



The Greatest **SARAH** **SILVERMAN** **STORY**

Ever Told (Or Close To It)

There is more to Sarah Silverman than just “fake-racist meta-jokes” and fucking Matt Damon. There are also doody jokes. But seriously, folks, after 34 episodes of *The Sarah Silverman Program*, 30 movies, two Emmys and one memoir, she’s just getting started. On the doody jokes. Just kidding. You’ll see.

BY JONATHAN VALANIA / PHOTOS BY AUTUMN DE WILDE

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Sarah Silverman *is not* a cunt.

There, I said it. Why, you ask? A perfectly reasonable question. I will tell you why. First of all, because it's true. But more importantly, I just have a gut feeling that at least one Sarah Silverman magazine profile in the history of Sarah Silverman magazine profiles should start with that sentence, and why not The Greatest Sarah Silverman Story Ever Told? And as of right now, we are officially all-in/doubled down/completely committed to being that story.

(It's OK, I ran it by her and she's fine with it. I am a gentlemen, after all.)

When I meet Sarah Silverman for the first time, she is coming out of the bathroom. It seems somehow fitting. Her sets are rife with grimy bathroom humor, "doody" is her favorite word, and she's been telling audiences as of late that she wants to make a phone app "that will let you know when your friends are shitting." For the first and probably last time in my life, the prospect of asking a complete stranger if she made a doody actually seems like not just a good idea, but a great one. Still, I think better of it and it passes. Probably all for the best.

Like everyone on TV, Sarah Silverman is smaller and more vulnerable in the flesh. She looks trim, adorable and 10 years younger than her 43 years—which she chalks up to her zero intake of booze or meat. And yet, upon closer inspection, something is wrong. There is a dull black bruise under one eye. There is something deeply disturbing and angry-making about a woman with a black eye. Right away, your jaw clenches and your hands ball up into fists. All you want to know is who did this and where is he now.

"Oh, shit. I keep forgetting how crazy I must look," she says, when I ask what happened. "I tried covering it. This is with cover-up on. I thought it'd be gone by now. I got a concussion playing basketball—like, I just landed on my head."

It is the middle of August and we are backstage at Susquehanna Bank Center in Camden, N.J., where Sarah is performing as part of Oddball Fest, Funny Or Die's moveable feast of comedy, featuring state-of-the-art stand-up practitioners circa now, people like Louis C.K., Amy Schumer, Bill Burr and Aziz Ansari.

We sit down on Sarah's dressing room couch and chat about her career (in less than two weeks, she will win her second Emmy and be tapped to host *Saturday Night Live*), her dad ("Hey, he does look like Harry Dean Stanton, now that you mention it"), her weed (never before a show; no regrets about showing America her pot pipe on the red carpet at the Emmys—it's legal in California), her vegetarianism ("I don't eat meat or fish, but I eat dairy and eggs. I don't eat anything dead, but

I'll eat it if it comes out of an animal's boobs or vagina."), where she draws the line in pursuit of a laugh ("Nothing's off limits if it's funny enough, and it doesn't make me feel more rotten than excited to tell it. That's the only gauge you can really go by."), her nervousness about her impending appearance on *The Howard Stern Show* ("It's my first *Stern* being with Michael").

Michael is esteemed actor Michael Sheen, born in Wales, graduate of London's Royal Academy Of Dramatic Art, three-time BAFTA nominee, better known in the U.K. for his stage work, probably better known in this country for playing David Frost, Nixon's chief interrogator in *Frost/Nixon*, and Tony Blair in 2006's *The Queen*. Or his current incarnation as *Master's Of Sex's* titular Dr. Masters. (Sarah played Betty's ex-GF Helen for two episodes this season, and is expected to return next season.)

