

The Romance Writer

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

A long row of PEOPLE line up along the street in a queue that appears to go on forever. The vast majority of the people are WOMEN, excitedly talking amongst themselves. They could be queuing for a concert like they were teenagers.

We FOLLOW the line from the very end, around several blocks and down the long street.

In the crowd, trying to cross through the line is JAKE SHEFFIELD (early 30s), whose enthusiasm makes up for his arrogance. He struggles with the women as he tries to get through.

JAKE

I need to get to work... Just let me through... I'm not going to steal your place... Dammit, let me through... Someone people have lives.

Finally, he breaks through, but not before one woman TAPS him on the BOTTOM.

JAKE

Hey! I felt that.

The women just smiles and WINKS. Jake hurries into the building, not looking back.

We continue to FOLLOW the line as we reach the end - a BOOKSTORE. We go inside.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

The queue ends at a table. There sits ISABELLA DELACOURT (late 20s), she has a romantic and seductive charm. She's glamorous, in an old fashioned way, like she's studied old movies for her style.

Isabella is signing books, always smiling, but getting through them efficiently.

ISABELLA

There you go, I hope you enjoy it... Oh, make sure to read this with a glass of wine... I always read in the bath, with lots of

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ISABELLA (cont'd)  
bubbles... Don't tell your husband  
about this one... I hope you enjoy  
page one-oh-three.

The women all giggle, like they're sharing a secret.

ISABELLA  
Next.

The signing line continues.

INT. TYPO MAGAZINE OFFICE - DAY

Jake enters the busy office of TYPO MAGAZINE, their logo everywhere in the swanky building. He makes his way through dozens of CUBICLES before he reaches his own. He could possibly be the only male that works there.

JAKE  
Hey Ashley, what the hell is going  
on out there today?

The cubicle next to his is filled with a FEW WOMEN as they crouch around a BOOK. His co-worker, ASHLEY (20s) responds, holding up the book for him to see. It is TORRID HEAT BY ISABELLA DELACOURT.

ASHLEY  
It's only the day we've all been  
waiting for.

JAKE  
A book? What's so good about a  
book?

ASHLEY  
You wouldn't understand, you're  
only a mere male, Jake.

JAKE  
I've got a degree from Harvard  
University. I don't think a trashy  
novel is going to stump me.

ASHLEY  
Fine. In the last book, we didn't  
know whether Sigfried was going to  
declare his love for Maryanne. We  
thought she might die and never  
know how he felt. And today we get  
to find out what happens.

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JAKE

Oh God, don't tell me you're all  
obsessing over a romance novel?  
Please.

All the women look at him, angry. DOROTHY (50s) is steaming.

DOROTHY

Don't you dare call an Isabella  
Delacourt book just a romance  
novel. It's the only thing keeping  
me going. I'm old, not dead.

ASHLEY

Chill, Dorothy.  
(to Jake)  
These books are so much more than  
romance. They're like every single  
fantasy a girl could have.

The women all nod, including SELENA (20s).

SELENA

They make me believe that fairy  
tales can come true.

JAKE

It's just a book.

DOROTHY

Hold my earrings, I'm going to take  
him out.

Dorothy goes to lunge at Jake, but the women easily restrain  
her.

They are interrupted by SAMANTHA CHASE (50s, elegant but  
tough), the boss, as she walks by importantly.

SAMANTHA

Staff meeting. Don't be late, I'm  
in a firing mood. And that means  
you too, Selena, I'm watching you.

They all scramble to follow behind, especially Selena.

SELENA

Why is she picking on me?

ASHLEY

You dated her son.

(CONTINUED)

DOROTHY

And then dumped him in a text message.

ASHLEY

On Christmas day.

DOROTHY

Which also happened to be his birthday.

SELENA

And I should be punished for that?

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

A NEWS REPORTER (female, 30s) has set up beside Isabella's signing table. She stands in front of a CAMERA and is about to go live.

NEWS REPORTER

I'm standing here in the Book Nook where a frenzy is occurring right in mid-town. The latest novel by Isabella Delacourt hits the stands today, making millions of women's dreams come true. I'm here with the lady herself.

The News Reporter leans over the desk. Isabella plasters on a charming smile.

NEWS REPORTER

Ms Delacourt, the burning question we all want to know is what finally happens between Sigfried and Maryanne?

ISABELLA

Oh, I can't give it away. You'll have to buy the book and enjoy the journey yourself.

NEWS REPORTER

I thought you might say that. You've been called the biggest thing to happen to romantic fiction since Mills & Boon, what inspires you to write such tantalizing tales?

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ISABELLA

Well, I don't like to kiss and tell, but I do get a lot of my material from my own love life. But let's keep that between you and me.

She WINKS, ever so charmingly.

NEWS REPORTER

Of course.

The News Reporter steps aside again as Isabella continues to sign.

NEWS REPORTER

Isabella's book *Torrid Heat* is out today and, judging by the line here, it's going to fly off the shelves. We have yet another bestseller here, folks. Get in quick ladies or you will be sorely disappointed.

She gives a cheesy grin.

INT. TYPO MAGAZINE BOARDROOM - DAY

The entire staff of Typo sit around a boardroom table, Samantha sits at the end. Jake is amongst them.

SAMANTHA

We're getting outsold by that blasted *Women's Only* magazine. We need something good, something to wipe the floor with them. Go.

