



## MEET THE AUTHORS



Robin Epstein and Renee Kaplan will do a reading and book signing at 4 p.m. Saturday, June 25 at Borders at Pyramid Mall in Ithaca.

# When you're down, shake it up

Buzz Staff

The cover-art of an old "New Yorker" features four beauty-pageant contestants lined up for judging: Blonde, perky and glassy-eyed, each woman clones the next, representing Alabama,

California, Massachusetts. Starkly breaking the line of carbon copies is a smirking, devilishly dark-haired beauty impudently sporting a sash emblazoned with "New York."

This is the recommended image to take going in to "Shaking Her Assets," a stylish cut of chick lit by Robin Epstein and Renee Kaplan (FYI: Kaplan bounced between Ithaca and Paris when she was growing up, which her bio says was an "odd back-and-forth between redneck and

highbrow.") "Shaking Her Assets" is a breezy bathtub read about one of those ideas — you know, the kind that makes you think "I should quit this gig and just..."

Quick on her feet, with the most understandable balance of ethics and the ability to bald-face lie, the pencil-skirted heroine juggles the strain of work, relationships and family in classic couture fashion.

Rachel is what every Midwestern girl dying to take on NYC imagines city girls do: ordering Thai takeout, visiting champagne bars with striking foreign men and reveling in a long-time best friendship with a fine, fun and supportive guy.

Her well-groomed look is hardly representative of a perfectly manicured life — her longtime boyfriend just opted out of their cuddly bliss, and hot on the

breakup's trail is a pink slip. And if that weren't

enough, a family emergency in Minnesota wobbles her equilibrium and ... well, let's just say she's not the kind of chick to let her skirt fly over her head during rush hour traffic.

Rachel's an interesting character in her own

vintage-compact-collecting sort of way, and her cohorts through the twists and turns of her new venture offer up their own quirky wit and personality.

The obvious standout is Zach, introduced in early pages and popping up quickly in a coincidental flurry of temp agencies and networking parties. He's just one of those guys — charismatic, witty, off-beat and a little scruffy — more alt-rock teddy bear than Prince Charming, and adds an interesting sparkle to a story that might otherwise be a simple white wine.

Rachel's sister and her two daughters are also a nice twist to the story — outspoken but adorable, it's impossible to forgive one or both for loudly enunciating the word "vagina" at the grocery store or for inviting the neighbor's diabetic, clinically depressed dog to stay for the weekend.

Rachel may have the weight of the world on her shoulders, but she's not going to let it keep her down. Her inability to see the big picture is sometimes a blessing and otherwise a curse — at least until she gets some straight-shooting advice from the last place she'd expect it.

This light romp through Manhattan — with all its art, food and creative energy — and makes readers want to hop and train and take a bite out of the Big Apple, just like the city's newest heroine.