

The Harlequin Maneuver
Written By Don Nguyen

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(Music from "Gone With The Wind" plays in background, slowly fading out as lights come up on a beautiful sunset vista. Fabreze and Jezebel are locked in a tight embrace. Fabreze is dressed in a nice flowy, button down shirt. Jezebel is dressed in a nice flowy button down dress. This is harlequin romance at it's finest - or cheesiest.)

JEZEBEL

(With a southern accent)

Oh my dear Fabreze. It's been so long since we've seen each other. So long indeed.

FABREZE

Time was our greatest enemy. But love conquers the test of time. And we have passed that test.

JEZEBEL

My sweet, sweet Fabreze. I could just eat you up, my big hunk of cornbread. Gobble gobble.

(Gnawing on his neck)

FABREZE

Likewise my sweet mint julep.

JEZEBEL

You're the man of my dreams

FABREZE

You're the woman of mine.

JEZEBEL

You're my little snake in the grass.

FABREZE

You're my little fox.

JEZEBEL

You're my big big firecracker. Kaboom! Oh, say something smart and intelligent my darling. Give me something to ponder.

FABREZE

Have you ever thought what the speed of lighting would be without all those zig-zags?

JEZEBEL

Oh! Stella for star! Take me now Fabreze. Take all of me. I surrender.

FABREZE

Sweet, sweet surrender.

JEZEBEL

No, wait. I'm going to put up a fight.

FABREZE

You want it rough.

JEZEBEL

Oh yes! Yes! Rough as a Mississippi outhouse!

FABREZE

You like it.

JEZEBEL

(Feigning)

No, I don't. I don't like it. You monster!

FABREZE

You want it. You want more of it.

JEZEBEL

Damn you and your sweet tender loins. I said no. I mean no.

FABREZE

Your lips say no. Your eyes say maybe. But your body says -
oui!

JEZEBEL

(Shaking her head with each "NO")

Oh no. Oh no, no, no, no, no.

(They move closer together)

JEZEBEL (Continued)

Oh oui, oui, oui, oui!!!

(They lock lips)

JEZEBEL (Continued)

I love you. I've always loved you.

FABREZE

Now, I will show you...Paradise.

JEZEBEL

Take me mon cheri. Sweep me away on your golden chariot of
love.

(Fabreze sweeps her off her feet. Cue cheesy
romance music. Fabreze starts to cross off
stage. Stan appears. He appears in regular
street clothes)

STAN

Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop right there. You've got to be joking. This is ridiculous!

JEZEBEL

Why Fabreze. Who's that man over there? Is he one of your servants?

FABREZE

I've never seen him before in my life.

STAN

This is a load of crap.

JEZEBEL

Why, whatever do you mean?

STAN

You love him?

JEZEBEL

Why I must say, I believe you've been eavesdropping on us.

STAN

Eavesdropping? I've been reading this crappy book for the last two and a half hours.

FABREZE

Book? What book are you talking about?

STAN

This book. This entire thing. You guys are just characters in a story.

(And you suck!)

JEZEBEL

Fabreze, I believe your man servant has lost his mind.

STAN

The only thing I've lost is \$7.95 and two and half hours of my poor miserable life.

FABREZE

(To Jezebel)

What is he talking about?

STAN

(To Jezebel)

Do you honestly love him?

JEZEBEL

Well, of course. You heard me say so, you big fat yankee spy!

STAN

He's been with other women. He'll be with another one as soon as he's done with you.

JEZEBEL

Well, of course he will. He is the great Fabreze.

STAN

How can you say you love him while he goes out with other women?

FABREZE

Because, I am the great Fabreze. Like she said.

STAN

(To Fabreze)

First of all, change your name.

(To Jezebel)

And second. If people really love each other, they would not go off and be with other people. That is not how it's supposed to work.

FABREZE AND JEZEBEL

It's not?

STAN

No. Relationships are personal bonds of love between two people.

JEZEBEL

Well, this is all we know. This is all we've ever done.

STAN

You're lucky. You're lucky that you two don't have complicated lives. That you two don't care for each other, that you two don't hurt. Don't cry.

FABREZE

What is it that you want...Mister...Uhhmm

STAN

It's Stan. My name is Stan.

FABREZE

Yes, Stan. Thank you. What exactly do you want Stan?

STAN

What do I want?

(Thinks a long hard minute)

STAN (Continued)

What do I want?