In some quarters, he will be better known for being Kate Beckinsale's main squeeze/baby father from 1995-2003. In a few weeks, *Stern* will point out that Kate Beckinsale is one of the most gorgeous creatures on the planet, and ask if Sarah feels intimidated by that fact. This is one of those car-bomb questions *Stern* likes to drive into guests, one of the questions she was dreading, but she defuses it like Jeremy Renner in *The Hurt Locker*. You can almost hear the gears turning. Do I cut the red wire—threaten to scratch that bitch's eyes out? Or the blue wire—acknowledge Beckinsale's extraordinary beauty, but instead of being intimidated, take the high road and say she's flattered that her boyfriend is surrounded by all these beautiful creatures, "and he chose me!" She snips the blue wire and ... nothing happens. Defused. Crisis averted.

She has a cute story about meeting Sheen that she clearly loves to share, so let's indulge her:

"We were fixed up, without knowing it, by Mark Flanagan, who owns Club Largo in L.A. I did a benefit show there that I will talk about tonight if I remember, and he was there. Flanagan introduced us, and the next day, Flanagan was like, 'He has a crush on you!' And I was like, 'Oh, he's cute.' And then, without me knowing, he told Michael, 'She has a crush on you.' He connected us by email. We went out to dinner, and we were both so confident, because we thought the other one had a crush on us. It wasn't true. It wasn't not true. It wasn't until his 45th birthday dinner, and one of his friends said, 'How'd you meet?' And I was like, 'I'll take this: Michael had a crush on me, and he told Flanagan, and they made a plan for him to come to one of my shows.' And Michael's just politely listening, and then he was like, 'That's not true.' It was so embarrassing."

And then Louis C.K. walks in to the dressing room. Just to say hi. This almost never happens to me.



Being Sarah Silverman looks easy these days, what with the Emmy for *We Are Miracles* and the SNL host slot and her *Stern* appearance and her memoir (2011's *The Bedwetter: Stories Of Courage, Redemption And Pee*) and the TV show (*The Sarah Silverman Program*, which ran from 2007 to 2010) and the movies (30 since 1997, and two in the can) and fucking Matt Damon, etc. But that was not always the case.

She was born in New Hampshire, the youngest of three sisters (Susan, who grew up to be a rabbi in Jerusalem; Jodyne, who grew up to be a screenwriter; and Laura, who grew up to be an actress and would play Sarah's sister on *The Sarah Silverman Program*). Her mother taught theater and was George McGovern's official campaign photographer (when he ran against Nixon), and her father owned a small chain of discount ladies apparel called Crazy Sophie's. Her parents divorced when she was six, which was right about the time she started wetting the bed, a chronic condition that she would not grow out of, literally, until her late teens.

Sarah suffered bouts of clinical depression, a condition not soon alleviated by her search for professional help. One shrink hung himself while she sat in the waiting room; another put her on Xanax and continued to up the dosage until 14-year-old Sarah Silverman was popping 16 Xanaxes a day. A third shrink, displaying a moral clarity and professional judgment heretofore not encountered by Sarah or her parents, pointed out that prescribing a 14-year-old girl 16 Xanaxes a day is a dereliction of duty verging on child abuse, and slowly weaned her off. In time, Sarah came back from the pharmaceutical twilight zone and finished out her school days reasonably well-adjusted, socially engaged and happy.

Invariably in the biography of all great artists, there is a period of childhood illness and social isolation that triggers an inward stare and the precocious development of a rich interior life. It is then that said artist discovers a tremendous latent aptitude, and the time and space to develop it. When Sarah was five years old, she got her first taste of the kind of reactions you could get from telling a joke—specifically a joke that steps on the third rail of taboo, a joke that speaks the unspeakable. In 1965, five years before Sarah was born, her brother Jeffrey asphyxiated in his crib while in the care of her Nana and Papa. Obviously, this tragedy devastated the Silverman family. Fast forward to 1976. Five-year-old Sarah is sitting in the backseat of her Nana's dark blue Cadillac Seville with her sisters. She'd been getting big laughs by blurting out things like "I love tampons!" or her adorable enunciation of the swear words her father taught her when she was three. She liked getting laughs; it lit up her brain and made her do the Snoopy dance.

