



Jezebel

When Abraham was born, Nimrod's advisors wanted to kill him. He was hidden beneath the earth for thirteen years and didn't see the sun or the moon.

- Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, 1st Century CE

I am about to tell you something important, and I'm honestly not sure how much of it is true. If you don't believe any of it, you are a fool. If you believe everything I say, you are also a fool. It's about my childhood. Will you listen?

I was stuck in a cave for the first thirteen years of my life. My mom and dad and brothers could come and leave as they chose, but if I tried, there was some sort of force-field blocking me from leaving. I had my mother to take care of me, and my father took care of my brothers outside of the cave. I never saw the stars or the moon until I was thirteen. My mom died when I was almost thirteen. She did something right before she passed, as if she was possessed with some spirit or another, mustering all her dead might to soar out of her tiny little bed, boosting me over her head until her arms locked. She prayed, "Oh, this is my little sunshine! And every day my little sunshine pops up and around and around he goes." She kissed me all over my body. We were both clad in tatters with flesh peaking out of our clothes like "Hey there, I'm a knee," or "Hey there, I'm a belly button" or some such nonsense.

I said to my mom, "Let's pretend, mom! Let's just pretend forever and ever!"

"How, my little raisin?" she asked, "My little raisin, how will we pretend? Oh! I know!"

She set me down and grabbed my arms and spun me like a spinning dying crash-landing squawking bird and I was howling with happy. "Throw me!" I yelled and her grip I was released and launched off her fingertips and fell hard to the ground, getting a little bloody but I didn't care.

"Again! Again!" I said, still on the ground, and she worked through dizziness until she had to put me down. She fell and got back up and tried to walk forward but was all wobbly all

over her body, and I saw her dying sores popping out of the windows of her clothes like "Hey there, I'm dying."

When the dizziness left her, I piggy-backed on her up and down the cave. She bent forward and kissed my nose, upside down. "Let's be goblin-monsters!" she yowled.

I screamed, "Yeah! Yeah! Spin! Spin! Spin with all your might!" And she spun and we screamed like insane saints, like loopy loony holy-fools. And then she put me down and plopped herself on her little bed and said to me, "Listen to your father after I'm gone. I love you. The dead are more alive than the living. Goodbye," and she kissed me and she perfectly peacefully died just like that.

I cooed like babies coo and harp strings of my muddy snot burst out of my nose as I wheezed and coughed and mucus and my hehe flesh clung to the womb in the sky. I thought to myself, looking at her corpse, *Is God everywhere? Like, is God in a rolling ball, rolling around and around? Yeah, He is isn't He? Just rolling around inside the rolling ball. Was God in her illness? Sure, maybe I just don't see it yet. Was God in her death? Sure, He's just concealed. God is everywhere, in some form or some form or some form or some form or some form. . . everywhere!*

Yikes, I'm sorry. I traveled to la-la land for a moment there, didn't I? This is tough, and you're the first person I've talked to about this. I've been through hell, but it's all for the good. Everything was for the good. Every descent in my life was for an ascent.

To understand how I felt after my mother died, we need to go back a little bit. In the cave were cadaverous mazes in alcoves too deep to venture and labyrinths in corners too haunted to discover, but one day I ventured so far back and it makes me green thinking about it. I saw a

sopping wet albino mouse on its back, grotesquely pulsating its body and salivating making awful noises. She shook the water off and got on her hind legs and suddenly started dancing as if there was the softest melody somewhere, like she was happy and peaceful. I thought something was seriously wrong so I ran to my mom.

"Mom!" I called panicking.

"What's the problem?" she answered calmly

I said, "I just saw this, this mouse, if you could call her that. I don't know if she's okay. She looked crazy, like a wild wild animal. Her squeaking didn't sound right. Like real muffled but real loud. Mom, sh-she looked at me right in the eyes and her eyes were the probably the reddest things ever created and there was so much passion! But she doesn't know me! She couldn't be passionate, but she looked real real serious. Like I needed to know something!"

My mom petted my head, "Son, I saw that mouse too. She seems to do a sort of round over in that area of the cave every day. Who knows why. She's okay, I think. Don't worry."

"But why does she have to be so messed up? Who does she have to pet her head? Why was she so shortchanged? Why does she exist? Why is she so twisted?"

My mom said, "She exists to fight her battle. She just has a different battle than you do. Her soul picked this battle before she was born. It's a beautiful battle. The more twisted something seems, the more holy the war it is fighting."

