

POST IT NOTES AND SPANDEX

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### Author's notes

Post It Notes and Spandex is a series of short pieces, most of which can stand on their own or even be done individually as one acts. It is designed to be presented as a full length play with one intermission, however flexibility is a virtue I highly endorse. The three short monologues for The Woman should be included in the order given. Other than that, sections can be eliminated and the order of the pieces changed to suit the needs of the production.

Following is the suggested order of presentation:

Things I've Lost

The March of Time

The Near Death Laundry Chute Experience

In the Pool

Things That Never Change

Intermission

The Cousins' Book Club

Unexpected Dancing

Things I've Found

## POST-IT NOTES AND SPANDEX

### CHARACTERS

All of the characters except Young Gayle are women over 60. Actors may take multiple roles.

#### **Things I've Lost, Things That Never Change, and Things I've Found**

THE WOMAN: Just your everyday friend, aunt, neighbor. Low key. Never flashy.

#### **In the Pool**

THERESE: A widow trying to find her way.

HELEN: Stylish, well coiffed, serious.

ANNA: Not quite put together. Distracted.

GAYLE: Graceful, thinner and more toned than the others.

MILLIE: 87. Not always totally with it, but a fighter.

#### **The Near Death Laundry Chute Experience**

LYNN: Fast talker. Uses her hands and her body when telling a story.

#### **The March of Time**

ESTHER: Unpretentious, socially conscious. Jewish.

LIZ: Suburbanite, middle to upper middle class. Not Jewish.

#### **The Cousins' Book Club**

MARGO: Never married. Cosmopolitan.

ELIZABETH: A widow.

SANDRA: Married to Bill.

MARY ALICE: Mother of many. Grandmother of many. Married to Ed.

BARBARA: The youngest of the cousins. Unmarried.

#### **Unexpected Dancing**

GAYLE: An average older woman who is an above average dancer.

YOUNG GAYLE: Gayle in her teens or twenties.

# THINGS I'VE LOST

## THE WOMAN

Things I've lost. In no particular order of importance.

The instructions to my new cell phone. The gift card to the movie theater my daughter and the kids got me on my last birthday.

My eyebrows.

After a great deal of effort, five pounds.

My libido, although maybe not totally because I did have a dream a couple of weeks ago about that guy who plays Thor in the movies. I forget his name. My ability to remember names.

The hair on my legs. The patience to suffer fools easily.

My husband.

My career.

The sweetest dog ever.

The need to read a mediocre book to the end. The hair under my arms.

The ability to hold my liquor. The ability to hold my pee.

The black shoes that are the only decent pair I have that work with my bunions.

The magical girl thing that let me flash a smile and a little leg and get out of a speeding ticket.

Most of the hair on my..... Oh no. I'm not going there. I haven't lost my mind.

## THE MARCH OF TIME

*A large city park. LIZ enters from stage right, moving downstage center to a park bench. She is nicely dressed for a cool day. Jacket. No hat. Very L L Beanish. ESTHER enters simultaneously from stage left. She is wearing a jacket covered in political buttons and has a backpack. She carries a sign that says "I can't believe I still have to protest this crap." She is looking off stage left, waving to her offstage family and calling to them.*

ESTHER:

I've gotta sit. Just for a minute. *(She makes the sign for "call me" with her hand.)* Text me when you're ready. *(She sits on the bench with all her stuff then quickly looks up, sees LIZ and realizes she was heading for the bench.)*

ESTHER:

I'm sorry. Did you want to sit here?

LIZ:

It's fine. I can find another place. *(Looking around)*

ESTHER:

*(Rearranging her stuff)* Don't be silly. Sit. There's room. Take a load off.

LIZ:

Thanks. I should have worn better shoes.

ESTHER:

These I've got here are the best. Especially if you have bunions or bone spurs. Ugly as hell, of course, but who's to notice. Can you believe the turnout?

LIZ:

I almost couldn't get on the train it was so crowded.

ESTHER:

I know people say this all the time, but I think I know you from someplace.

LIZ:

Really?

ESTHER:

Yeah.

LIZ:

You know, I think you're right. I don't know... Do you do water aerobics?

ESTHER:

God no.

LIZ:

You aren't in an over 60 tennis league, are you?

ESTHER:

Believe me, if we know each other, it's not going to be from any sports thing. I'm thinking maybe from a while ago. Did you work with the Sandinistas in the 70's.

LIZ:

No. I did a Chocolate for Charity fundraiser in 85.

ESTHER:

That's not it.

LIZ:

Where do you live?

ESTHER:

Northwest side.

LIZ:

I'm in the burbs.

ESTHER:

What about school?

LIZ:

Morgan High and then down to State.

ESTHER:

Betsy? Betsy McCann?

LIZ:

Esther Stein! *(They jump up and hug.)* Wow. I can't believe this. The last time I saw you, you were on the floor of Andrews Hall linking arms with JJ and that red headed dorky guy...

ESTHER:

Bernie.

LIZ:

Bernie. Waiting for the cops to break down the door.

ESTHER:

And you were going out the window to put together bail money. Somebody said you got gassed, but I never got the whole story.

LIZ:

*(Holding up her hand)* See this scar?

ESTHER:

Ow! That's nasty.

LIZ:

Got shoved up against that fence outside Altgeld trying to get away from the teargas. The health service called my parents. They put a tight leash on me after that. I call it my antiwar wound. My kids think I got it falling off a bike. Not sure how cool they'd be with mom's radical past. Maybe I'll tell them when they're old enough.

ESTHER:

How old are they?

LIZ:

My son's 40 and Joanie is 44.

ESTHER:

They could probably handle it. My God. Betsy McCann!

LIZ:

Actually Liz Harrison now. You still Esther Stein?

ESTHER:

Oh yeah. I didn't change my name when I married Barry. We were going to hyphenate, but his last name is Lowenstein and somehow Esther Stein Lowenstein did not exactly have a melodious ring to it. Was Harrison that guy you were with back then? The one that headed up the protests. Good looking guy. Money..

LIZ:

No. That was Mark Cabot.

ESTHER:

Oh yeah. Of all of us I thought you guys would stick. You were kind of the golden couple.

LIZ:

We were, weren't we. Not to be. He caught a low number in the draft and opted for Canada. He could have come back with the amnesty but he settled in up there. Got married. We're actually still Christmas card friends. God, life takes you in strange directions, doesn't it?

ESTHER:

Canada's sounding pretty good to me at the moment.

LIZ:

You wouldn't really.....

ESTHER:

Nah. My mom would kill me if I ran away from a fight. She's over there with Barry, my two girls and their kids.

LIZ:

Your mother is here!