Everyone looks alive as they scramble for ideas.

ASHLEY

We could do an expose on what is really in make up. I've heard there's beetles in there.

SAMANTHA

It's been done.

DOROTHY

How about fashion trends for winter?

(CONTINUED)

SAMANTHA

What, pray tell, is finter?

DOROTHY

The season between fall and winter.  
It's going to be huge this year.

SAMANTHA

It sounds like a disease. No. Next.

SELENA

What about Isabella Delacourt? We  
could do an article on her. She's  
very topical at the moment.

Samantha thinks it over, staring long enough at Selena to  
make her shift nervously in her seat.

SAMANTHA

Perfect, you're not just a  
heartless bitch. Jake, you're going  
to interview her. Maddison, arrange  
it.

She SNAPS her fingers and her assistant at her side,  
MADDISON (20s, perpetually on edge) hurries to write it  
down.

JAKE

Why me? I think I'm the least  
qualified to interview Isabella  
Delacourt. I only heard about her  
half an hour ago.

SAMANTHA

That's why. You don't know her,  
she's a clean slate. You'll give a  
balanced interview. Unlike any of  
the women in this office.

ASHLEY

I'll do it. I'd be happy to.

DOROTHY

Over my dead body. I've been here  
since the eighties, I deserve this  
interview.

SELENA

It was my suggestion. I should do  
it.

SAMANTHA

Quiet. Jake is doing this interview. If he knows what's good for him.

Jake looks around at the women giving him the evil eye. He resigns himself to the fact.

JAKE

Anything you want, you're the boss.

SAMANTHA

Good. We'll put it in the next issue. I want you on this immediately.

JAKE

Of course.

SAMANTHA

Now, what else? Come on people, we need ideas and we needed them yesterday.

They all sit at attention, all except Jake who slumps in his chair.

SELENA

Shoes for kittens?

INT. TYPO MAGAZINE - SAMANTHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Samantha sits at her desk in the plush office as she notices Jake walk by.

SAMANTHA

Jake, in here.

Jake enters, obedient.

JAKE

Samantha, what can I do for you?

SAMANTHA

I know you're not happy about being assigned the Isabella Delacourt interview.

JAKE

It's fine, really. I just don't know if I'm the most suitable candidate.

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SAMANTHA

Take a seat, I want to share a secret with you.

Jake sits, apprehensive about what's to come.

SAMANTHA

Typo magazine has lost it's way. We used to be so focused on the hard hitting journalism that we all dreamed about writing in college. Now, our pages are filled with fashions, diets, and celebrities. I want to get back to our roots. It's going to be the only way to save this magazine from the slush pile.

JAKE

How does interviewing a romance novelist achieve that?

SAMANTHA

It doesn't. But it will get a lot of people to read the magazine and provide the money for us to move on to bigger and better things. We need to keep the bean counters happy or they'll shut us down.

Samantha studies him, like a cat watching a mouse. They sit in silence for a beat.

SAMANTHA

You're still not convinced.

JAKE

I can do the article.

SAMANTHA

I'll do you a deal. If you can pull off this Isabella Delacourt interview, your next job will be as Senior Articles Editor.

JAKE

Are you serious?

SAMANTHA

Absolutely. You've got a keen eye for a story. I want you on my team when Typo resurrects itself. Do we have a deal?

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JAKE

I'll have the article on your desk  
by the end of the week.

SAMANTHA

Great. And it better be good.

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

Isabella is ushered by SECURITY GUARDS from the bookstore to a waiting LIMOUSINE. FANS line the way, practically dying with the excitement of seeing her. She's a writing rock star.

ISABELLA

Thank you so much for coming... I  
love you all... Go home and demand  
some romance... But read my books  
first.

INT. ISABELLA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Isabella steps into her apartment, a modern and up market version of a brothel. Nearly everything is pink and red.

She throws her KEYS on the bench and walks through. On every available surface are FLOWERS. She stops to inspect a few. One reads:

CONGRATULATIONS ON ANOTHER BESTSELLER.

ISABELLA

How sweet. And lame. Nice try Joan  
Collins.

She scrunches up the card and throws it to the ground. She continues to examine them.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jake sits on the SOFA in his apartment. An exposed-brick, open plan place. He is reading TORRID HEAT, studying it more than engrossed in it. He's writing notes as he goes.

The FRONT DOOR opens and in steps EMMA SHEFFIELD (20s), carrying groceries. She puts them on the counter and sees Jake reading.

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EMMA

Hey.

JAKE

Hey, Emma, what's up?

EMMA

Tired of lines, I swear everyone in the city is out today.

(stops, sees Jake's book)

Are you reading an Isabella Delacourt?

She hurries over and GRABS the book for a closer look.

JAKE

Yes and ow.

EMMA

What are you doing with this? It only came out today. Don't tell me you're a closet romance reader. That's kind of creepy.

JAKE

It's research. I'm interviewing her tomorrow.

EMMA

You're interviewing the twelve time bestselling author Isabella Delacourt? The Isabella Delacourt?  
(off Jake's nod)

On my God. This is huge. This is like the biggest thing to happen to me. Ever.

JAKE

I'm the one interviewing her, not you. Remember?

Emma starts begging, putting her hands together in prayer for him.

EMMA

You have to let me come. I can be your assistant or something. Please please please.

JAKE

No, I already have an assistant.

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