.

Balaam: today I literally had to rip a girl's hair extension out from one of the loose tiles in the ceiling because she jumped really high and it got torn out and almost scalped her. it was

honestly kind of funny. might've been because I ripped the pen before but I don't know. Miranda's a bitch.

Gomer: is she manager yet

Balaam: ya started last week. on some power trip. if only she could see her basic Brandy Melville—lookin ass through my eyes. that'd knock her down a few pegs.

Gomer: lame

Balaam: I know. you going to Cruze with Connor and Ezra tonight?

Gomer: yep. they took my fake last time but I have a good feeling about it tonight. I even manifested getting my dick sucked.

Balaam: nice, I'm sure you will

Gomer: ya

We hear footsteps coming upstairs. Balaam quickly puts away Jezebel's belongings and pulls out her phone.

Blackout//

Part IV//

One month before Jezebel's death. Jezebel is downstairs making dinner. Lights up on Balaam playing scrabble on Jezebel's floor. By herself. Habakkuk is quietly whispering to herself with closed eyes, rapidly scribbling in a floral notebook, and whispering again.

Balaam: YES bitch double word score.

Habakkuk: those are Jezebel's letters.

Balaam: is it exhausting

Habakkuk: what?

Balaam: to have a ginormous stick up your butthole twenty-four hours a day?

Habakkuk: funny

Balaam: I'm not trying to be rude I'm just genuinely wondering

Habakkuk: my ass is doing just fine, thank you very much

Balaam: oh I know it is

Habakkuk: jesus christ I can't catch a break

Balaam: oh come ON I'm sorry

Habakkuk: you're just as bad as Gomer

Balaam: WOAH I take offense to that

Habakkuk: ya, you should

Time passes.

Balaam: why don't you take a hit

Habakkuk: um, because Jez is downstairs and I'm not an addict like you

Balaam: you pussy, the kids aren't even here and it's supposed to be a fun girls night. remember fun!! did you ever experience that?

Habakkuk: fine. tell no one.

Balaam: roger that

Habakkuk takes a tiny puff from Balaam's weed pen. She's doesn't cough at all.

Balaam: impressive. I take back when I called you a pussy a few seconds ago.

Habakkuk: I appreciate that

Balaam: I can't believe I cracked Mozart.

Habakkuk: oh shut up. I'm a lot cooler than you think

Balaam: oh really. when's the last time you smoked?

Habakkuk: yesterday.

Balaam: um what

Habakkuk: ya I smoked my monq

Balaam: your monq. is that like some kind of juul? damn I thought I was the generation z-er here

Habakkuk: no its like—its, it's essential oils. It's literally just essential oil and water vapor.

Balaam: oh

Habakkuk: ya

Balaam: well that's cool!

Habakkuk: okkk stop

Balaam: what

Habakkuk: you don't have to pretend I'm cool I know I'm not it just makes me feel alive and like a real person living in the real world when I'm with you. sometimes.

Balaam: oh! thank you, I guess

Habakkuk: not in a weird way. I'm just—I'm really trapped by my art and my apprenticeship sometimes.

Balaam: ya. I understand. my SoundCloud feels like it's like strangling me, sometimes, so—I get it

Habakkuk: right

Balaam: wanna play twenty questions

Habakkuk: what are we in seventh grade

Balaam: yes and my favorite color is mandarin orange! lol!

Habakkuk: shut up

Balaam: so pancake or waffle

Habakkuk: pancake

Balaam: ew you would

Habakkuk: what the fuck does that mean

Balaam: your boujee little self would pancake people! Don't you want to feel the intimacy of waffle??

Habakkuk: no. too vulnerable. I don't do that

Balaam: hm. figures. what does Joseph like?

Habakkuk: what

Balaam: what does he like

Habakkuk: I don't know

Balaam: you don't know?

Habakkuk: no I don't know

Balaam: well that's a little worrisome Mozart

Habakkuk: and why is that

Balaam: because he's your husband? and it's weird that you don't know what he likes?

Habakkuk: don't judge me Balaam, I can promise you I know what my fucking husband likes. especially physically. like with sex. so.

Balaam: k

Habakkuk: (knowing exactly what) what

Balaam: I just don't really know why you would say that to me

Habakkuk: say what to you

Balaam: be all sexual about Joseph around me

Habakkuk: why the fuck not

Balaam: you know why

Habakkuk: okay come on Balaam

Balaam: (nonchalantly) I'm just being real with you. you know how I am it's just inconsiderate. that's all.