ESTHER:

Are you kidding? No way is she staying home when there's evil to fight. It's in her blood. She's organizing the nurses aids at her senior living home, which has actually caused serious blowback from the people running the place let me tell you. "They beat the crap out of me when I marched in Selma and that didn't stop me. Being old isn't going to do it." I cleaned up her language there, by the way.

LIZ:

God bless her. How does she have the strength to keep doing it all these years?

ESTHER:

You know how in monster movies the monster always has something he needs to live like human blood or bone marrow....My mother feeds off injustice. Sticking it to the tyrants lights up her little eyes and kickstarts her heart.. One of the happiest days of her life was when we got her FBI file. She has the page that cited her as a potential security threat framed on her wall. Although she was a little pissed off that they said potential. So, what have you been doing since the Andrews Hall days?



LIZ:

Taught for a bit. Did some freelance writing. Married Sam and had the kids. Ended up in corporate communications for McDonald's for a lot of years before I retired.

ESTHER:

I headed up a letter writing campaign a few years ago trying to get them to stop using factory farms for their beef.

LIZ:

Oh sure. Did you get a sort of condescending snappily vague letter thanking you for your concern and promising to look further into the matter.

ESTHER:

I did.

LIZ:

That was me.

ESTHER:

I burned it.

LIZ:

You should have. (*They both laugh.*) What about you careerwise?

ESTHER:

Well, after college I went south as a union organizer. I got chased out of there, came back up and started working for a non profit. Barry was a community organizer. We met trying to save a low income housing project.

LIZ:

Norma Rae meets Barack Obama.

ESTHER:

I wish we'd had their skills! The project got torn down but our relationship's lasted more than 40 years.

LIZ:

(*Looking around*) I can't believe the language these girls are using. I mean some of the signs....

ESTHER:

The point is to take derogatory words and co-opt them so they're empowering. Like how Black people use the N word.

LIZ:

Honestly, Esther, I'm not comfortable with that either. I'm with Oprah. I don't think anybody should use the N word.

ESTHER:

Where do you stand on queer?

LIZ:

It hasn't exactly come up in my life. I'd have to think about it. Words are very important to me. I can't even text or tweet. I need to punctuate and capitalize. The kids think I'm nuts.

ESTHER:

You know what I remember. How you would never let anybody call the cops pigs. The guys gave you shit on that but you held your ground.

LIZ:

I've been saying thank you to all the cops here today like we used to.

ESTHER:

Oh yeah, me too. I was watching. All the old lefties here do it but the kids don't know they should. We've got a few things we can share with them.

LIZ:

They need some better songs. Nobody's singing.

ESTHER:

I like that girl who does the song about not keeping quiet but it doesn't really work for a rally.

LIZ:

Did you see the video? Where she's all chained up. Yikes.

ESTHER:

They need to find their own Woody Guthrie or Dylan.

LIZ:

Or Helen Reddy. (*singing*). Yes, I am wise but it's wisdom born of pain

ESTHER and LIZ:

Yes I've paid the price. But look how much I've gained. (*louder*). If I have to, I can do anything. I am strong. I am invincible. I am woman.

*(ESTHER's phone signals a text and she reads it and answers quickly.)*

LIZ:

Uh, oh. Cops calling to tell us to shut up?

ESTHER:

No, just my daughter saying the grandkids spotted an ice cream vender so she'll get back to me in a few to let me know where they'll be.

LIZ:

So your whole family is here. That's so great for you.

ESTHER:

Not quite the whole family. I have a son in New York. He works for Goldman Sachs. You ask yourself, was there something I could have done.

LIZ:

Oh Esther.

ESTHER:

I'm just teasing. Mostly. He's a good guy. And it's not such a bad thing that someone in this family makes a lot of money. Who knows. I may need somebody to make bail again.

The good news is his daughter is marrying this great boy from Nigeria who was adopted as a baby by two Unitarian lesbians. I am so looking forward to that wedding! You here on your own?

LIZ:

My son's marching in Boston with his wife and son. My daughter wants no part of any of this. My husband wanted to come but it's a lot of walking on uneven ground.

ESTHER:

This getting old business is tough.

LIZ:

Oh, that's not it. Sam's in great shape. But he lost a leg in Vietnam. The prosthetics are getting better and better but you know, something like this...

ESTHER:

Oh, wow. Sure.

LIZ:

He's watching it on tv.

ESTHER:

We should wave then. The Channel 26 chopper is over there somewhere I think. (*They look up and wave, laughing as they do.*) I did some work with veterans. I never know what to say to guys who were in Nam. The World War II vets or the Korean guys you can say, thank you for your service and they appreciate it. Some guys from Nam are good with it but I've had others, they don't want to hear it.

LIZ:

Sam says he never knows what to say when someone says that. It always reminds him of the guys in his platoon who didn't come back. He's carried that all this time. And he has the physical pain to remind him.

ESTHER:

(*Digging in her back pack*). Listen, I've got some pot in here somewhere. It's great for....

LIZ:

Esther, oh my god, no.

ESTHER:

Relax. It's medical. All legal. In little candies. It's my mom's but she's got no problem sharing.

LIZ:

This is a public....there are cops....

ESTHER:

Oh, Betsy, haven't you figured out that nobody pays attention to old ladies. They think we're safe. It's great. We can be like stealth weapons in the war against bullshit.

LIZ:

Oh, I don't think....

ESTHER:

It can help with pain. And other things. When was the last time you did it high?

LIZ:

Oddly enough I actually know the answer to that question. It was in 1974 after a neighbor's party. A couple months later I was pregnant. Bye bye joints.

ESTHER:

Well, you won't be getting pregnant again so....

LIZ:

No. Really. That was another life.

ESTHER:

It's the same life. Damn. Can you believe it's been almost fifty years since we sat on that floor at Andrews trying to stop the war.

LIZ:

Did we do any good, do you think?

ESTHER:

Some. It ended. Maybe a little sooner than if we'd kept our mouths shut. And you can't keep your mouth shut. I don't know what more we could have done. I'm proud of us. When people start dissing boomers I won't have it. Hell, we stood up for civil rights and women's rights. Native Americans. The environment.

LIZ:

But then most of us just sort of...stopped. Not you. Obviously you've kept up the fight. The Sandinistas? Seriously? I just....I don't know.....I always thought it was enough just to be a nice person.

ESTHER:

Don't underestimate nice. We really need nice right now. But so now, well....let me ask you. Why are you here?

LIZ:

I'm not really sure. I went to bed one night and everything was normal and I woke up the next day and suddenly it was 1968 again. I guess I just felt like I had to do something. And this was something I could do. But is it going to do any good do you think?