So, when Nana called out from behind the wheel for everyone to put their seatbelts on, without missing a beat, Sarah chimed in with, "Yeah, put your seatbelts on—you don't want to wind up like Jeffrey!" Total silence. It was like somebody opened the airlock and all the oxygen had just been sucked out of the capsule. Her sisters stared at her wide-eyed with an admixture of shock and anger, followed by the sound of her Nana violently sobbing. Sarah didn't exactly learn how to get laughs that day, but she learned how a few words arranged in the proper order had the power to turn the mood of a room inside out in an instant, until the seams of raw emotion were showing. It would take years of trial and error and outrage—and even a little ignominy—but in time, she would learn to wield this power with Jedi-like precision.

Fast forward 25 years. Sarah is living in Los Angeles and establishing herself as a must-see comedian with regular sets at Club Largo, a tiny nightclub that A-list comedians use to incubate new material. Before leaving for the venue, a light bulb goes off. Sarah dabs some red paint on the crotch of her khakis and ties a sweater around her waist. She did five minutes with the sweater tied around her waist, and then took it off and did a cartwheel across the stage, and then leaned over the drum kit on the stage with her back to the audience, as if reaching for something she'd dropped, ensuring that everyone could see the red paint. Then she did

another five minutes, savoring the mortified stares and nervous, strangled laughter of a sold-out crowd watching a comedienne unwittingly humiliate herself. And then she let them off the hook. She looked down and acted like she just noticed the red spot on the crotch of her khakis.

"Oh my god! Oh my god, this is so embarrassing!" she told the crowd. "You guys must've been dying for me. Did you think I got my period or something? No, no, no—I just tried anal sex for the first time."

There are probably 20,000 people in the audience for the Philly-area stop of Oddball Fest, and they've been drinking for hours in the sun. This being the city that booed Santa Claus, Philly has a rep in comedy circles for being confrontational. Back in 2006, in this very venue, Bill Burr locked horns with a drunken and abusive crowd. For 12 minutes straight, he unleashed a torrent of scorching scatological invective and obscene, anatomically impossible imprecations like somebody opening the release valve on the Hoover Dam of Hate. It was to insult comedy what Slayer is to Simon & Garfunkel. It is the stuff of legend. Sarah goes on in T-minus 30 minutes. Number of jokes written down on the piece of paper she's holding: zero.



Here's how she will prepare for her set:

1. Drink one cup of coffee
2. Smoke one Camel Crush
3. Run to the bathroom, evacuate nervous diarrhea
4. Drink one bottle of Poland Spring to replace fluids lost in step three
5. Drink half bottle of Red Bull

By now it's show time. Zero dark thirty. Time to make the funny. Sarah stands in the wings of the cavernous Susquehanna Bank Center until DJ Trauma cues her entrance with Lana Del Rey's "Cola," the song with the inimitable and anatomically impossible opening line, "My pussy tastes like Pepsi-Cola." Sarah rolls her eyes, vamps her way onstage and then turns deadly serious when she gets to the microphone. "But seriously, that song is important to me ... I was brutally gang-raped while that song was playing," she says impishly. "It really puts me in the mood."

A couple jokes later, she launches into a new bit that is pure Sarah:

"My oldest sister is a rabbi. We're close. She came to town, and she had a meeting, and she said, 'I've got a meeting with this amazing woman. She runs an adoption center out of Ethiopia. This amazing Ethiopian

"I don't eat meat or fish, but I eat dairy and eggs. I don't eat anything dead, but I'll eat it if it comes out of an animal's boobs or vagina."

