

I HATE THAT.

By Sophie Bohr

Characters

MARGOT: 16, female, any race

JEZEBEL: 18, female, any race

INGRID: 18, female, any race

Setting

A classroom in a church during Vacation Bible School

Time

A summer afternoon, present day

At Rise *Three students – Ingrid, Margot, and Jezebel – are sitting in a classroom, slightly uncomfortably, at a table meant for elementary-aged students. They're all wearing matching "Crew Member" or "VBS" t-shirts. On the table are bowls of beads, friendship bracelet string, and a piece of paper with the names of all the children at the camp. Margot is holding a notebook and jotting down the things she and Jezebel list that they hate, while Ingrid dutifully works on the bracelets they were assigned to create.*

MARGOT

Oh my God I hate that! (Margot writes.)

INGRID

(Without even looking up, as if she's given them this reminder dozens of times.) Don't say "Oh my God."

MARGOT

Ok, number 47, I hate when people wear those sweatshirts that have the year on them, but they're not old enough to be vintage and cool so they're just old in a gross way, like Disney World hoodies from 2007. (Margot writes.)

JEZEBEL

Number 48, I read online yesterday that most soap suds are artificially created because we associate a lather with being clean, but the suds don't *actually* do anything. Makes you wonder what else corporate America is lying to us about. I hate that! (Margot writes.)

MARGOT

Was that on the website with the gross, neon yellow HTML page?

INGRID

conspiracytheories.com?

JEZEBEL

Maybe.

MARGOT

Number 49, I hate the noise it makes when someone's leg is pressing up against those brushes on the sides of an escalator. Are they so unaware of their limbs they don't feel a giant brush scraping against their calf? Or are they just stubborn and refuse to move? I think about it *every* time I –

INGRID

Margot, can you rip me off a little piece of paper?

MARGOT

A little piece of paper?

JEZEBEL

Oh my God I hate when you do that.

INGRID

Don't say "Oh my God."

MARGOT

Oh, I hate the sound of paper ripping too!

JEZEBEL

What? No, I hate when Ingrid picks at her hangnails until they bleed and then puts little pieces of paper on them.

INGRID

I have to cauterize the wound.

JEZEBEL

That's not even what cauterize means! (Margot hands Ingrid some paper.) C'mon Ingrid help Margot out, what's something you hate?

INGRID

If I give you one will you start helping *me*?

JEZEBEL

Yes.

INGRID

Fine. I hate when you're about to search something on your phone so you click the search bar at the top in safari, but then a text comes in so you end up clicking the text instead, and it's something that you didn't plan on responding to right away, but now that you've already opened it you feel like you have to respond because otherwise you'll forget... I hate that.

MARGOT

That's a good one.

JEZEBEL

(Margot and Jezebel begin to continue listing things and not making the bracelets.) That reminds me, I hate when –

INGRID

Please help! It's not even my fault we have to make these! And Sister Katherine scares me, I don't want her to come in and see we've only finished three.

MARGOT

(Genuinely apologetic.) No, you're right I'm sorry. Which name are you on?

INGRID

You can start with Constantine. (Margot winces, then begins to make a bracelet.)

JEZEBEL

Do we really have to put "Jesus loves" and then their whole name on the bracelet? Constantine is four, his wrists aren't even big enough for "Jesus loves"!

INGRID

(To Jezebel.) Yours is Montgomery.

JEZEBEL

He goes by Monty, right?

INGRID

No.

MARGOT

I'm sorry you guys. This is all my fault, I should be making these alone.

JEZEBEL

I thought it was pretty hilarious.

INGRID

(Sets down her bracelet for the first time and looks up.) You thought it was hilarious that Margot asked our group who God's son is, and they said Santa, and she said yes?

JEZEBEL

It wasn't even a big deal until Father Michael decided to show them the "Son of God" statue of Jesus bleeding on the cross.

INGRID

And now they think Santa's dead!

JEZEBEL

You just don't like breaking the rules.

INGRID

Says the girl who threw blank papers in the air on the last day of high school because she didn't want her name on them!

MARGOT

(Sighs with regret.) I don't know why I said that!

JEZEBEL

It's fine, after they have their nap they won't even remember it happened. Besides, (a little under her breath to Margot.) it's not like any of it's true anyway.

INGRID

Jezebel! (Ingrid looks at the sky in fear.) You cannot say that *here*!