ESTHER:

Well, not if this is the end of it. Not if everybody goes home and gets comfortable again. There'll be more marches. But there's got to be more than pissed off walking around.

LIZ:

But what....

ESTHER:

*(Digging into her backpack again and pulling out a flyer and an envelope)* Listen, I've got just the thing for you. The first and third Saturday mornings every month I go down to this refugee center. We let them practice their English on us and we bring some stuff for the kids and help them with paperwork. Whatever they need.

LIZ:

*(Taking the flyer).* Isn't this kind of an iffy area?

ESTHER:

Poor people stuff tends to be in iffy areas. But it's fine. I've been going there a year and nobody's hassled me.

LIZ:

I don't speak Spanish.

ESTHER:

These people are from all over. They have translators and most of them want to speak English anyway. *(Her phone rings again and she quickly takes and sends a text)* Ah. Got to meet the kids. I think this is winding down.

LIZ:

Oh, Esther it was so great running into you. Maybe....

ESTHER:

Look, here's what I'm going to do. I'll give you this flyer and I'm putting my number on it. If you want to go, call me and we can meet up. If this doesn't work for you maybe there's something else I can connect you with. And I'm going to throw a couple of these little candies in here, too, just in case, you know. *(She tucks the envelope into Liz's purse)*

LIZ:

*(They hug and ESTHER exits as LIZ calls after her).* Hey. While you're taking care of everybody else, make sure you take care of yourself.

*(LIZ sits back on the bench and reaches into her purse. She takes out the flyer and as she reads it she fingers the scar on her hand, then looks out at the audience.)*

*Slow fade.*

## The Near Death Laundry Chute Experience

LYNN:

I love my laundry chute. When my late husband and I moved from a city apartment to a suburban house the two things I loved most were 1. not having to drive around the block ten times to find a place to park and, 2. my laundry chute. I would strip in front of the little door each morning and send my pajamas down that black hole. I even learned how to drop my drawers and flick them through the opening with my feet. It's not as sexy as it sounds.

Anyway, one evening a couple of weeks ago I went down into the basement expecting to do a few loads. I'd stripped the bed earlier so there would be sheets and a comforter along with towels and the other usual stuff. But when I got downstairs, the basket under the chute was almost empty. Ok wait. I did throw that bedding down, right? I'd just left the bedroom. I knew it wasn't on the bed.

A tiny little panic started to rise up because of course now I'm thinking.....well you know what I'm thinking. Not so early onset dementia. Where's the damned bedding? And I say to myself if I find the sheets in the refrigerator so help me I will drop my young dog off at doggie day care and then the old dog and I will get into the car, close the garage door and sayonara baby.

Fortunately, just as I'm trying to figure out if I can build up enough carbon monoxide with my Prius, it dawns on me to look up into the chute. And there it all is.

Having narrowly avoided committing suicide and dogacide, I now need a plan. I move the basket, replace it with a nearby step stool, and try to reach the blockage. Not even close. I can get one arm and my head in there but I have these Joan Crawford shoulders so no way is that going to work.

Up two flights of stairs. Open the chute door. Nope. The stuff is just out of reach. I need something I can use to push it. So I go back downstairs where I survey my options. I try a broom but the handle is long so the angle is wrong. There is a much heavier shorter handled spade. I haul it back up to the second floor where I maneuver it into the chute and, holding it in my right hand, reach down as far as I can .....and promptly lose my grip on the damned thing. It hits the bedding. The whole kit and kaboodle slides maybe another two feet before it gets stuck again.

I'm thinking maybe now that it's moved I can reach it from below. Back to the basement, back on the stool and I reach and reach and I'm really close. And.... no.

Brilliant idea! I go to the kitchen and get that grabber thing that you use to get the corn on the cob out of the water. Back to the basement, back on the stool and as I start to reach up and realize that yes, hallelujah the grabber will reach.... I have a blinding moment of common sense. This shit, including that stupid spade, is going to come down on my head.

There are a lot of things to think about when you live alone. Like that whole medical emergency scenario. I do not have an I've fallen and I can't get up button. It's crossed my mind. But I'm in pretty good shape and getting one would just seem to be the final admission that I am an old person. Honestly their commercials don't help. I kind of want to slap that old lady or at least tell her quit whining and face your death with a little dignity. Not that I'd be a saint. I'd totally be a whiner right to the end.

Normally I carry my cell phone with me when I go into the basement. Except today I didn't. I look down at myself. I am wearing a pair of godawful sweatpants and a t shirt that says Hakuna Matata on it. My hair looks ok, but I'm not wearing make up. This is how I will be found if I am attacked by my laundry and my spade and my head hits the concrete floor.

So you can see the pickle I'm in and the choices I am facing. I could call someone. Like, who? What am I going to do, call the fire department? Hello, this is an emergency. I need someone to come over and ream out my chute. I don't think so.

I could go upstairs, change clothes, put on a little lipstick and blush and grab my cell phone. Or I can just say screw it. By this time I've been up and down those friggin stairs so many times, I'm willing to take my chances. I look around the basement for something I can use to increase my odds of survival. There's an old yoga mat in the corner so I drag it over next to the stool and figure I'll try to fall in that direction should it come to that. There's a box of some stuff to take to Goodwill and there are a couple of knit winter hats in there but, like I said, the one saving grace is my hair is actually looking pretty good and how much protection is a wool cap anyway. Where's a football helmet when you need one? Believe it or not I have one, but it's in the attic and I'm not willing to give the EMT's who find me that much material.

Deep breath, back onto the stool, grabber in hand. I reach up and yes! The tongs close on a pillowcase. I tug. The lone case drifts to the floor. I reach again and now I have a piece of the comforter. This is the motherlode. If I can move that I'm.....and here it comes! It's moving slowly enough that I can get out of the way except that when I try to step off the stool my ankle twists and down I go. But I land on the mat and I roll out of the way just as the spade hits the bedding and bounces. Away from me. I am alive. I am soooo alive! And as soon as my ankle heals, I'm going to go dancing.

*(She limps off.)*



## IN THE POOL

*(A pool. Five women mime standing in water up to just below their chests. They wear bathing suits and water shoes. HELEN is stylish looking even in this situation. GAYLE moves gracefully. ANNA has slightly imperfect hair and works hard at the moves. MILLIE is 87 years old. She wears glasses and a shower cap and keeps up as best she can. The fifth member of the group is THERESE. She is downstage center.*

*Throughout the monologue the women attempt to follow the moves of the unseen teacher. Because they are in water, they can not see each others legs. While their arm movements are always well co-ordinated, not all of their leg movements in all exercises are exactly the same. )*

### THERESE:

You'll find us all here twice a week. Wednesday and Saturday mornings. Our intrepid little band. Fighting for our bodies. At war with gravity on so many fronts. Trying to strengthen the muscles that will keep us upright. It's easy to keep your balance in the water. On land, not so much. We have a fear of falling.