— SARAH SILVERMAN

woman, and we're meeting at 8 a.m. Can I use your apartment?' And I said, 'Sure, I'll be sound asleep.' But she woke me up because she forgot her key, so I had to wake up. My eyes were, like, glued shut. So, I open the door and she was like, 'This is Amber!' And I was like, 'Oh hey, Amber! Heard so much about you.' I grabbed her hand, and both of her hands were hooks. But I had to commit; I had already grabbed them. I didn't see. So, I just really gave her a good shake. 'Hi, nice to meet you!' I can feel the fastener jostling, and there was nothing you could do about it. I went back to sleep. Later, I was like, 'Suzy, really? Rabbi Suzy.' I mean, she must have told me nine different things about Amber. Two of them should have been the hooks. She's so liberal. She doesn't see color. She



doesn't even see hands. That's how beautiful my sister is. She doesn't see hands. Me? I'm too honest. I see hands. I'm honest to a fault, you know, like sexually. I like to give handjobs. I'm a righty. I give handjobs with my left hand, cause then it feels like someone else is doing it. What is the etiquette on where you put your balls/asshole hand for post-coital cuddling? Is it just straight out to the side? Do you just sever it? Just cut it off?

"That's how Amber lost her hands. [audience groans]"

"Just kidding. I'm kidding—it was landmines. [audience groans louder]"

"It's OK ... she was eight. [audience laughs uproariously]"

That's typical of a Sarah Silverman joke. Like a rollercoaster ride through the dying thoughts of Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*: the horror, the horror. Her jokes all start out with a slow, steady climb up the hill of transgression, with Sarah sitting backward in the front like a coxswain barking out encouragement to the rowers—*hooks for hands! balls/asshole hand! landmines blew her hands off!*—and then at the top, she calls out, "It's OK ... she was eight," and as we plunge vertiginously down to the very bottom, all we can do is put our hands in the air and scream.

This is the part of the story where I call up Sarah's famous friends and co-workers and ask them to say something nice about her. (This is mandatory when you write about celebrities. How do you think they got to be celebrities?)

Jimmy Kimmel, ex-boyfriend and talk-show host: "There is a magic lantern of truth and love and fun inside Sarah that allows her to say things almost no one else can get away with saying. She stores it in her vagina."

Eric Wareheim, one half of batshit-crazy comedy duo Tim & Eric: "Comedians are mostly a bore for me. But people like Sarah push the boundaries of what is OK, and it really attracted me to her work. And she constantly outdoes her self over time. A rare treat."

Michael Cera, the son and heir of a shyness that is criminally vulgar: "This is a bit awkward, but I really don't know how to answer these questions. I would love to pipe in because I like Sarah so much, but I just have no idea how to answer these questions."

Tig Notaro, comedian, cancer survivor and sarcastic Taylor Dayne stalker: "Sarah has an immediate gut reaction to everything, and the perfectly worded response to immediately follow. I fantasize about making something one day that I could cast her in that would be the craziest curveball of a character for her to play that would blow everyone's mind. You know what? I'm gonna go ahead and make that happen."

Considering Notaro just endured a season in hell—pneumonia, followed by C. diff, then her mother died in a freakish accident, then her partner dumped her, and finally she was diagnosed with breast cancer—I don't have the heart to tell her that somebody already beat her to the punch. Back in March, Sarah shot a movie in and around New York called *I Smile Back*, based on Amy Koppelman's well-regarded novel about an upper-middle-class Jersey housewife named Laney, who, from the outside, appears to have it all—husband, two beautiful kids, nice home in the burbs, a big-ass SUV—but on the inside she is collapsing into a downward spiral of drug addiction, illicit sex and soul-crushing depression. *School Of Rock*, this ain't. Sarah plays Laney, and to hear director Adam Salky tell it, nails a role that would have tried the souls of many far more experienced and accomplished dramatic actresses.

"I found it truly inspiring that she was so boldly willing to step outside of her comfort zone and prove that she's more than what she's already accomplished in comedy, which is pretty awe-inspiring in its own right," says Salky. "But when I heard that she was attached, it was one of the key reasons for signing on, aside from my own deep attachment to the material, and my own belief in the story and what it could mean for people who have had struggles with mental illness and addiction. I knew that I wanted to work with her on it. She has this pool of emotional and intellectual depth beneath the surface, and it's really like a well of emotion she can draw from, and you put the camera on her and let it run and she can take you on a whole emotional journey, and that was just a really wonderful thing to see. And, of course, since there's so many long takes in the film, there's these moments where there are no cuts that rest entirely on her performance, and she absolutely nails it."