(MORE)

STAN (Continued)

I want to be able to stitch up my insides, nice and tight so my guts don't spill out all over the place, along with my heart and humility. I want all the grays in my world to turn into reds and blues and deep shades of green. I want the cold ice inside my lungs to melt away. Vaporize so I can breath again. So I can stand up from inside a four foot tall room called loneliness. That's what I want.

FABREZE

Jesus Stan. If you wanted closure, all you had to do was say so. You don't have to be so graphic about it. Oozing guts and hearts? Jesus.

JEZEBEL

I feel badly for the lanky man, Fabreze.

STAN

Thank you.

JEZEBEL

How long were you two together?

STAN

Almost three and a half years.

FABREZE

How long since she left you?

STAN

Almost three months ago. My doctor says it takes exactly two weeks for every month of a relationship to get over that person. I figure I've got roughly a year and half to go.

FABREZE

Well, let us know how it all turns out. Good to meet you.
(Taking Jezebel by the hand)

JEZEBEL

Wait, we can't leave him here like this. We need to help him.

FABREZE

What can we do? We don't know his wife. We don't even know him.

STAN

(to himself)

She said "No more words."

JEZEBEL

Stan?

STAN

She said "No more words" and I believed her.

JEZEBEL

Stan, how can we help you?

STAN

I believed her, and I gave up. I didn't put up a fight.

FABREZE

He's koo koo.

STAN

I just laid down like a sick dog. And she went away. She just went away. Away.

JEZEBEL

(Shaking Stan)

Stan? Stan! Snap out of it!

(She slaps him)

STAN

Ow!!! Jesus. You didn't have to hit me.

JEZEBEL

I'm sorry, you were losing it.

STAN

I was having an introspective moment to myself. Jesus. I think I broke a filling.

JEZEBEL

I'm sorry. I don't know my own strength.

(turning to Fabreze)

It's the fire inside us southern women. We're all dragons Fabreze. Fire breathing dragons.

STAN

Let's just get down to business, okay?

FABREZE

Yah.

STAN

(directing the two of them)

Okay. You, Sasquatch.

FABREZE

It's Fabreze.

STAN

Right. Sorry. Okay, you, stand over here.

STAN (Continued)

And...Jezebel. You are back here.

(He moves her offstage)

Good. Okay. Now, you are going to call him Stan.

(to Fabreze)

And you are going to call her Samantha. Now. Picture this.

It's Sunday. Raining.

(We hear rain)

You're waiting for her. She's just a few minutes late, but a feeling of dread starts to creep up on you. You're scared she'll show up...and you're scared she won't.

FABREZE

I do not understand.

STAN

Just go with it.

FABREZE

Where are we at?

STAN

A small coffee shop. Quiet and neutral. That's what she wanted. She's coming to give you some mail that was delivered to your...I mean, to her place. It's the last reason to see each other. You both know that. Now, the waiting gets longer and longer. You start to pace.

(Fabreze starts pacing)

You check your watch. She's not coming. You decide to leave, thankful that you didn't have to go through this moment.

(Fabreze starts to exit)

STAN

Then she walks in.

(Jezebel enters. Fabreze and Jezebel look at each other, both being overly dramatic)

STAN (Continued)

No. Not like that. This is not a romance novel.

FABREZE

Well, technically it is.

STAN

Let's do it again. Try to be real.

(Fabreze starts pacing again, as Jezebel exits)

STAN (Continued)

Okay. She isn't coming. You decide to leave. Thankful that you didn't have to go through this moment.

(Jezebel enters and they look at each other. This time, reacting a little more natural. All is well until Jezebel opens her mouth)

JEZEBEL

Fabreze, my darling. I'm so sorry I'm late. Please forgive me.

STAN

No! Not like that. Do it again. Drop the southern accent.

(JEZEBEL gasps in disgust)

Please. For me.

(JEZEBEL agrees, and exits again.)

STAN (Continued)

(To Fabreze)

And you. Talk normal. You two must feel this moment. Make it genuine. Okay, again from the top.

(Fabreze starts again, and Jezebel enters. This time, they see each other and take a moment)

JEZEBEL

(Without the southern accent)

Hello.

FABREZE

Hello.

JEZEBEL

Sorry to keep you waiting.

STAN

Tell her it's okay.

FABREZE

It's okay. It's fine. I wasn't waiting that long.

JEZEBEL

Here's your mail.

(She hands it to him)

FABREZE

Thank you.

(JEZEBEL starts to exit)

STAN

Don't let her go!