There's a spirit of camaraderie, but we don't know each other well. We chat at the lockers. We each use the same one every time so we remember where our things are. They put the number on the key, but it's small and hard to see without your glasses. And your glasses, of course, are in your locker. It would be easy to make the numbers bigger or in color but the world is not made for old people. Oldish people. Seniors. Mature people.

Our teacher's name is Heather. She has two small children. She urges us on, praises our achievements, gently chides the slackers. Her body is still firm. But there are crinkles starting at her eyes and there are some small snakey veins on one of her legs. It's beginning.

*(The women do a move that involves raising their hands above their heads. GAYLE's arms look like she's doing ballet.)*

That's Gayle over there. Someone said she used to dance. Most of us just struggle to do the moves, but Gayle seems to enjoy having the moves come out of her, if that makes any sense. Unlike the rest of us, I think Gayle is on good terms with her body.

Not like poor Anna. I wonder if anything ever came easy to Anna. I heard that her husband has early onset Alzheimers. But then I heard her husband drinks. I suppose both could be true. I try to give her little compliments sometimes. You can always find something. We support each other when we can.

That's Helen on the end. Is she tan today? She's usually tan. She and her husband travel. Her son is a doctor. Everybody's a little jealous of Helen. She's kind of like the woman in the Cialis ad. You know that couple holding hands on the beach as the sun sets. Maybe. But you never know what's going on in someone else's marriage. I try to be nice to her too. Just in case.

*(MILLIE does some move with her hands that is unlike anything the others are doing.)*

Oh, looks like Millie's a little lost again. When I first got here I took one look at Millie and just thought, dear Lord, do not let me end up like Millie. Please take me before I end up somewhere in public with a shower cap on my head. Let me die cool. But now.... I mean she's 87 years old and she's exercising. Not well, granted, but she's moving. And apparently she actually has someplace to go later where she wants her hair to look nice. She's outlived two husbands and she still gives a crap. I've outlived one. And there are days when I don't.

You think you understand how death works until the person who has always been with you suddenly isn't. And everything in the house is frozen midstream. Waiting. His clothes in the laundry basket. His pills in the day of the week container. His scrawled to do list. Kidney doc Thursday 3 o'clock. Get battery for watch.

Time. Lose a husband, gain a lot of time. And garage space. You can even put your car in there. I'm not saying it's a fair tradeoff, you understand. But still. There are small gifts. You take your coffee and your book, settle into the couch and the quiet. The dog curls up, leaning into your thigh, snoring softly. You are grateful for the sound and the touch of him.

You may be an important person in many people's lives, but you are no longer the most important person in anyone's. That's one part sadness and one part relief.

*(There is silence as all of the women lose track of their movements and their heads slowly turn in unison from left to right, staring.)*

The two guys who just got out of the swim lanes are training for a local triathlon. They've been here every Saturday for the last four weeks. It's like an alien visitation. Travelers from another world. We lived there once. The land where you could touch that kind of beauty. Now we can only look. From a distance. Surreptitiously, so we don't seem creepy.

My husband was a beautiful boy. Blond hair. Slim hiped. He wrote poetry and played guitar. We had chemistry then. And rug burns. Thankfully change comes slowly when you see someone every day. You hardly notice. And then suddenly one day you do. But it's ok.

Heather is telling us to push.

*(The women take a wide legged stand and push their arms forward.)*

Push push push she says.

*(The women push faster.)*

Once upon a time when we were told to push, we were bringing life into the world. Now all we can do is push against the current, knowing full well someday the current is going to win. But not today. Today we are still full of fight.

Here are the rules of the pool.

Show up.

Don't kick the person next to you.

If everyone else is doing something you can't do, do something you can.

And. Most important of all.

ALL THE WOMEN:

Keep moving.

## THINGS THAT NEVER CHANGE

### THE WOMAN

Things that never change. In no particular order of importance.

I will always be in the wrong line at the grocery store and the wrong lane on the expressway. So will you.

A fifty fifty chance isn't.

As soon as I find the absolutely perfect beauty product they'll stop making it.

No matter how much money you have in the bank, you will use every tool at your disposal to get the last of the makeup out of the tube. I'll bet even the Kennedy women do it.

My dog's medical emergencies will always happen on a weekend or a holiday. Ditto for my own medical emergencies.

The five pounds will come back. And bring their friends.

Men You want him to call he doesn't. You don't want him to, there he is. It's friggin high school all over again.

I can put together a family gathering with the skill of Ike planning the invasion of Europe, and at the end of the day somebody's nose will be out of joint.

There will always be at least three people in my life I can call in the middle of the night who will run over and help me dispose of the body. No questions asked.

When it's a warm summer night. And I'm driving somewhere I can get up a little speed. And the windows are open. And the oldies channel starts to play one of those songs. I'm 17.

Whatever happens on the outside, I'm still me on the inside.

## THE COUSINS' BOOK CLUB

*Elizabeth's house. Five women. Each has a glass of wine, a small paper plate with food and a book. There is a table with more food and more wine and the women visit it from time to time during the scene to replenish their supplies. MARY ALICE checks her phone periodically and surreptitiously texts quick responses. MARGO can't sit still and moves around more often than the others. BARBARA, the youngest by several years, has a hard time getting anyone to pay attention to her.*

MARGO:

Exactly what am I eating here?

ELIZABETH:

*(Looking at the item MARGO is holding up.)* That's a kohlrabi chip. Dip it in the hummus. It's really good.

MARGO:

No offense, Elizabeth but it really isn't.

ELIZABETH:

I didn't make it. Mary Alice did.

MARY ALICE:

Very low calorie and a load of vitamins.

MARGO:

Lately at these get togethers I feel like I'm trapped in an ashram.

BARBARA:

*(Speaking quietly and ignored by the others)* That's rude.

MARY ALICE:

We can't eat like we used to, Margo. Your mom died at 62 and mine was only 58. We're not in the best gene pool.

MARGO:

I can't believe you remember when everybody died.

ELIZABETH:

Guys, don't forget, Grandma made it to 95.

SANDRA:

Yeah, but she was paralyzed on her left side for the last seven years.

MARGO:

And she was a mean old bat. Mean old bats live a long time.

ELIZABETH:

You'd be mean too if you were half paralyzed and every three months you got picked up and carted to another house.

MARY ALICE:

People took care of their own in those days.