The film is in the final stages of post-production, and is headed for the festival circuit in search of a distributor. Salky expects it will be in theaters sometime in the second half of 2015. Could this be Sarah's *Being There*? Eightball says, "Ask again later."

It's late September, and I'm sitting in the sumptuous, retro-moderne *Barton Fink*-esque lobby of the Bowery Hotel in downtown Manhattan, waiting for Miss Silverman to arrive. I pass the time shooting the shit with Tony Kiewel, VP of A&R for Sub Pop Records, which just released the audio version of her Emmy-winning stand-up special, *We Are Miracles*.

Sub Pop Tony has flown from Seattle to squire Sarah to a CD signing tonight at the Rough Trade store across the river in Brooklyn. Like David Cross, who also releases comedy albums on Sub Pop, Sarah is technically not an indie rocker, but her comedy is informed by the same niche boho sensibilities that inform indie rock: a willingness to trammel taboos in the pursuit of innovation, an abiding need to throw cold water on the bonfire of show-biz inanities, and the ability to hold two opposing ideas at once—such as sticking it to The Man while cashing his checks.

Sub Pop Tony is so nice and chill and smart, it's easy to see why he's Aziz Ansari's foodie pal. "Ask him what's the best sandwich in Pittsburgh—he'll know what I'm talking about," he says when I tell him I will be interviewing the comedian in a few days and hit him up for a deep inside-baseball question that will make smoke come out of Ansari's ears.

Out of the blue, I ask Sub Pop Tony whatever happened to Arthur & Yu, who released just one beloved album of dreamy '60s-style psych-folk back in 2007 on Hardly Art, Sub Pop's arty, low-budget imprint, before going dark. Turns out he is married to Yu (*née* Sonya Westcott). He fills me in on the sad soap opera of the band's demise, which I am not at liberty to disclose. Sure wish they'd make another album, though.

When Sarah arrives, her shiner has faded away, but now her finger is broken and wrapped in a splint. Yet another basketball injury, this time sustained while playing with her nephews. "They are awesome basketball players, and I was trying to teach them a lesson—not go easy on them," she says. "It's my right hand middle finger; you would not believe how much you need that finger. Peeing. Wiping after I pee. It's everything."

For the next 90 minutes, we hopscotch around topics, landing briefly on various Sarah Silverman touchstones, such as porn:

"I have very complicated feelings about porn, like everybody does. It's dis-

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—JIMMY KIMMEL

gusting until I need it, and as soon as I'm done with it, it's disgusting again. I have no judgments for it. I'm not gonna define it as feminist or un-feminist. I don't know. It's where you get your freak on. Some people need it to get off. Every once in a while, I am included."

Transnational whoopee-making:

"It's so much fun having a foreign boyfriend. He's from Wales. I love the vast differences between us. He had never heard the word 'doo-dy.' And he has really taken it on. It's so funny when he says it, 'cause he just says it really like someone who went to RADA: 'doo-dee.' It's so hilarious to me. I'm so lucky to have a boyfriend who's foreign and constantly lets me make fun of him as an asshole American, which is super fun to me. I mean I asked him, 'Are you OK with this? Talking about our sex life onstage?' Like how post-coital I get in his face, yelling, 'USA is number one!' He'll go, 'Number one in what?' 'It doesn't matter! Don't worry about it! We're number one! That's important to us. Juvenile diabetes, it doesn't matter.' But he's like, 'Yeah, I'm fine with it. Because no one in the world would believe you do that.'"

Or why she no longer plays the Laugh Factory in the wake of highly publicized controversies, such as Michael Richards' career-hobbling N-word meltdown years ago, or more recently a rape joke told by Daniel Tosh:

"I don't work at the comedy Laugh Factory, even though (owner) Jamie Masada's always been good to me. I'm a woman of science, and I see a very strong pattern, which is every time a comic gets in trouble for saying something in an intimate crowd at a live comedy setting, it's there. There's video footage, and all of a sudden, Jamie Masada's on CNN, talking about it. I just think it's fishy."