"What do you mean, mom? What I saw was horrible."

"Maybe I'm just talking to myself. To tell you the truth, I don't fully understand why that mouse has to suffer, and it bothers me too. The harder the struggle, the stronger the individual, that's all I know."

I didn't see the mouse until a year later. I was lying down to go to sleep and she crawled over to me on her back. This time she was clean and smiling. I grabbed her by her neck fur. I looked into her ruddy eyes and asked, "What's your name, little one?"

I was just goofing, you know. I wasn't expecting an answer, but she said, "My name is Jezebel."

I was shocked, "You can talk! Tell me, why do you crawl on your back like that?"

She giggled, "Why do you walk on two feet?"

I giggled back, "Because that's how God made me!"

"You believe in God? I thought I was the only one!" she said.

I smacked myself on the forehead, "And I thought that *I* was the only one!"

We laughed.

She said, "I've seen you. I hide in this cave sometimes. I see you are sad. I will stay with you."

I said, "Really? What do you eat? I'll feed you."

"I can feed myself, don't worry. I'll just leave the cave when I need food. I am completely independent!"

I said to her, "We're going to be such good friends! We are going to talk all the time to each other!"

"No no no. I am a leper. That's why my fur is white and my eyes are red. I was exiled from all the mice communities. I plan to be silent here in the cave to atone for myself. I will be with you, though. I just won't speak to you except when you really need comfort."

"Why are you a leper?" I asked her.

But she didn't answer the question. She said, "I promise you that when your parents fight, I will come speak with you. The rest of the time I need to pray and meditate. Before I take my vow, I make one request. Would you dig me a little hole to sleep in? The gravel is too packed for me to dig with my little claws." She showed me her claws.

Of course she wasn't really talking to me. It was all my imagination. I invented Jezebel's personality out of necessity, because of my loneliness. She was a coping mechanism incarnated. I would pounce on her whenever my parents were fighting and I'd yell, "Talk to me!" Sometimes I even wanted my parents to fight, just to hear her voice. When they fought, Jezebel would tell me things like, "You are loved by God. You are loved by me! Your parents will stop fighting some day and they both love you! You have a lot to be happy about!" But sometimes logic and that little devil on your shoulder can become the same things, and Jezebel actually was that devil on my shoulder. She spoke little, but when she did, it was excruciating. Even the seemingly positive things she said always had veiled elements of darkness.

From the time I was six till thirteen, Jezebel and I were best friends. We played when my mom wasn't around. I would beg her, "Jezebel! I need company! I'm lonely. Can't you talk to me during normal times?" But she appeared not even to comprehend my question.

Over time she lost her independence and became domesticated and quite needy. She wouldn't sleep in her hole unless there was fresh packed straw in it. She needed special water and food. My mother had to collect bugs and grass for her to eat and she became fat. I had to tell her a story every night or she would peck at my face when I went to sleep. She began signaling that she needed massages. And I was happy to give them. It gave me something to do, but it was getting unhealthy.

One day I yelled at her, "Stop with all the gestures, if you need something, just say it, Jezebel! Tell me what you are really feeling!"

She drew the word NO in the dirt.

I should have killed her right then! The torture started off soft. She was a thin spider-web around my neck that I could have brushed off. But I didn't, and she would become my obsession. The web would transform into the thickest, tautest anchor rope dragging me into the depths of the turbulent sea. She was the visitor who overstayed her welcome and somewhere along the way would become my master. I would hold her close to my chest all day. I went to sleep holding her. I woke up holding her. This mouse was unique, and only I saw her profundities and sensitivities.

I spent about half my time with my mother when she was alive and the other half I played with Jezebel. I didn't see my father a whole lot, as he was always busy working and raising my two brothers outside of the cave. My mom spent time with my brothers too, but still had a lot of free time and spent most of it playing with me and teaching me Babylonian oracles. Yeah, I lived in Babylon, in Cuthah, where they worship Nergal, the king of the underworld.

My mother and father could never see eye-to-eye for very long and my mother, peace be upon her, didn't have any friends to vent frustrations to. She would come to me, desperate to be understood, wanting someone on her side. I started hating my father, even though he had never done anything wrong, so I wouldn't listen to him, and I went to Jezebel. When my father saw my dead mother, he broke down and carried her to the hole which he had already dug. I ran to the opposite side of the cave where Jezebel was sleeping. *If my mother has passed, I thought, then perhaps Jezebel has been released from her vow of silence! My parents can no longer argue!*

I woke Jezebel and said to her, "Talk to me! I need you!"