FABREZE

Wait. Wait.
(Jezebel turns)
You look great.

JEZEBEL

Thank you. So do you.

FABREZE

Can we talk?

JEZEBEL

There's nothing left to talk about.

FABREZE

There's everything to talk about.

JEZEBEL

Let's not do this. I just came to deliver your mail.

STAN

You're losing her.

FABREZE

You came because you wanted to see me one last time. Because even though you've made up your mind about us, you haven't made up your heart.

STAN

That's good.

FABREZE

What did I do to cause you to change your feelings about me?
What did I say?

JEZEBEL

Maybe it's what you didn't do. What you didn't say.

FABREZE

So tell me, and I'll do it.

STAN

(to Jezebel)

Give him something. He deserves a reason.

JEZEBEL

(Thinking hard)

It's not you. It's me.

STAN

That's a cop-out.

JEZEBEL

Okay, it's not me, it's you.

STAN

No! God, this is not going to work.

JEZEBEL

Take me in your arms Fabreze.

STAN

No, she wouldn't do that.

JEZEBEL

Just trust me.

(Fabreze takes her in his arms.)

JEZEBEL (Continued)

Now, pretend you're going to lose me forever. Say something to me.

FABREZE

If there was one thing I could say to get you to stay, I would. If there was one thing I could do, I would. But I know I can't. I can't change the world for myself. I can't make you change your decision. So smile one last time for me. I miss that smile.

(They move in to kiss. Samantha enters)

SAMANTHA

Whoa! Hold on a second.

STAN

Samantha?

SAMANTHA

Stan.

STAN

What are you doing here?

SAMANTHA

I'm reading the same book. Listen, you can't just change the ending of someone else's story like this.

STAN

But...how can you be here? This is absurd.

SAMANTHA

Not anymore absurd than you being here. I want you to stop all this--

(She sees Jezebel)

Oh, so that's what you look like. Hey, weren't you also Darlene Remington in Memories at Midnight, and the beautiful librarian Angela Snowe in the Driven Snow?

JEZEBEL

(With a southern accent)

Why yes I was. I really felt Angela Snowe's internal conflict was more believable after the cancer scare.

SAMANTHA

Oh, me to. You were so brave during that time. It really gave me a lot of strength.

JEZEBEL

Oh thank you. You know, I can just touch one person's soul-

STAN

Do you two mind?

JEZEBEL

Sorry.

SAMANTHA

Well, I can't stay. I just wanted to tell you a few things before I leave.

STAN

Don't go.

SAMANTHA

I have to. Listen. I've going to tell you three things. You must listen carefully because I'm not going to repeat it. One, you did absolutely nothing wrong that stopped me from loving you. Two, there is nothing wrong with your physical or emotional makeup that renders you unlovable. And three, I am not going to change my mind. Don't think that breaking up with someone is easier than getting broken up with. It's not. I hurt and I cry a lot. You have to move on. This is not healthy. Not for you. Not for me.

STAN

But, I just wanted one last chance. To make it right.

SAMANTHA

It is right. It may not feel so now, but in time, you'll agree.

OMNIPOTENT VOICE

"Now boarding rows A through E for flight 357."

SAMANTHA

That's my flight. I've got to go.

STAN

You're leaving?

SAMANTHA

Yes.

JEZEBEL

On a jet plane?

SAMANTHA

Yes.

FABREZE

Don't know when you'll be back again?

SAMANTHA

Nope.

STAN

Samantha, I just let me say something...

SAMANTHA

No more words Stan. No more words. Good-bye.

STAN

(Long pause)

Good-bye.

(Samantha exits. Music from "Leaving on a Jet Plane" softly plays in the background)

STAN (Continued)

That's it. There's nothing more to do. I couldn't change things, one way or the other.

FABREZE

We're sorry Stan.

STAN

No. It's okay. Now I know. Thanks for helping me. Maybe I will finish this book. She always read these things.

JEZEBEL

Why did you start reading them.

STAN

I guess I just wanted to understand a small part of her. This seemed like a good start.

JEZEBEL

It was nice meeting you.

STAN

You too. Thanks for helping me. I think I can move on now. Good-bye.

(Stan exits)

FABREZE

Well, it certainly has been one crazy day.

JEZEBEL

Yes. It has. You know, I think I just want to be alone right now.

FABREZE

Yeah, me too.

(pause)

I'll go with you.

JEZEBEL

Okay.

(They both exit. Blackout)