MARGO:

Not people, Mary Alice. Women. When we had grandma my dad never missed a day of work or a bowling night. And she was HIS mother.

*(Exit MARGO)*

ELIZABETH:

Do you guys remember her wake?

BARBARA:

I don't think I was born yet.

MARY ALICE:

What was it? Three nights?

SANDRA:

At least. And we all had to be there every minute. They let Elizabeth and me bring our dolls. Margo brought a deck of cards. Where is Margo?

MARY ALICE:

Bathroom I think. We played Go Fish for hours.

ELIZABETH:

And we snuck downstairs for the Maurice Lennel cookies. You know the last time I had one was where George had his chemo. They actually weren't all that good.

SANDRA:

I was a Salerno butter cookie kid.

MARY ALICE:

*(singing)* “Mommy. What is it dear?”

*(MARY ALICE, SANDRA and ELIZABETH sing)*

“I want a Salerno butter cookie.”

MARY ALICE:

I can’t believe I remember that commercial. I can’t remember what I did yesterday any more, but that I remember.

BARBARA:

I was too young.

MARY ALICE:

My kids won’t let my grandchildren go to wakes or funerals. I think they’re overprotective but I’m just old grandma. They really are all such wonderful kids, though. I can’t complain. They check in with me all the time. That was just Angie a minute ago. She sent me a picture of Danny in his high chair at Chipotle. See?

*(MARY ALICE passes the picture to everyone and they ooh and aah)*

SANDRA:

Who even has real funerals anymore? Everybody gets cremated and scattered someplace and then there’s a memorial service.

BARBARA:

It’s better for the environment.

MARY ALICE:

If there’s no grave, there’s no place to visit.

ELIZABETH:

We’ll come back and haunt you, cuz. No need to say goodbye at all.

*(Enter MARGO)*

MARGO:

Elizabeth why do you have like seven post it notes on your mirror.

ELIZABETH:

You know there's a guest bathroom on this floor.

MARGO:

Someone was in it.

ELIZABETH:

Margo, we're all here.

MARGO:

Whatever. I could barely see to put my lipstick on.

ELIZABETH:

It's so I don't forget things.

MARGO:

One of them said cousin's book club Sunday. You couldn't remember us?

ELIZABETH:

Oh I'd remember you all were coming. I was just worried I'd forget which day was Sunday.

SANDRA:

I put mine on the dresser mirror. If I remember. Which reminds me, Elizabeth, I'm sorry I missed the mindful meditation session last week. I just totally forgot.

ELIZABETH:

That's ok. I texted you but I forgot you don't text.

MARY ALICE:

You don't text? You should text. Twitter is good.

ELIZABETH:

It's getting so hard to remember who's on what. I'm not on Facebook so I miss stuff. And there are still two women in my bridge club who don't have email. No wonder my mind is going.

SANDRA:

Last week I was making pasta and I couldn't find the pasta grabber thing. It's been in that same drawer since we redid the kitchen eight years ago. I finally found it in the drawer with the batteries. Scared the crap out of me.

MARGO:

Ok, this is depressing. What were you talking about while I was gone?



ELIZABETH:

Funerals.

MARGO:

That's my conversational choice? Dementia or funerals?

BARBARA:

We could talk about the book.

SANDRA:

Needing a few reminder notes is not a sign of dementia. It's normal aging.

ELIZABETH:

Anyway, Sandra was saying she wanted to be cremated and Mary Alice was saying that her kids won't let the grandkids go to wakes or funerals.

SANDRA:

Did Susie have her baby yet?

MARY ALICE:

Next month. She's having a girl. I'll have seven grandsons and seven granddaughters. And they're all such great kids. Isn't that amazing?

MARGO:

You have six kids and fourteen grandkids and some of them are teenagers and everyone is fine. That's not just amazing. It's a candidate for a Ripley's entry. Come on. Nobody's at least ADHD? Addicted to something?

MARY ALICE:

No. No.

ELIZABETH:

Anyway, the point was Mary Alice thinks the old routines surrounding death help us get through it.

MARY ALICE:

Wakes and funerals and cemeteries give us something familiar for people to participate in.

ELIZABETH:

My friend Eileen died last year. And you know she was widowed twice and she has three kids....two on the east coast with her first husband and I think the youngest from the second husband lives in Hawaii. Anyway, she was cremated but she never wrote down where she wanted her ashes to go so there was this big fight. The youngest boy had kept his father's ashes and he wanted to mix Eileen in with those and scatter them in Hawaii, but the oldest one said she should be with her father and the second oldest one said he knew his mother really wanted her ashes scattered in the mountains. So you know they split her up. Honest to god. They took measuring cups and scooped her into baggies with little labels on them. Now she's all over the place.

SANDRA:

You need to have a plan. I have all my instructions right there with my will. Bill knows exactly what to do and if he goes first or if we go together the kids know. I even wrote what goes in the obituary and the picture I want them to use.

MARGO:

I haven't even had my picture taken in the last five years.

MARY ALICE:

Oh, I'll take one now. I can take all of us and post it on my page.

MARGO:

So help me, Mary Alice, you put my picture on facebook and I will put this book in your face. It ought to be illegal, sticking people's pictures out there in the world without their permission.

MARY ALICE:

It's fun. Don't be so vain.

MARGO:

I can diet, exercise and wear spandex so my body can look pretty damned good. But there is nothing you can do with the face.

SANDRA:

Botox. Or surgery.

MARGO:

It's painful. It's expensive and you just end up looking like you only in a wind tunnel.

SANDRA:

I was in the doctors office last week reading People, and they had these pictures and I could not believe that Marlo Thomas and Marie Osmond look like each other now.

ELIZABETH:

Marie's the one that still has eyebrows.

SANDRA:

You know what bugs me. How when magazines do those advice articles—like skin care. And they'll say here's what you do in your 20's, and 30's and maybe 40 to 50. And then, that's it. Like your skin falls off at 50. Or maybe they'll have an over 50 category, like there's no difference between 50 and 80. Or they'll just say, emphasize your best feature. Like you've still got a best feature.

ELIZABETH:

Oh and the ads for the dating sites. For people over 50. And all the people they show are maybe 50 and a half.

SANDRA:

And the makeover shows. They never do anybody over 50.

ELIZABETH:

But you go to the makeup counters at the stores for help and it's all girls in their 20's. They have no idea how to pick make up for somebody who can't see to put on makeup. I was in Walgreen's and they had that Cover Girl eyebrow pencil I like on sale.

SANDRA:

Oh yeah. Seems like they have it on sale every other week.

ELIZABETH:

I couldn't remember if I had an extra one so I bought it. And when I went to put it in the drawer I had five of them in there.