And she opened her mousey lips, "I'm sorry you lost your mom. Would you like to play with the ball?"

"Jezebel! You're speaking to me and my parents aren't fighting! Does that mean---"

"Woopsie-daisies, I guess I technically just broke my vow of silence."

"Let's play with the ball and talk!" I said excitedly.

And as my father buried my mother, we conversed and played with the ball. She looked me straight in the eyes as she kicked the ball. It was scary. Everything in the world just stopped right then. This was more fun than anything I had ever done! I shouldn't have felt as excited as I did to play with this tiny ball. . . but I shouldn't get mad at myself! It wasn't just playing with a ball. It was more than that!

Being in the cave for so long helped me learn how to appreciate the small things and to turn the mundane things into special things. But when I lost my mom, nothing was special

except for Jezebel. I thought to myself, *If Jezebel is here, there will always be new things I invent to keep going: some new project, some new plot, some game, some adventure, some future to trek, some past to erase.* I believed that if I worked hard enough, peace would somehow come from Jezebel. Three days after my mother's passing, in a state of crazed adoration, I woke Jezebel up and said to her, "Oh, my mouse. I love you more bottomless than heaven, but what are you doing to my silly, sepulchral soul? You aren't even real, are you? You're just a phantom, but I am staking everything on you!"

She showed me her teeth, "Stop it! Hide your bloodied, grinning chompers, oh they stab me stab me in the eyes in the eyes; hide your bloodied lips, bloodied from holy prostrations on your kowtow face with gums in sharp rocky pebbles and what the hell am I even saying anymore! I'm losing my mind for real this time!"

She started dancing and I said, "Oh, I love it when you dance, flailing yourself around and around looking like an angel grabbed your little paws and threw you up and you did endless silent flips as your lips totter up down left right. I can read your teeth chattering, prophesying 'world war, world war,' announcing my fate. Do you hate me? Stop it! Stop dancing! Stop doing what you're doing to my brain, don't you know you're hurting me?"

She stopped dancing and started squeaking. I said, "Your squeak boils me inside and chills me inside till I freeze inside and am reborn inside and then you damn me and you renew me and nullify and shatter me. You sustain me. You give me life. You petrify me. You putrefy me. You make me feel little again. You turn me feral!"

She signaled for a massage. I gave her one, "You know, every single damned kind of needle pokes at me when I trace my finger through thy labyrinthine, scarred body. Every damned feeling is felt as I grab at every single damned pockmark and contusion on your pathetic little face."

She opened her mouth, and I said, "Jezebel, open your slimy mouth wider and let me gaze inside. You certainly were the most precious figurine burned in the shop. Thy white fur is white fire and thy palsyng snow-ears are bottomless, and if I could, I would reach deeper and deeper inside and extract and grab all of your mysteries, and if I had the courage, I would reach out and touch thy jurassic claws which are condemned to quiver uncontrollably in this lifetime and even after death overtakes you, quivering and clutching and pining constantly for the nothingness of the great eternal abyss forever and ever, world without end."

She turned around and showed me her tail. I said, "Thy limp, clever-as-a-fox tail is the most horrible-holy thing I've seen. It writhes in the dust predestinating my every movement one way or the other, mumbling secrets only whispered about in the company of kings. Ever and anon I will avert my eyes from you, and that's when I feel as if I have taken my eyes off God, and that is when I see the pyre that this world is, and that is when I see that I am the one being cremated, and that is when I see why I need you so much, Jezebel! Never leave me alone in this garbage heap!"

I tried to grab a paw, but they were clutched so tight. I said, "What is this? Are all the secrets of the cosmos be locked so tightly and neatly in thy paws? You pain me to the marrow--- I'm thunderstruck when I glance at you and I pulsate and throb. Let me into your heart, into your brain, into your soul, I say. Regenerate me and slay me again, Jezebel, because I always die a

little, but you always resurrect me. The whole world was created, is renewed, and is sustained through your holiness, yet you bear the burden of every living thing! Jezebel, unleash your wisdom! Show your true self! Why do you just sit there licking yourself? Reveal thy glory!"