JEZEBEL

What? Is God gonna smite me, right now, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, in a classroom in the middle of nowhere? You don't think he has anything better to do?

INGRID

You're not supposed to say stuff like that.

JEZEBEL

What if I just think it?

INGRID

I don't think you're supposed to do that either.

MARGOT

Do you think God can read our minds?

JEZEBEL

I sure hope not.

(Brief pause as they continue to make the bracelets.)

INGRID

Margot, what did you say that journal was for?

MARGOT

The therapist my mom is forcing me to go to wants me to write down 100 things that I hate.

INGRID

That's weird.

MARGOT

I know! But thank you both for helping me, it's hard coming up with so many things!

JEZEBEL

(Jezebel hesitates for a moment.) How is your mom doing?

MARGOT

She's good. From like, what I can tell. I have trouble sitting down and asking her about the progression sometimes. Actually, all the time. I hate that about myself.

JEZEBEL

Don't say that.

MARGOT

No, I do.

INGRID

I mean we all have things we hate about ourselves, Margot.

JEZEBEL

(With sincerity.) Yeah, like ever since I got my period, I've never had one where I didn't stain something, and I really hate that about myself.

INGRID

And I used to play this game you plugged into the TV called Dream Life, and you got points every time you chose the best dialogue option, and now every time I say something good in a conversation in real life I imagine getting points like in Dream Life, and I hate that about myself. And the fact that I renew my Fabletics VIP subscription every month even though I know I'll never – (Jezebel nudges her to stop talking.)

MARGOT

But those things don't affect other people. Well, Jezebel yours might. (Trying to suppress anger.) I just wish I were there for her more, you know?

JEZEBEL

It's hard to talk about that stuff.

MARGOT

A good person would talk about it.

INGRID

I haven't known you that long, but you seem like a good person Margot. Unlike Jezebel who's trying to send us all to Hell! Why would you say that God isn't real while we're sitting in a church making Jesus bracelets?

JEZEBEL

I never said that God isn't real! I just feel like... what are the odds they got everything right, you know? Like there's a theory that God and the angels were actually just an advanced race of aliens who created mankind as an experiment, and Jesus was actually an alien-human hybrid sent by the alien overlords.

MARGOT

Do you ever wonder how the devil would torture you if you went to Hell? (Ingrid groans and lays her forehead in her hands.)

JEZEBEL

Of course. I think it'd be like working on comp sci programs at the Linux lab with all the boys who look at me like I'm a stupid bitch for taking a break and doing a little online shopping, as if they haven't been playing World Of Warcraft for the past four hours.

MARGOT

I think it'd be like perpetually being in line at the grocery store, and the person in front of you insists on using those dividers to separate their groceries from yours.

INGRID

You seriously think about that stuff?

MARGOT & JEZEBEL

All the time.

MARGOT

It keeps me up at night.

JEZEBEL

Me too. Sometimes I bring my laptop to bed so I can look at Instagram to lull myself to sleep, but that just makes me stay up later because I always feel like I have to watch the stories that people label for "close friends" because I want to affirm their choice in me as a "close friend" by giving them a view!

MARGOT

Who uses Instagram on a laptop?

JEZEBEL

You know I don't trust smartphones.

MARGOT

But you trust Instagram?

INGRID

What's the "close friends" thing?

JEZEBEL

It's the thing on people's stories where they can choose to only share it with their close friends... the circle frame turns lime green?

INGRID

I've never seen that before.

JEZEBEL

Oh.

MARGOT

I look at Twitter to fall asleep. But even then I can't escape the endless void of my own thoughts! Last night I saw a video with Salt Bae, and as I was watching him sprinkle salt on the meat I thought, that's God!

INGRID

(Somewhat disturbed.) Why?

MARGOT

Maybe God just sprinkles blessings down on us (Margot mimics the video with a handful of beads and drops them back into the bowl.), like Salt Bae sprinkles salt, and it doesn't really concern him who gets them and who doesn't. Maybe he just has too many slabs of meat to take care of and he doesn't worry about making sure all of them get fairly salted – like making sure every prayer gets answered or stopping bad things from happening.

JEZEBEL

Or maybe it's like he... or she... can only answer a few prayers a day, so she uses a lottery system with those bingo cage things that dispense the balls, and the day my ball rolled out I used it on something stupid, like over the summer when I was trying to find my little brother in IKEA!

