



Jezebel's Got the Blues...And Other Works of Imagination: A Collection of Monologues and Dialogues Inspired by the Old Testament, Told with a Southern Voice and Tinged with the Blues.

Merrill Farnsworth

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Jezebel's Got the Blues...And Other Works of Imagination is a series of performance pieces that puts a new spin on stories from the Old Testament. In Merrill Farnsworth's inspired telling, Jezebel, Cain, Noah, Delilah, Lot's wife, and other denizens of Bible history reveal themselves as people with very modern stories to share. Jezebel and her friends are true originals – taking readers (and audiences!) on a creative, thought-provoking, insightful ride.

Author's Note: *Jezebel's Got the Blues...* is a collection of stories and paintings created over a nine-month period. As an artist, I often go into the studio, take up a brush filled with paint and begin making marks on paper or canvas, letting the marks take shape and allowing shapes to emerge, as they will. One day in September, a face began forming, and I followed the inclination to form a woman's face. In time, I saw the face of Jezebel staring out at me, and it occurred to me she looked frightened. I'd always imagined her as defiant.

As a daughter of the South, I was warned about Jezebel and picked up on the notion she was a bad apple. I was told she wore too much rouge and knew she came to a bad end. Having gone through a period of life that didn't end so well, I felt a certain compassion for Jezebel when she showed up that day in September. I began painting more and more layers of red on her cheeks, thinking that somehow more red would keep her from feeling so blue. As I painted, I began imagining a story about Jezebel, told from the point of view of the rouge on her cheeks – a voice that became a strange witness to her story.

That is how a series of stories and paintings came to be called *Jezebel's Got the Blues...and Other Works of Imagination*. After I finished the paintings and had written the stories, I called upon friends, all talented actors I'd performed with over the years. I asked if they'd join me to perform this series of monologues and dialogues. All said yes, as did Phil Madeira, who accompanied us with improvised blues on his guitar. It was a magical night for me. All my imagining became something real – to me, my friends, and to the audience gathered for the retelling of stories about a ragtag crew of characters who share a longing for grace to bend the notes of our blues towards love.

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