And there was so much psychic energy in the air that my soul left my body, and I was flying in the clouds for a while, where I met my spirit animal, which happened to be none other than Jezebel! This realization caused me so much confusion that I reverse astral projected back into my body, and when I saw the real Jezebel again, I was once so overtaken that I was transported to the clouds. So I went back and forth from the cave to the clouds for several minutes until Jezebel covered her face with a mask and I could look upon her veiled self.

"Jezebel, I love you! I am deranged without you!" I screamed.

"Okay. Thanks," she said, "I am going to go back to sleep. Would you wake me when your father brings food?"

I nodded. I was honestly expecting more of a response. She went back to sleep. And right then, a small monkey danced his way into the cave. He had with a triumphant grin.

"Who the hell are you?" I asked.

"My name is Booboo. You need some assistance, don't you?"

"Yes! I'm so messed up! It's like I have two people in me right now!"

Booboo said, "Everybody has two voices on their shoulder. Everyone has two people inside them."

I said, "How would you know? You're a monkey!"

"No I'm not. I am the good voice that was on your shoulder. I left your shoulder because you weren't listening to me. Jezebel has been blocking me for so long that when you were astral projecting, I left your body and possessed a monkey outside the cave."

"Really?"

"Yep."

"You know, I hate the bad voice! I try to throw away everything it tells me! It makes me feel icky."

"Don't get me wrong. The bad voice is my arch-enemy. . . but you should pay attention to everything that it tells you."

"What? Why would I do that?"

"Every single person is at war with that bad voice. If one's not fighting against it, then he is not truly alive. When a person's soul comes from it's lofty place, it chooses its own unique bad voice with its own unique desires and struggles. Always remember, these struggles come from a holy place beyond nature. Without the bad voice, how could be be good? Listen to what the bad voice is saying and fight against it. That is your purpose in life. This is a lofty, exalted, beautiful task! It's not at all icky. How could you possibly think that?"

"Jezebel is the only reason I'm thinking the thoughts I'm thinking now and she barely says anything! Booboo, I feel like my bad voice has left my shoulder and is living in her!"

"Duh. You just figured that out?"

"So it's true! Am I beyond hope?"

"Ha! Not at all! There is nothing on earth that can stand before human willpower!" said Booboo, "I've seen people project their insecurities and problems on stranger things. You should

have seen the last guy I was assigned to. He projected all of his problems on butter-biscuits. The more problems he had, the more biscuits he ate, until the biscuits killed him."

"I'll just pray more. I'll pray all the time and I won't look at Jezebel."

"Then you would just be projecting all your problems on prayer. There are people who pray all the time, and wear coarse clothing and fast, and when they die, the angels ask him, 'What the hell did you do, man? You didn't fight the battle you were made for!' This is a real battle and it takes complete selflessness to win." And the monkey disintegrated into thin air, which is puzzling, since Booboo had told me he had possessed the monkey. You would think the monkey would just return to its previous state when my Booboo left it. Regardless, Booboo was back on my shoulder, where he belonged.

I said, "Booboo is right. I have to get rid of her. I have to make a preemptive strike before she totally overcomes me and persuades me that I am worthless again!"

And in a moment of transcendent selflessness, I took the knife we had in the cave and plunged it into the sleeping Jezebel. I lifted the blade and wept. Her squirming body was suspended on the blade and she was cursing me, begging me to her last drop of life-blood that I should give up, that I should be so lukewarm. She died, and her blood-red, wide-open eyes became resigned. I dropped the knife and ran through the forcefield that was keeping me in the cave. I was outside for the first time in my life, and it was hot, and I was screaming. I saw the sun and the world, and a bunch of people from the town were running towards me, wondering who I was. I couldn't stop crying, and I ran from person to person, hugging them. The craziness was gone! I came back later and buried Jezebel. Call me crazy, but I believe that the sole purpose of being in that cave for all those years was for me to kill her.

Every now and then her ghost will come haunt me and tell me to be bad or feel bad for myself. Do I hate her? No. How can you hate a one legged dog? How can you hate a deformed child? I have to guard myself from loving her. I get real stern and say "Get the hell away from me!" Sometimes I want to love her ghost, but I am firm. She will usually leave me alone. Sometimes her ghost comes and pecks at my face at night. She wants me to tell her stories. And I do. Sometimes she comes and demands that I dig her a hole to sleep in. And I do. I don't mind it as long as I don't feel insane. As long as I have her under control.