SANDRA:

And they last forever.

ELIZABETH:

I know. I looked at them and suddenly it occurred to me that I might not outlive my makeup.

MARGO:

I hate that nobody ever warned us about the whole hair thing.

MARY ALICE:

I know. It's like all of a sudden you've got it where you don't want it and where you want it, it's gone.

SANDRA:

Well that's not totally true. I mean I am so glad I don't have to shave my legs or armpits anymore.

BARBARA:

Really?

MARGO:

And no more trips to Brazil, if you get my drift.

MARY ALICE:

What?

ELIZABETH:

But now you have to shave your face. Or tweeze.

BARBARA:

Really?

SANDRA:

My eyebrows are almost totally gone. Just like Marlo.

ELIZABETH:

I never saw this coming.

MARGO:

Somebody needs to make a movie.

ELIZABETH:

A movie?

MARGO:

Remember how in fifth grade they herded all the girls into the auditorium for that movie about how our bodies were changing. You know the one that starts out with that chick who can't go in the pool.

ELIZABETH:

*(Using her documentary voice)* "Why can't Virginia go in the pool today?"

MARGO:

Because her mother's afraid if she uses a tampon she won't be a virgin anymore.

SANDRA:

“High in the fallopian tubes, the drama of life is taking place.” Of course the real drama was how that sperm got to that egg. They didn’t tell us that part.

MARGO:

See. Someone should make a movie about the changes your body goes through when you get old. The hair, the weight, the drying out, the memory...

MARY ALICE:

The leaks.

ELIZABETH:

The sweats.

SANDRA:

I don’t sweat at all any more. Even when I should be sweating.

ELIZABETH:

I wake up at night drenched. And I can only sleep on my left side because of that vertigo thing where you get those little crystal in your ears...

MARY ALICE:

Auntie Dodie had that...

ELIZABETH:

And so every morning the left side of my hair is sticking straight up.

BARBARA:

So women need to be warned about what’s coming.

ELIZABETH:

Once a year theaters could have a special showing and every woman who turns 50 that year gets a free ticket.

MARGO:

Followed immediately by a huge get together with free champagne and xanax.

MARY ALICE:

*(With uncharacteristic enthusiasm)* And Chippendale dancers!

*(The others stare at her for a moment in disbelief.)*

I'd love to go see a movie. I can't remember the last...oh well I took Angie's kids to that Disney movie ... you know the one with the spunky girl who spends the whole movie proving she doesn't need a man and then she ends up with one.

ELIZABETH:

That's all of them, isn't it?

SANDRA:

Little girls should not need the fantasy that some man will come and rescue them.

MARGO:

That's right. That's my fantasy and I'm not sharing it with any prepubescent kid.

SANDRA:

At some point do you just give up? Will we still be tweezing those chin hairs at 95?

ELIZABETH:

Who wants to live to be 95?

MARGO:

Almost anybody who's 94 I would imagine.

ELIZABETH:

Honestly, sometimes I don't know what's scarier. The idea you die and that's it, or the idea of going on forever.

MARY ALICE:

Did you see that article in Time about kale?

*(Exit SANDRA)*

MARGO:

Again with the food?

MARY ALICE:

Two servings of kale a day improves your memory by 37%.

MARGO:

Yeah, well, I'll start eating kale when I'm demented enough to forget what kale tastes like..... You know what I miss. Cocktail weenies. Remember how you used to go to parties and they'd have them on little toothpicks. God those were good.

ELIZABETH:

When I was a young bride, I swear, once a week FOR DINNER I would take Oscar Meyer hotdogs, slice them down the middle, fill them with Velveeta.....

MARY ALICE:

Wrap 'em in bacon and a Pillsbury crescent roll and stick them in the oven.

ELIZABETH:

Bake at 375 for twelve minutes.

MARY ALICE:

Well we know better now.

ELIZABETH:

Except next week it'll change. Did you ever think you'd see the day when coffee and chocolate were good for you?

MARGO:

And red wine. Proof that prayer works, I say.

MARY ALICE:

Margo, do you think you might have a little drinking problem?

MARGO:

Yes. Right now my problem is I have too little to drink. *(She heads for a refill.)*

MARY ALICE:

I'm just saying we need to be careful about what we let into our bodies.

MARGO:

I miss the days when the big concern was WHO we let into our bodies.

MARY ALICE:

Don't forget we have diabetes in the family.

MARGO:

Can we please stop talking about sick people! Every place I go these days all anybody talks about is who got what diagnosis, what hurts, ....

ELIZABETH:

And you know it seems like all my favorite programs these days are sponsored by catheters. Or those chairs that go up the stairs. Or walk in bathtubs.

MARGO:

Or medications with all the godawful side effects. You know I swear I was listening to one of those ads and the announcer says, tell your doctor if you've had an organ transplant. If your doctor doesn't know you've had an organ transplant you should get the hell out of that doctor's office.

ELIZABETH:

Would you get one of those?

MARGO:

A transplant?

ELIZABETH:

A walk in bathtub. I was thinking they might be nice.

MARY ALICE:

Are you kidding? You have to sit in them while they fill up and then sit in them until they drain. Who wants to do that?

ELIZABETH:

I never thought of that part. You can't open the door.

MARY ALICE:

It's important to know the family health history. If we're prediabetic...

MARGO:

Oh my god, at our age we're all pre something if we're not already something. I'm tired of it. I just keep exercising and hoping for the best.

ELIZABETH:

I gave up on 36-24-36 a long time ago. My goal now is 120 over 60.

MARY ALICE:

Dr Oz says the mistake people make is they exercise and then they go have a doughnut.

ELIZABETH:

If you can't have a doughnut after you exercise, when do you get a doughnut?

MARGO:

Immediately after a terminal diagnosis.

ELIZABETH:

I'll bet the doughnuts in hospice are just as bad as the cookies at chemo. Margo promise me if I'm in hospice you'll bring me the doughnuts from Peterson's. The one in the strip mall next to the used book store.



MARGO:

Again with the food and the death talk.

BARBARA and ELIZABETH:

Maybe we should talk about the book.

MARY ALICE:

Who picked this book, anyway?

ELIZABETH:

Who do you think?

*(They all look at MARGO)*

MARGO:

What? I was tired of all those stories about orphans in Nazi Germany and Russians with blood diseases. This book is about real women of our generation who accomplished things. We need inspiration. *(She holds up the book pointing to each word in the title)* Girls Like Us.

ELIZABETH:

Carly Simon, Carole King and Joni Mitchell?

MARGO:

Yes! They broke the mold. They did things women weren't supposed to do. They kicked open doors!

