

"THE ONE-EYED CAT"

By Rob Biesenbach

Characters

Sam - 20s/30s, smart odd, but not menacing

Sara - 20s/30s, his intellectual equal and emotional better

(Sam and Sara, strangers at an urban farmer's market. Sara is dipping into the free samples when Sam approaches.)

SAM

(Abruptly) You're not going to eat that, are you?

SARA

(Hesitates a moment, takes stock of Sam) Just watch me.

(She eats it, defiantly.)

SAM

You know if someone had told me you could fit a quart of guacamole on one chip, I would have said they're crazy.

SARA

What are you, a food cop?

SAM

More like an admirer.

SARA

Are you following me?

SAM

You remember! The bagel place. I *thought* we had a moment there, staring at each other through the glass?

SARA

Actually I was looking at my reflection, trying to dislodge a poppy seed from my teeth.

SAM

Oh.

SARA

How'd I do?

(She shows her teeth. He's momentarily disarmed by her lack of self consciousness, then leans in to check.)

SAM

Um, all clear. (Collects himself) So ... now here we are together again at the Farmer's Market. Doesn't that tell you something?

SARA

That you're stalking me?

SAM

Technically, it's not stalking - at least as defined by the laws of this state ...

SARA

That's comforting.

SAM

I'm not dangerous.

SARA

Oh, I know that.

SAM

(Disappointed) Oh.

SARA

(Comforting him) Maybe a little ...

SAM

You're very pretty.

SARA

(Flattered but suspicious) Thank you ...

SAM

You remind me of my ex-girlfriend!

SARA

Oh! Joy! Just the words that every girl wants to hear!

SAM

No?

SARA

NO!

SAM

Oh. (Long pause) Excuse me.

(He reaches out to touch her, she lets him.)

SARA

Um, can I help you with something?

SAM

It's just - you've got a ... hair from some sort of ... animal on you.

(He gently plucks it off her sweater.)

SARA

Oh. That would be cat hair. Thank you.

SAM

How come it's called fur when it's on them, but hair when it's on you?

SARA

Why does a lemon peel become a rind when it's in a recipe?

SAM

(Pauses to consider, gives up) So you have a cat.

SARA

Cats.

SAM

More than one? How many?

SARA

Seven.

SAM

What?

SARA

No, just two.

SAM

Oh.

SARA

Three, actually.

SAM

It's really 14, isn't it?

SARA

Two are permanent, one's just ... a boarder.

SAM

You're one of those crazy cat ladies, aren't you?

SARA

Define crazy.

SAM

Oh, I wrote the book on crazy.

SARA

Is that right?

SAM

A couple of chapters at least ... let's see, I'm picturing cats all over the place, walking on the kitchen counters, dipping their heads in the spaghetti pot, you dress 'em up in little outfits at holiday time ...

SARA

Actually, the boarder's not going to make it to the holidays - she's got feline HIV.

SAM

Oh. I'm sorry. (Pause) So you took her in ...

SARA

To give her a little comfort and peace until ...

SAM

Right. (Pause) I'm Sam. (Pause) And you are ...?

SARA

Attempting to eat my weight in free condiments.

SAM

And I'm bothering you.

SARA

Only a little. I'm Sara.

SAM

Sara. With or without an "h?"

SARA

Without. Thank you for asking.

SAM

To be honest, I'll probably forget.

SARA

But at least you made the effort.

SAM

Yes, exactly! I knew you were the kind to appreciate the gesture. See, I know a lot of Saras.

SARA

But none like me.

SAM

No, none like you. (Pause, they have a small moment, then he shifts out of it.) And they all spell it differently - you girls should really get together on that.

SARA

Come up with a uniform standard?

SAM

Precisely. Like the Sams - we've really got our act together - S-A-M.

(She goes to inspect some produce)

SARA

Yes, well, that's very Sam-like behavior, isn't it?

SAM

You got our number.

SARA

OCD.

SAM

Tip of the iceberg ...

SARA

So this ex-girlfriend ...

SAM

What ex-girlfriend?

SARA

The fiendishly attractive one who resembles me?

SAM

Oh, her ...

SARA

How long's it been?

SAM

My God, don't tell me you're going to eat that!

SARA

Of course not, it's a gourd.

SAM

A gourd?

SARA

One of a species of various inedible, flowering plants -

SAM

I know what a gourd is. (Pause) At least I thought I did. I guess I've never seen one quite so ... large ... and purple ...

SARA

(Approvingly) It is odd, isn't it?