MARGOT

Or what if God doesn't even answer prayers? You know, some believe God made the "best possible world" for us to inhabit, but if that's true then isn't praying just a waste of time? If this is the best one then nothing could really get any better, right?

JEZEBEL

Some people think things could get better, but since God gave us free will it's our fault so many bad things happen. But then how could God know everything that's going to happen and have some "grand plan" for us if we have free will?

MARGOT

(This point is personal to Margot.) And how does that free will stuff explain things like natural disasters or diseases? How is it someone's fault if they get sick? And how do we know God could even help us in the first place? (Margot looks down and seems preoccupied with these thoughts.)

JEZEBEL

Exactly. Ingrid, what's the next name?

INGRID

Jesús.

JEZEBEL

(Amused.) So it'll be a "Jesus loves Jesus" bracelet? That's like those Kanye loves Kanye memes oh my God!

INGRID

(Ingrid opens her mouth to object, but then refrains.) Just make the bracelet.

JEZEBEL

What do *you* think about God, Ingrid?

INGRID

I mean I've never really thought about it that much until now. I guess... (Ingrid looks up and lowers her voice, as if God won't hear her.) Maybe God wants to help us with everything, but he can't. Like in those spy movies where they're trying to steal a painting, and one agent is watching the other agent on a security camera after they've tied up the guards, and the one watching the footage sees a booby trap, but he can't do anything to help, so he just screams vainly at the screen as he watches the other agent get mutilated. Maybe it's like that.

JEZEBEL

Do you ever think about *how* God “watches over us?”

INGRID

Maybe it’s kind of like watching an ant farm.

JEZEBEL

Or an episode of Love Island. Or Survivor! Maybe it’s just like an endless loop of reality TV –

INGRID

I *hate* reality TV.

JEZEBEL

I can add that to the list! (Jezebel picks up the notebook.) Number 50.

INGRID

I have another one for the list. I hate when people put chapstick on, but they put it all around their mouths so it’s all shiny above their lips and below not just on the *actual* lip area.

JEZEBEL

Alright. (Jezebel writes.) I hate... when a website is down so they show you a cute photo to somehow make up for it! Fuck you Amazon I don’t want to see “The Dogs of Amazon” apologizing for your bad programming, I want the page I’m looking for!

INGRID

I hate when you have a group chat with all iPhones and then you add an Android who makes all the text bubbles green and ruins it for everybody.

JEZEBEL

(Jezebel pauses.) Wait... you’re just listing things that I do! Ok, I hate that when I see people pick at their hangnails it reminds me of that scene in Black Swan. You know which one I’m talking about!

Both Ingrid and Jezebel progressively get faster and start to overlap each other, and it becomes a bit of a game coming up with things they hate about each other, but they’re laughing as they think of them – it’s all in good fun.

INGRID

I hate when people, on multiple occasions, bite down too aggressively on those plastic forks at the food court, so they break into a bunch of little pieces in their mouth, and they're somehow still surprised every time it happens!

JEZEBEL

I hate when you see your friend on the street, so you wave at them, and then they don't see you and don't wave back, so you get publicly shamed on your way to Baskin Robbins!

INGRID

I hate when people clap during a musical and their Fitbit lights up!

JEZEBEL

I hate when people scream when they sneeze!

MARGOT

Stop!

Margot suddenly grabs the notebook back, but in doing so spills a bowl of beads all over the table and onto the floor, which snaps Margot out of her burst of anger. Jezebel and Ingrid are in silent shock at this uncharacteristic outburst from Margot. All three watch, almost mesmerized, as the beads bounce onto the ground. Margot begins to flip through the notebook.

I've been lying to you guys.

JEZEBEL

(After a slight pause.) About what?

MARGOT

I don't go to therapy.

INGRID

You don't?

MARGOT

No.

JEZEBEL

But what about the notebook?

MARGOT

No one was supposed to see it. When you found it in the cafeteria, I made up a story about a therapist forcing me to make the list.

JEZEBEL

Why?

MARGOT

Because I'm just so... angry. All the time. So, I googled what to do about it and someone said writing down every angry thought you have helps. I didn't want you guys to think of me as an angry person, so I said I needed help with the list. But honestly, I could fill every page all by myself.

INGRID

Why are you so angry?