MARY ALICE:

You know I read they might draft women now. And put them in combat.

ELIZABETH:

I don't think there's any job women aren't doing. Outside of the mafia and the Catholic church.

MARGO:

Valet car parker. Think about it. Have you ever handed over your car keys to a woman?

ELIZABETH:

You're right. I wonder why that is. They're mostly foreign, aren't they? East European.

MARGO:

So you think there's some Russian controlled valet ring that bars women.

ELIZABETH:

No. That's not it. Even when people hire high school kids for big parties, it's always boys. And that should be a pretty good job. Lots of tips. It's just sexist.

BARBARA:

Well the book talks about how the women broke....

ELIZABETH:

Why do you suppose the author called it Girls Like Us and not Women Like Us?

MARGO:

People don't refer to us as women, do they? I mean, you go to a restaurant with your friends and if you're in a cheap place with an older waitress she'll say like "do you girls know what you want." And if it's more upscale, the server will say, "Do you ladies know what you want." They never say do you women know what you want. That would sound funny.

BARBARA:

So our choices are to be girls or ladies.

MARY ALICE:

I still feel like a girl. I mean, I don't feel old or anything. I know I can't do some of the things I used to. But I'm still me inside. I'm still the girl I was. Sometimes I still get surprised when I look in the mirror.

MARGO:

Always hold the mirror up, by the way. Never ever look down into a mirror. It will scare the shit out of you.

MARY ALICE:

I don't think there's anything wrong with being called a lady. That's a compliment.

MARGO:

No it's not. It's a straightjacket. We admire the women in this book precisely because they refused to be ladies.

MARY ALICE:

But they were young. That's not who we are any more.

ELIZABETH:

So the world is still telling us who we should be. We're old ladies.

MARGO:

I'd say people see us in a certain way but honestly I don't think they see us at all. You know when I was still working, there was this time when a bunch of us were in the lunchroom. And I was the oldest one there, of course. So the conversation turns to some older actress who was hooking up with a guy who was younger. And one of the men in the room who was maybe in his thirties says something like, "He's doing it for the money. She's got to be close to 60. Can you imagine doing it with someone that old?" And of course I'm sitting right there. And nobody even had the decency to feel uncomfortable. We're invisible.

*(Everyone is silent for a moment. Then enter SANDRA.)*

SANDRA:

Wow. What shut you guys up? Whatever you're not talking about, I've got a better topic. Elizabeth, what's with the post it note that says "Call Ric. 7 PM?"

ELIZABETH:

Does nobody use the guest bathroom?

MARGO:

There was a call Ric post it note? How did I miss that. Damn I have to get my cataracts checked.

SANDRA:

So who's Ric? And why are you calling him at 7PM?

ELIZABETH:

It's...uh....well actually it's Ric Santorino.

SANDRA:

Oh my god, Ric Santorino!

MARY ALICE:

*That Ric Santorino?*

BARBARA:

Uh oh.

MARGO:

All I can say is I'm relieved you've crawled out of your widow hole and started seeing someone. Although Ric Santorino is sort of diving into the deep end of the man pool.

SANDRA:

How did this happen?

ELIZABETH:

The reunion committee sent out a list of names and contact info and the next thing I know he's emailing me. And we reconnected and then we got together at the reunion and we've been....sort of....you know.

MARGO:

Actually dear we don't know. So now you have to tell us. And of course what we really want to know is are you sleeping with him so you may as well start there.

MARY ALICE:

Margo!

ELIZABETH:

No, I'm not sleeping with him.

MARGO:

Why not? You slept with him in high school.

*( MARY ALICE, SANDRA, AND BARBARA stare at ELIZABETH incredulously)*

ELIZABETH:

Once! *(to MARGO)* Which I confided to you in deepest confidence. And you made a sacred vow you'd never tell.

MARGO:

For the love of god, Elizabeth, we're all adults now. The statute of limitation on pinky swears can't be more than 30 years.

MARY ALICE:

He was so gorgeous.

SANDRA:

What happened with the two of you. I thought you'd stay together forever.

ELIZABETH:

What happened was, after three years of fighting him off, I was afraid I'd lose him. So we had sex. And then I got scared about maybe getting pregnant if we kept doing it and I said no more. And Ric said bye bye. Now he says it was the biggest mistake he ever made. And here's the irony of the whole thing. All these years later I'm facing the same damned decision.

MARGO:

The same fucking decision.

SANDRA:

Well, is there, you know, chemistry?

ELIZABETH:

Honestly, I'm beginning to think my chemistry set is missing a few chemicals.

MARY ALICE:

Then he just isn't the right one.

SANDRA:

How did he age? Fat? Bald?

ELIZABETH:

No. Actually he still looks pretty good. And I enjoy being with him. But I'm honestly not sure I want to have sex with anyone.

BARBARA:

Then don't.

MARGO:

There are pills for that now you know.

ELIZABETH:

I already take a statin and a blood pressure pill and something for my thyroid. Who knows how all that stuff interacts. Do I really want to mess with that just to have sex?

MARGO:

I know guys practically on their death beds and they pop Viagra like chiclets.

MARY ALICE:

But that's men. Men are different. Women don't need sex like they do.

BARBARA:

Did anybody read the book? Joni Mitchell? Carly Simon?

SANDRA:

I know we've always been told that. Do you think it's true?

MARGO:

Here's what I think. I think that generally, yes, men want sex more than women. But it's all on a continuum. The horniest woman is definitely hornier than the least horny man. And over your individual life it all sort of ebbs and flows.

ELIZABETH:

Well my tide seems to be in permanent ebb. And I know what he wants.

MARGO:

Oh honey, if that's what it takes. It's not like we've never hit our backs and thought of God and country when we needed to.

*(The women all stare at MARGO)*

Oh, come on. Seriously. You've never had sex when you didn't want to?

SANDRA:

Well of course. I'm married. But....

ELIZABETH:

You know I think part of this is I just can't bury another husband. After what George and I went through with his cancer.....I can't do it again.

SANDRA:

But if it's you who gets sick. Then there'd be someone to take care of you. How healthy is Ric?

MARGO:

Oh great. Now we're playing invalid roulette. Sleep with him, Elizabeth and we'll send his DNA sample off for analysis. Check for any latent disease tendencies.

ELIZABETH:

It would be nice to have someone to grow old with. Travel maybe. Or just look out at the sunset...

MARGO:

You do know those Cialis commercials aren't real, right?

SANDRA:

Hey, Bill and I do those things. We hold hands when we walk in the sand. Partly so we don't fall over, but still.