Her complicated feelings about returning to SNL, the locus of her first great show-biz failure:

"Oh, I'm so excited. It's really interesting. I've had to think about it, because I think it will be easy to go into that space, and that smell, and the familiarity of it will give me this kind of sense memory that could put terror in me. I have to remember that I'm a grown woman, and I deserve to be there, and I'm not a 20-year-old anymore. I'm really excited. The thing that is most interesting to me is that, when I was there, it was all grown-ups. Now it's gonna be all kids, you know?"

Her plans to get meta on her troubled tenure as an SNL cast member back in 1993. (She once stabbed Al Franken in the head with a pencil during an SNL writers' meeting, and then couldn't stop laughing maniacally. To this day, she can't really explain why. Soon after, she was fired.):

"I have an idea, and this will come out after the show airs, so I can tell it to you. You'll see if it happens or not. At one point in the monologue, I'd love to, because I could say, 'I was here 20 years ago, and I never got anything on,' I looked at my sketches and they're terrible in hindsight. But I really didn't perform much. I mostly would be a plant in the audience during the monologue to ask fake questions to the host. 'Yes, you have a question?' And then cut to me in the audience, 20 years ago. There are four times I remember, and I found three of them, where I'm the girl in the audience asking the question. Wouldn't that be cool?"

The importance of combining antidepressants with talk therapy to battle the depression she's struggled with on and off since childhood:

"I'm so lucky, because 50 milligrams of Zoloft works for me, and continues to work for me. It's been 20 years since I started taking it. I don't have the sexual side effects. It's been the perfect fit. I remember asking my psychiatrist, 'I feel great, should I get off of this?' Well, that's like a diabetic saying, 'I feel great. Should I get off of this insulin?' But you have to do the hard work. If you take it like a medicine and you don't combine it with talk therapy, and if you have suicidal thoughts, it could only just give you the strength to go through with it. That happens a lot. I'm a fan of talk therapy. I think there's

a lot of terrible therapists, probably 80 percent of them. But if you are willing to spend the time trying different people and finding a match, it's worth it, because you only get one life on this planet, you know? And it's important for it to be examined."



n hour later, we are standing out front of the Bowery Hotel, where we are joined by Sub Pop Tony and Sarah's mirthless pit bull of a manager waiting for the car service to show up and ferry us to Brooklyn for the Rough Trade signing. Two black SUVs with tinted windows pull up out front. Assuming they are for us, we start to pile in, only to be told that these SUVs are for the Black Keys, who are playing Madison Square Garden tonight and are also staying at the Bowery Hotel. I curse them out, in jest: "Fuckin' Black Keys!"

Sarah turns to me and says under her breath, "You can't say 'Fuckin' Black Keys' because it sounds like you're saying 'Fuckin' blackies.'" I can't tell if she's serious or doing sh*tick until I notice two African-American males passing behind her. I feel like I'm living in a Sarah Silverman bit. Like the video short she made for JASH—a YouTube channel that features the combined talents of Sarah, Michael Cera, Tim & Eric and Reggie Watts—where she goes thrift shopping with her sister Laura, who pulls out a pair of vintage clam-diggers and says, "Remember knickers, Sarah?"

"Yuck, I hate knickers!" she loudly declares, then stifles herself when she notices there is a black woman standing next to her giving her a dirty look.

"No, I didn't say what you thought I said," Sarah pleads, and then, looking down, she notices the black woman is wearing—wait for it—knickers. Cue sad trombone.

When her manager sees me scribbling down notes about the Black Keys incident, she barks out, "That's off the record. In fact, from here on out, we're off the record."

Sarah sees me rolling my eyes. "No, it's not," she says. "What if I say something brilliant?"

Her manager shoots Sarah one those you-are-not-leaving-the-house-in-that-mini-skirt-young-lady glares as we pile into the next SUV that pulls up. As we cross the Williamsburg Bridge, Sarah checks her email on her phone. "Oh cool, Michael's going to do a documentary on the Chartists for the BBC!" she says. "What's a Chartist?" Nobody's ever heard of them. Sarah Googles it and then reads from the Wikipedia entry.