MARGOT

Ever since my mom got diagnosed, I hate absolutely everything. I always feel like I'm about to explode, and all the anger built up in me leaks out onto people I'm not even mad at, like the kids this morning! And I hate myself, most of all, for being like this!

JEZEBEL

Have you told your mom –

MARGOT

No. She's the strongest person I know and she's... so positive about everything. And if she can keep it together, then so can I. I just don't want to feel like this anymore so I'm trying (Margot holds up the notebook.) anything.

Pause.

INGRID

This reminds me of a poem I recited for forensics in 7th grade.

JEZEBEL

(Appalled at the inappropriate timing of Ingrid's anecdote) Ingrid!

MARGOT

No, it's ok. Do you remember the poem?

JEZEBEL

Of course she does.

INGRID

(Ingrid clears her throat.) It's by Shel Silverstein.

She had blue skin,

And so did he.

He kept it hid

And so did she.

They searched for blue

Their whole life through,

They passed right by-

And never knew.

I don't know maybe your mom feels the same way you do. Maybe she feels like she has to make everything seem fine because she thinks you're so good at keeping it together.

MARGOT

I just miss how things used to be. A lot. And I try not to, but I dream about how life could be different. And I don't understand why God is doing this and letting this happen. And I know that sounds so "why me" but that's how I feel. I hate God! And I hate the lesson from this morning – "God always has a plan." I think that's what made me lash out at our group. I'm so sick and so tired of hearing every person in my life say "God has a plan" to her, and say that to me! Maybe God doesn't know what he's doing. Or maybe there isn't a God at all.

JEZEBEL

Maybe not.

MARGOT

But that's the thing, I can say that out loud and joke about it, but deep down I want there to be a God so badly! And I hate that too. I hate that the first thing I turn to is praying even though God is the one causing all my problems in the first place.

JEZEBEL

I think it makes sense to want there to be a higher power behind the scenes.

INGRID

Then at least there's someone to be mad at.

MARGOT

(Somewhat surprised at Ingrid's understanding.) Yeah, exactly.

JEZEBEL

I think you should talk to your mom.

MARGOT

I've just never found a time that felt right.

INGRID:

Margot, this reminds me of something I realized lying awake one night. (Jezebel whispers "Oh no" and realizes Ingrid is about to go on another tangent.) I was on YouTube and I saw this video come up on my recommendations feed – "22 Musicals In 12 Minutes w/ Lin Manuel Miranda & Emily Blunt" and I thought 'Ingrid that's three things you *love* wrapped up in one video!' so I added it to my 'Watch Later' list and... (Jezebel senses her tangent will be long and motions to her to make it brief.) ...and basically, I still haven't watched it because I'm waiting for the right time when I can *fully* enjoy it, but I've realized that there's never a perfect time to watch it, or for anything in general, so I feel like you should just do it. Talk to her.

JEZEBEL

And you don't have to start with everything. Maybe just start by telling her you've been feeling different lately. Margot, you know what got me through all my family problems growing up? Talking to you about it while we played tetherball at recess every day. Now it's my turn to be there for you. You could say... the ball is in my court now.

MARGOT

(Margot cracks a smile and a small laugh.) I hate that joke.

JEZEBEL

Thanks for telling us everything. We're here for you.

Ingrid, Margot, and Jezebel hug.

MARGOT

Thanks, you guys. (Their gaze simultaneously veers to the beads on the floor.) We should probably clean these up before she comes back.

Ingrid, Margot, and Jezebel begin picking up the beads on the floor and putting them back into the bowl.

Sometimes I feel like all the prayers God gets from me are like angry voicemails.

JEZEBEL

What if they actually are like voicemails, like the reason all this bad stuff happens is because God lost his God-cellphone and he's been looking for it for 10 billion years, so all our prayers have just been sent to voicemail? And once he finds it, he'll have to press *86 and listen to all of them.

INGRID

I bet if his God-cellphone is lost, he's looking all over for it.

JEZEBEL

I think so too.

MARGOT

Me too. I just wish I could be one of those people that gets signs from God, like those potato chips in the shape of –

Margot stops in front of a cluster of beads on the ground at tilts her head.

INGRID

In the shape of what?

MARGOT

You guys come here. Look at what those beads spell.

Ingrid and Jezebel come look at the cluster of beads alongside Margot.

INGRID

Oh my God!

JEZEBEL

That's really weird...

MARGOT

I love that.

Lights out.

THE END.