SAM

And a bit intimidating ... at least get a decent one - that one's all flat and brown on one side.

SARA

I like it. It might make a ... handsome doorstop.

SAM

(Smiling) Am I your gourd?

SARA

You would make a very problematic doorstop.

SAM

I do get a little antsy.

SARA

So how long?

SAM

These avocados are so obviously not locally grown. Avocados come from California. I pronounce this whole farmers market an utter sham.

SARA

They're grown indoors. In greenhouses. Since you broke up. How long?

SAM

Year-and-a-half.

SARA

YEAR-AND-A-HALF?

SAM

Okay, two.

SARA

It's 14, isn't it?

SAM

No, just two ... See, they say that, to really get over someone, it takes one month for every two that you were together and, well, we went out for three years so that makes ... um ... 18 months, so ... well, I guess if you add it up I am a little overdue, but ...

SARA
You think a lot, don't you?

SAM
Doesn't everybody?

SARA
Not like you.

SAM
No, not like me ... you find this ... alluring, yes?

(She smiles slightly, goes back to
examining the produce.)

The truth of the matter is ... I was kind of depressed.

SARA
Oh, come now. Depression is nothing that vitamins and a little
exercise won't cure.

SAM
Thank you, Doctor Cruise.

(She stops.)

SARA
So, really? Clinically?

SAM
Yes. It's a ... recurring theme in my life.

(Pause. She goes back to the produce.)

SARA
Were you in love?

SAM
No.

SARA
NO? Three years together, and you weren't in love?

SAM
I'd rather talk about us.

SARA
There is no us. Besides, you brought it up.

SAM
Are these zinnias?

SARA

They're gerber daisies. Answer the question.

SAM

(Pause) I thought we were. You're sure they're not zinnias?

SARA

Positive. See, the petals are all different. But what ... ?

SAM

(Firmly) But it turns out we weren't.

SARA

Oh. (Pause) I'm sorry.

SAM

Thanks. (Pause) So, what do you think about our future?

SARA

Doomed.

SAM

Doomed?

SARA

Utterly and entirely.

SAM

Oh. See, I think you offer everything I could possibly want in a rebound relationship.

SARA

This has all the makings of a total disaster.

SAM

I suppose. I like that, though. Actually, I thrive in an environment of reduced expectations.

SARA

You should really prosper in this situation, then.

SAM

Oh, believe me, if you expect nothing of me, you won't be disappointed.

SARA

On the other hand, this does carry the side benefit of upsetting my mother ...

SAM

Oh, I like a good cause. So you'll see me?

SARA
I'm gonna buy that gourd.

(She opens her wallet.)

SAM
That wasn't the answer I was expecting. You carry photos of your cats?

SARA
Doesn't everybody?

SAM
Right. So NOT the crazy cat lady. May I?

(He reaches out, she hands photos to him.)

SAM
Laminated - nice touch. (Winces) Ew!

SARA
What?

SAM
That one's got only one eye!

SARA
I'm aware of that, yes.

SAM
How did it happen?

SARA
I don't know.

SAM
So he's the new one then? With HIV?

SARA
No, he's one of the permanent ones. He was like that when I picked him out at the shelter.

SAM
Hold on a minute. So you went to the shelter, had your choice of any number of two-eyed cats and you went home with ... Captain Morgan here?

SARA
He had the best personality.

SAM
Oh, that old line. I get that all the time: "He's got bad teeth, and just the one eye but oh, what a winning personality!"

SARA

And if I didn't take him, who would?

SAM

Right. (Pause) Here, let me pay for your gourd.

SARA

Silver-tongued devil.

(As he reaches out to pay she sees a wristband on his wrist.)

SARA

What is that wristband? One of those "Live Strong" knockoffs?

SAM

Uh, no. It's sort of a ... membership thing.

(She takes his wrist and reads.)

SARA

"St. Francis Xavier Cabrini."

SAM

Patron saint of lost causes.

SARA

Is that the ...

SAM

Loony bin? Yes. I, um ... I check myself in, from time to time, when things get a little ... too much?

SARA

I see. (Pause) Is that ... everything?

(He shakes his head no.)

Right.

SAM

I'm a little more trouble than a cat.

SARA

It's not that, it's -

(He steps forward, as if to kiss her and she instinctively steps back. He's unsurprised.)

SARA

Look, I should be -

Going?

SAM

Yeah. (Pause) I'm sorr-

SARA

Shh! It's okay, cat lady.

SAM

(She departs, leaving him on stage.)

Lights out.