"Chartism was a working-class movement for political reform in Britain, which existed from 1838-1858. It was a national protest movement of particular strong homes of support in the north of England, the east Midlands, the Potterys, the Black Country and South Wales.' So, it was like a working-class movement for political reform. Cool."

As we work our way through Williamsburg, we marvel at how chic and shiny it's become and wonder aloud how any actual hipsters could afford to live here. We're an hour early and Sarah's hungry. She wants a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Finding a PBJ in Williamsburg is like trying to buy a SpongeBob backpack at Louis Vuitton. Sub Pop Tony fires up the restaurant-finder app on his phone.

"There's a tapas small plate place right next to ..."

"No, I just want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich," she says. "I just want some fucking American food. Everything's gotta be fuckin' shmancy."

We settle on a general-interest bistro nearby, where Sarah orders a large dinner salad. Over the course of the next 40 minutes, fascinating things are said about Aziz Ansari, David Cross, Mario Batali, Anthony Bourdain and a \$5 million launch party Xbox once hosted where 50 Cent was the entertainment and everyone had to wear bullet-proof vests—but, again, I'm not at liberty to talk about any of that. You see, there's a lot that you can't write about when you write about celebrities.



As we start the three-block trek to Rough Trade, a Rupert Pupkin-esque figure pops out of nowhere and gloms onto Sarah. “I’m coming to your signing,” he says, showing off the pink wristband that he’s been issued to get into the signing.

“Great, see you there,” she says succinctly and walks off.

When we are out of earshot, she leans in and tells me she’s developed a sixth sense for when somebody is going to lock onto her and not let go. And he was one of them. At the signing, Rupert Pupkin will prove her right.

The Rough Trade store is one of those indie-cool, vinyl-fueled, swag-strewn dream merchants straight out of *High Fidelity*. Sarah sidles up to a wall display for *Transformer* and affectionately caresses Lou Reed’s face. “I loooooove this album,” she says.

Before she sits down at the signing table, her manager holds up a mirror to Sarah, who checks if she has any lettuce stuck in her teeth. She digs out a fleck of romaine from between her bicuspid with her fingernail, and then offers it to a pregnant woman standing nearby with her husband. The woman politely defers. Sarah looks down at her stomach and asks her if she knows whose it is.

The turnout for the record signing is somewhere between modest and respectable, and proves, if nothing else, the dictum that you can no more pick your fans than you can pick your family. But as famous family counselor and secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld once said, you go to war with the family you have, not the family you want to have, even if that family is functionally illiterate when it comes to reading social cues or respecting personal boundaries. To wit:

A 20-something Asian man with long, thinning metal hair tied up in a black Axl Rose-style bandana. Without asking, he grabs Sarah’s hand and begins giving her a hand massage. Sarah’s Spidey senses start tingling. Vibing this, he says, “It’s OK, I’m a licensed masseuse,” which is sort like a rapist saying, “It’s OK, I’m a licensed gynecologist.” Sarah’s a good sport about it as he continues to fondle her hand while prescribing Tiger Balm for her broken finger—the yellow kind (the orange kind stains). This is why we have a registered-sex-offender list.

A four-year-old Mexican girl stares mutely at Sarah, while her mother explains that the little girl is a *huge* fan. I don’t really know how to score this one. I could see a five-year-old totally getting Sarah’s “fake-racist meta jokes,” but a four-year-old? Please.

Finally, it’s the Rupert Pupkin guy who glommed onto Sarah on the street. She totally had this guy dead to rights. He wants something special, something more than just an autograph and a selfie. He tells Sarah that he got into a big fight with his best friend and he felt terrible about it and apologized and offered to do whatever it took to make things right. His friend said, “All right, you can go to the Rough Trade signing and get

video of Sarah looking into the camera and telling me how sorry you are.”

