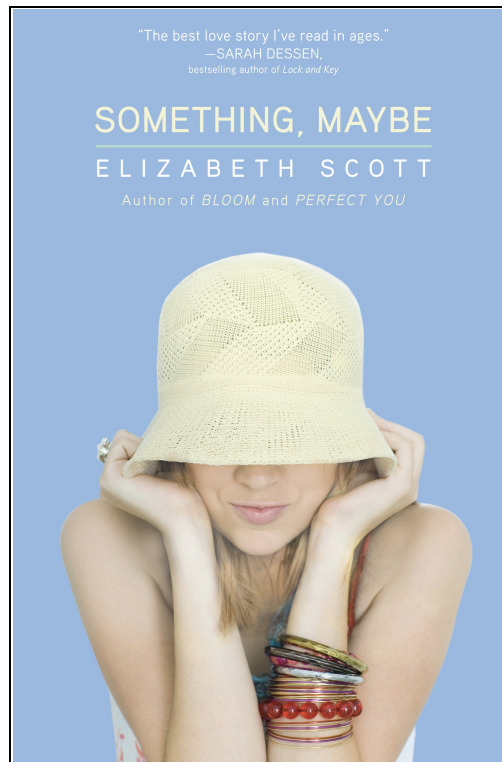


DELETED SCENE FROM SOMETHING, MAYBE



In early drafts of *Something, Maybe*, when Hannah went to New York to see Jackson, the two of them had lunch in his hotel before they went out to the chocolate-only restaurant. The scene--a chapter, actually--was cut because it was too long, but it does give you a bigger glimpse into Jackson's life, so here's a bit from it:

"Central Park is just over there," Jackson says as I look out the window, coming up beside me and pointing at a huge expanse of green. "And downtown is that way." He points again. "That's where my girls are. Doing some shopping. Fran, that is where they are, right?"

"Yes," Fran says. "They have the show car, and I told Sandi to make sure they

stop and take pictures in Times Square. And yes, I told Brandi not to pull her shirt up this time. I'm going to go finish organizing tomorrow's interviews. Enjoy your lunch. Hannah, I'll see you later, I'm sure."

"Thank you, dear," Jackson says and Fran waves goodbye, stopping to tease Darryl about an apparently tight pair of pants he wore yesterday.

"Trying to drive all the girls, crazy, aren't you?" she says, and as he shakes his head and says, "Won't happen again, I promise," I realize I'd forgotten about Fran's role as an enforcer for Jackson's girls. Not only does she take care of scheduling Jackson's life, she makes sure none of the girls that are living with him sleep with anyone else. Once, when I was visiting, one of Jackson's girlfriends was found with a cook in one of the kitchen pantries.

Fran told the girl she had to leave, and then fired the cook. Jackson was worried about the cook, but Fran said, "Non-disclosure agreement. Standard in all employee contracts, remember?" and he stopped clearing his throat.

At the time, I didn't know what she was talking about. I do now, though. Ex-girlfriends can be dismissed as vindictive or simple liars, but the cook--well, he could talk about Jackson's habits, like his weird food hang-ups. Or the fact that one of Jackson's girlfriends would rather sleep with someone who made Jackson's food than Jackson himself.

"And that's where the very first office was," Jackson says, pointing at some building. "I miss being in the city once in a while, but the castle has a much more... relaxed atmosphere."

He chuckles, and glances over at the bodyguards who, after a moment, laugh too,

even thought I'm not sure they can even hear him.

"Anyway, Sandi tells me there's a lovely chocolate store near Union Square," Jackson says. "Maybe we could go there after we eat and have some dessert?"

"What kind of chocolate?" I say, and he grins and kisses the top of my head again.

"That's my girl," he says, and we stand there, looking out the window for a while, Jackson pointing out buildings and telling me stories. Most of them took place ages ago, some back before Mom was even born, and Jackson sounds like he misses the way things used to be.

"The first girls we had, oh, they were beautiful. Skin, eyes, hair---just fresh, lovely girls. And, you know, we photographed Mariah Winters before she became Mariah Craft."

I nod. Mariah Craft is some old movie star who died when Mom was a teenager, but Jackson always talks about her as if everyone still knows who she is and loves her. Lots of web sites claim she's the only woman he tried to sleep with who refused him.

"And there's where I was eating a hotdog when I found out I was going to make over \$10 million a year," Jackson says, and I excuse myself and go to the bathroom.

It's not that I mind Jackson's stories, although he's told them all before, both to me and the audiences of his television show and website, but I'd rather see what his suite looks like.

It's enormous and gorgeous and the bathroom is--well, you could fit my bedroom, Mom's bedroom, and our bathroom into it. The towels are impossibly white and so soft, and there's a huge basket filled with shampoo and bath gel, and not little bottles either. Big ones.

The soap, when I wash my hands, smells expensive, flowery and herby all at the same time. Jackson's bar of green soap is next to it, though, and I wonder how he can stay in places like this and wash with soap that's so cheap even Mom and I won't buy it.

"Hannah, lunch," Jackson calls, and I walk back out to find a hotel employee setting up a table of food. Not a room service cart, but an actual table.

Once he's finished, he leaves in a flurry of "Thank you, Mr. James, sir," "Let me know if you need anything else at all," and quick glances around the suite, no doubt looking for Jackson's girls, who are--to be fair--far more fun to look at than a seventy-two year old man and ponytailed, baggy clothes me.

When I'm finishing the sandwich I made from a huge selection of meat and cheese, Jackson is eating a little cup of fruit cocktail, the kind that most people buy and give to their kids for lunch. When he's done, he picks up his oatmeal cookie--he always has one after lunch--turns it over, and then frowns.

"It has raisins in it," he says. "Darryl, will you please call Fran? Hannah, are you ready to see a little more of the city on our way to the best chocolate ever?"

"How do you know it's the best?" Everything Jackson sees or does or eats or wears is the best, according to him, and when I was little I used to ask him this question all the time.

"Because I like it," he says, which was always his answer then too.

As we leave, we pass Fran in the hallway. "And don't you think that when we gave you the required list and said DO NOT SUBSTITUTE, we meant it?" she says to the now-cowering hotel worker.

"I don't work in the kitchen, but I'm sure--"

"Excuses are for incompetents," Fran says. "Didn't anyone read the list?"

"Yes, of course," the hotel worker says. "Mr. James, I'm so sorry."

"Don't apologize, just fix it," Fran says, and folds her arms across her chest, hiding the "Ask Me About My Grandchildren" that's been printed (complete with teddy bears nestled at either end of the sentence) on her shirt.

"I don't like surprises, Fran," Jackson says, and Fran nods.

"Of course you don't. I'll take care of it right now. You and Hannah go have fun," she says, before marching the hotel employee away.

"Sorry about your cookie, Mr. James," the bodyguard who isn't Darryl says, and Darryl nods in agreement.

"Oh, no need to apologize," Jackson says. "I know it won't happen again."

"No, sir," Darryl says. "It won't."