

Women's Health

IT'S GOOD TO BE YOU

By Celeste Perron



Ten lucky readers will win a *Scrubs* DVD copy of season 4. [Enter here.](#)

It's been just a few weeks since Sarah Chalke turned 30, and her face lights up when she talks about her birthday. She started the day with a hike in the hills near her Los Angeles home, her chocolate Lab and long-term, non-celeb boyfriend by her side. But after breakfast it was straight into hair-and-makeup mode, because the Emmys were that night and her hit show, *Scrubs*, was nominated for Outstanding Comedy Series. Friends came over to keep her company while she primped and feasted on cake. "I did everything wrong before I went to the Emmys," she says. "You're probably not supposed to be having cake, champagne, and cookies!"

How Sarah spent her 30th says a lot about where she is in life. On the one hand, this Vancouver native is a grounded regular girl who just wants to hang out with her man, her friends, and her dog. But with a super-popular show now entering its sixth season and a growing list of movie credits (supporting roles in the upcoming *Chaos Theory* and *Mama's Boy*, as well as the lead in last October's Lifetime original, *Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy*), she's got a killer acting career that would seem to threaten her regular-girl status. One recent afternoon she stole away from the *Scrubs* set for some much-needed sustenance (a chicken salad sandwich and a cup of asparagus soup) and to chat about her favorite film project, the secret to breaking out of a relationship rut, and why, when she's ready to have kids, adoption is definitely an option.

***Scrubs* seems like it would be incredibly fun to work on.**

Our gag reel gets longer every year, and I'm the worst with the uncontrollable laughing fits. When you've had too much coffee and not enough sleep, the more you try to stop laughing the harder it is.

How do you cope with a crazy schedule and too little sleep?

It can be hard, because a few years ago I started to get bad insomnia. I wake up a couple of hours after falling asleep and can't turn my brain off. A friend gave me lavender spray for my pillow, which helps. And I keep water by my bed, so if I wake up thirsty in the middle of the night I can just grab it — because if you get out of bed, you're kind of screwed. If insomnia does hit, instead of lying there and stewing, I get up and check my e-mail. Just getting my mind off of that "fall asleep, fall asleep" thing helps.

What's on your mind at night?

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Everything, especially decisions. I've always had trouble making a decision and sticking to it. When I was 10, my dad taught me to make a list of pros and cons, but it always looks like 50-50 to me.

You recently starred in the Lifetime movie *Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy*. Why?

It's a true story based on a book by GERALYN LUCAS, a breast cancer survivor who was diagnosed at 27. She made so many gutsy, interesting choices along the way. She wears red lipstick to give herself courage and to make the doctors realize that she's not just another procedure, like "mastectomy right side," but a human being. And when she's having her reconstruction, she has to go get a nipple put on. If you've never been through that, you don't think, "Oh, you lose your nipple too."

How do they do that?

They gather skin to make one and then tattoo it. So on the morning of her surgery she decides not to do it. Instead she gets a tattoo of a heart with wings — the heart to represent her courage and the wings to represent the angels that guided her. Anyway, before the film I'd never done breast self-exams. And now I can't stop!

You can't keep your hands off them?

It's true, driving over here even! It doesn't matter if you don't have a family history, it doesn't matter if you're young, you have to check often, because early detection is key.

What are your vices?

Definitely caffeine, when we're working 14-hour days. And I'm sure that contributes to the insomnia! In terms of food, it's dark chocolate. Otherwise I eat very healthy because that's how I was raised. I was a vegetarian from age 12 to 17, then I started eating fish. I went back to chicken a few years after that, and then went back to red meat a couple of years ago.

What did that first steak taste like?

Amazing. There's no tofu imitation product to match it.

What do you do to stay in shape in the city?

I walk my dog and go hiking, and I also do yoga. It's such a good way to de-stress, though I have not figured out how to quiet my mind for the full hour. After 2 seconds I'm thinking, "Okay, what am I going to do after this?" I also found a cross-training class that I like that combines jump rope, yoga, and free weights.

Your parents run an adoption agency in Vancouver. Would you adopt?

Absolutely. They arrange adoptions from all over — China, Brazil, South Africa. So we went to remote places as kids, which gives you perspective on how lucky we are. Now I work with a charity called Half the Sky, which was started by a group of parents who went to China to adopt babies and realized, "We can't save all of these girls, so let's figure out a way to make their lives better." They help children get educated and make sure there are enough caregivers.

Have you been with your boyfriend a long time?

Yeah, about 8 years. I imported him from Canada. We met through friends when a bunch of us rented a cabin to go snowboarding.

What have you learned about making love work?

I don't know quite how to say this, but you can get into positive or negative ruts. I think if you're having problems, you need to take that first step and be the one to do something fabulous, and then the other person will do it back, and you'll get into a positive place. And you need to keep it new. We're planning a weekend in Santa Barbara. Getting away makes such a difference because you get a chance to just be with each other.

Tell me about your dog.

She's a chocolate Lab named Lola. I got her at a charity event for children with autism that I went to with the cast of *Scrubs*. They were auctioning off this 10-week-old puppy, and I was like, "Okay, I need to bring this baby home with me." But of course everyone else had the same feeling. So I started bidding but realized, "This is hopeless — everybody wants her." Then my cast mates jumped up at the end and got her for me.

How much did they pay for her?

Well, her middle name is 6G. But it all went to a good cause!

Photo by: Ture Lillegraven

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