Sarah shoots him a stony glare. “You’ll get a picture and an autograph—don’t get greedy.” Rupert Pupkin nods and hangs his head and storms off when she hands him his signed copy of *We Are Miracles*. It’s homo sapiens like this who make you question the premise of Sarah’s album title.

Afterward, Sarah pops outside for a smoke, and pulls out her infamous “liquid pot” vape pen. Cue Lou Reed’s “Walk On The Wild Side.” She offers me a puff and I tell her there were three things that I was praying would happen in the course of reporting this story. The first was that Louis C.K. would pop into her dressing room at Oddball Fest during our interview to say hello. Check. The second was that Jimmy Kimmel would give me a funny fuckin’ quote that would sum up why, like Jesus, Sarah Silverman is magic. Check. The third was she and I would roll doobies and laugh and laugh and laugh. Cue the sound of the needle being dragged across “Walk On The Wild Side.”

Manager: “This does not make it into the story.”

Sarah [rolls her eyes]: “It’s fine, yes it can. Like, people don’t know I’m a stoner?”

I tell Sarah I’ve never vaped before. Be gentle with me. “You hold it like a piccolo, up and down—people always forget that,” she says. “There’s a reason why you have to, but I don’t remember why.”

She shows me how to use the carb and then sparks it up. “Piccolo, piccolo,” she coaches me. “This lovely writer Dana Goodyear, from *The New Yorker*, wrote a profile about me years ago, and she met me at the Toronto Film Festival. So, we meet up and she tells me she wanted to have the full Sarah Silverman experience. She wanted to hang. So, she smoked and I don’t think she has much experience with weed. I could tell by the look on her face that she was just barely holding it together. And she said, ‘I’m gonna go back to my room.’ She disappeared for the rest of the night, and then she flew home the next day. I felt *sooo* terrible.”

I exhale a long, thick plume of potent THC vapor and laugh nervously, as a twinge of paranoia crawls up my spine. Years from now, will she be telling some writer from *Vanity Fair* how this “lovely writer” from MAGNET tore off his clothes and ran screaming naked through the streets of Brooklyn, and wound up kicking out the back window of a police car? And how she felt “*sooo* terrible”?

Somehow I hold it together and keep my clothes on as we say our goodbyes. But I almost lose it when Sub Pop Tony tells me that that Yu from Arthur & Yu (a.k.a. his wife) is standing right over there. Sure enough, she is. I grab him by the lapels and shake him, screaming, “*Who sent you? Who sent you?* Do you mean to tell me that after we talked this afternoon, you called your wife and were like, ‘Honey, you gotta fly out here right now—it will blow this guy’s fucking mind!’? *Well, it worked!*”

No, no, Sub Pop Tony assures me—she flew out with him yesterday. She was here all along; it was just a coincidence that I brought it up this afternoon when we talked. With that, Sub Pop Tony flags down a passing double-decker bus that’s headed to Philadelphia. What a coincidence—I live in Philadelphia! This must be some kind of magic bus. I make my way upstairs and have a smoke, and somewhere over the Brooklyn Bridge, with the majestic New York skyline looming luminescent, somebody spoke and I went into a dream.

I dreamt that Sarah was hosting *SNL*, and even though Maroon 5 was the musical guest and overall the show was more miss than hit laughs-wise—it is a rebuilding year after all; in the last year, *SNL* has lost Bill Hader, Kristen Wiig, Fred Armisen, Seth Meyers, Andy Samberg and Jason Sudeikis—she nailed most of her sketches and totally killed on the opening monologue, during which she answered questions posed to her by the 1993 version of herself, thanks to the almighty magic of television. Just like it was foretold. Weird, right? **M**

“I have very complicated feelings about porn, like everybody does. It’s disgusting until I need it, and as soon as I’m done with it, it’s disgusting again. I have no judgments for it. I’m not gonna define it as feminist or un-feminist. I don’t know. It’s where you get your freak on. Some people need it to get off. Every once in a while, I am included.”

—SARAH SILVERMAN