Habakkuk: you can't have both

Balaam scoffs.

Habakkuk: seriously you can't. I love you. as a sister and friend. but there's nothing. you know that. and quite frankly it's unflattering when you seem to want to fuck every woman under the sun.

Balaam: wow. okay

Habakkuk: I'm just being real with you.

Balaam: nice. I can tell.

Habakkuk: look, I'm sorry I just—don't you want me to be honest? so you can like—grow?

Balaam: I guess

Habakkuk: Jez and I—even Gomer, we care about you. we want you to be okay.

Silence.

Habakkuk: okay I'm just gunna say it we were going to have an intervention. with you. all of us.

Balaam: excuse me

Habakkuk: I know, I know it's just—it might be time. it might be time to try rehab again—or at least—think about it.

Balaam: wow

Balaam starts packing her tiny backpack with her clothes and weed pen and dignity to leave the room.

Habakkuk: ok don't be dramatic Balaam you have to take some responsibility you brought this on yourself

Balaam: I brought it on myself?

Habakkuk: yes. you brought it on yourself.

Balaam: I—oh my god—I just—what makes you think—how do you think you can say that? you *know* the power you have over me. you *know* I hate every inch of who I am and I recognize I'm the biggest fuck up to ever come from this town so why—why is it just OKAY for you to be the one? let Jez do it. she doesn't play with me like we're twelve.

Habakkuk: and what does that mean Balaam

Balaam: it means—she doesn't kiss me on the cheek after I read a poem I wrote or glance at me absentmindedly while I'm changing into my pajamas or talk about her nasty sex life with me she just—holds me and doesn't make me feel guilty for it. I don't owe her anything.

Habakkuk: I don't do any of those things

Balaam: (enjoying this) oh but you do! you totally fucking do. and don't gaslight me and make me think you don't because you KNOW it will work. I just—maybe we need a time out I think I need a time out.

Habakkuk: Balaam don't do that

Balaam: I just need Jez I want to be with Jez (starts calling for Jez downstairs) Jez! can you come up here for a sec!

Habakkuk: no don't you dare bring her in to this she doesn't deserve it

Balaam: oh so you're gunna make me feel guilty for that too

Habakkuk is grabbing Balaam's shoulders. Her grip is tight.

Habakkuk: NO that's not what I'm doing she just—SHE DOESN'T WANT TO TOUCH YOU LIKE THAT AND NEITHER DO I. OKAY?

Balaam stares at Habakkuk as she breathes heavily. Balaam slaps Habakkuk. It hurts.

Habakkuk begins to laugh.

Balaam: oh my god. oh my god oh my god I didn't—that's not what I meant to—I didn't think I could do that I—

Habakkuk: don't. let's just not do it. let's just not do the whole thing. okay?

Habakkuk smiles at Balaam and smugly kisses her cheek.

Balaam casually grabs her bag, takes a hit, and heads to the door.

Balaam: k. well I'm gunna go. have fun with Gomer. oh, are you surprised I know? you shouldn't be. bye Mozart.

Habakkuk is left alone in Jezebel's room. We hear an unknown voice from downstairs yell the following: Habakkuk? Balaam?

Habakkuk slinks to the floor. She perhaps begins to cry. Something strange yet mundane happens. Maybe a rosary falls off the side table. Maybe the cross on Jezebel's wall turns a few inches. Maybe the bible that lays open on her desk flips a few pages. It's not magical. It's not holy. It just is.

Blackout//

Part V//

Present. The swingset. Balaam stands alone. She repeats the same ceremony we see in Part I. Her arms are outstretched, as if reciting a greek plea to the gods.

Balaam: the stench of french press coffee and dior are imprinted onto my breastbone. I can't get it off. I scrub, scrub, scrub. I think I'm numb now. or maybe you are. I can't tell.

Balaam sits on the grass, criss cross applesauce.

dear Jezebel,
the shape of your back is my prison
at sunset, it strangles me
tighter
tighter
tighter
I feel nothing
and absolutely everything
I memorize every vertebra
scan your bones with my brain
pressing the picture into my palm
for forever
at least I wish it so
the curve of your spine is my prison
sincerely, Balaam

She waits for something to happen. Nothing does. It's not sad.

Curtain//