MARY ALICE:

My husband would do that. If I ever could find time to go the beach. I can't remember the last time I went to the beach. Maybe with Patrick's two. There's just always so much to do. I feel like I spend half my life doing laundry.

ELIZABETH:

Your kids are all out of the house. There's just the two of you. How much laundry could you have. You don't still do your kids....

MARY ALICE:

No. Not really. I mean once in a while. Annmarie has her hands full so sometimes. But even for just us. There's always towels and sheets.

SANDRA:

It doesn't seem like that much with Bill and me. How often do you wash your towels?

MARY ALICE:

Every time we use one.

MARGO:

Every time?

MARY ALICE:

Of course. How often do you?

BARBARA:

I heard on the Today show that on average people wash their towels every....

ELIZABETH:

Every three or four days maybe.

SANDRA:

That's right. A little more in the summer.

MARGO:

Really, you guys? Every now and then I just think, that one's been there a while, and I throw it in the dirty clothes.

MARY ALICE:

I don't want to have to remember which end I used on my face and which end I used... you know....on other parts.

MARGO:

Oh, honey, did no one ever tell you there's no such thing as cooties.

SANDRA:

What about Ed?

MARY ALICE:

Oh he'll let his towels go forever if I don't grab them right away.

ELIZABETH:

You have separate towels? George and I always just used the same towels. How do you keep them straight?

MARY ALICE:

His say his on them and mine say hers.

SANDRA:

That's a real thing? His and hers towels.

MARY ALICE:

I have to get them on the internet. They aren't cheap.

MARGO:

You have sex with the man!

MARY ALICE:

That doesn't mean I want to use his towels.

SANDRA:

What about sheets. How often do you wash your sheets?

MARY ALICE:

Every three days.

ELIZABETH:

Once a week. Once a week is fine.

SANDRA:

Once a week.

*(They all look at MARGO)*



MARGO:

Hey, I don't keep a sheet calendar. I used to wash them after sex but that sure as hell doesn't work any more.

MARY ALICE:

Hey. None of this is helping Elizabeth decide about Ric. Growing old without a partner is scary.

SANDRA:

Margo, don't you think about your future. You've got no husband and no kids.

MARGO:

You know my friends Ricki and Lee?

SANDRA:

The lesbians?

MARGO:

Well, they do have other identifying characteristics, but yes. Anyway, we were talking about this very issue because a lot of their friends don't have kids and they said they were at a party and everyone was joking around and they decided they would buy a place in the mountains and open up a lesbian assisted living home and call it The Silver Beaver. And then it got more serious and they could actually do it. And Ricki and Lee said I could stay with them if I needed to and I could probably pass.

MARY ALICE:

I can't see you in the mountains.

SANDRA:

THAT's the problem you see here?

MARY ALICE:

I think I would have made a good lesbian.

*(Everyone looks at her in amazement.)*

MARGO:

You'd have to give up the fourteen perfect grandchildren. And probably your Bible study group.

MARY ALICE:

Oh Margo. I'm not saying I'd give up my husband and kids and grandkids. I love taking care of them. Making the meals and making sure everything is right for them....all the time....and buying stuff ....and how they need you. All the time. I just mean women are so much easier. If you could get past the sex part.... You could live with somebody who'd be your sort of best friend.

SANDRA:

I never trust women who say their husbands are their best friends. Honestly, I love Bill like crazy but generally, I think you can have a happy life without a husband but you can't have a happy life without a best friend.

MARGO:

I say give the guy a break. You might enjoy it. Was he any good the first time around?

ELIZABETH:

It was in the back seat of a Corvair and I was petrified.

MARGO:

Ok, well you've both had a lot more experience since then. It won't hurt to up your number by one. Think back to when sex was just fun.

*(MARY ALICE has a look of shock, SANDRA looks a bit sheepish, ELIZABETH shifts uncomfortably and BARBARA's face gives away nothing.)*

Come on. The sixties and seventies were the one time in human history when nothing you got from sex could kill you. Tell me you didn't take advantage of it?

BARBARA:

I was too young.

MARGO:

*(To ELIZABETH)* So what's your number?

ELIZABETH:

Oh, Margo!

MARGO:

God, don't be so uptight. Have another glass of wine and tell us.

ELIZABETH:

Does Ric count?

MARGO:

Well of course he counts. You did it with him, right?

ELIZABETH:

Then two. One time with Ric and then 38 years with George.

MARGO:

Sandra?

SANDRA:

Sandra what?

MARGO:

Your number.

ELIZABETH:

Oh, go ahead Sandra. What the hell.

SANDRA:

A perfectly respectable seven. All of them before Bill I might add. Margo?

MARGO:

What counts as having sex?

ELIZABETH:

Who are you, Bill Clinton? Sex is inserting tab A into slot B.

SANDRA:

Oh, then I'm changing my number to five.

MARGO:

27. (*Everyone reacts with some surprise.*) Hey I started dating when I was 15. Granted I've had a dry spell recently but average it out over the years and I'm positively chaste.

BARBARA:

I'm not playing this game.

MARGO:

Well we know Mary Alice is a one.

*(MARY ALICE looks down uncomfortably, checks her phone and says nothing.)*

Mary Alice? Mar, put down the phone. The perfect kids don't need you right now. We do. Give it up, kiddo. We're all being honest here.

BARBARA:

Honesty may not always be.....

SANDRA:

Oh go ahead Mary Alice. Being a virgin when you got married isn't anything to be ashamed of.

MARY ALICE:

*(After a very long pause and a long sip of wine.)* Two. My number is two.

BARBARA:

Leave it alone, Margo.

MARGO:

Mary Alice! There was someone besides Ed? Spill. Do we know him?

*(MARY ALICE looks very uncomfortable.)*

BARBARA:

*(Firmly and more loudly than she's been speaking.)* Margo, I said leave it alone.

MARGO:

Come on, Barbie. We're just having a rational conversation about our sex lives. We've known each other all our lives but we've never had this conversation.

BARBARA:

Can't you see you're upsetting Mary Alice. You talk about people treating you like you're invisible but you can't see she's near tears. And, while I'm at it, you all treat me like I'm still the little kid who tried to horn in on your games and your grown up conversations. And it's Barbara. Not Barbie.

MARY ALICE:

*(Through tears)* It was Ric Santorino.

ELIZABETH:

What!

MARY ALICE:

I'm so ashamed. I never told anyone. It was in a Rambler.

MARGO:

Jesus, Mary Alice. I can't believe you kept this secret all these years. All this time and nobody knew.

BARBARA:

I knew.

*(ALL turn and look at her in stunned silence.)*

MARY ALICE:

How could..... I never told....

BARBARA:

Ric's little brother Frankie told me. He saw you guys messing around in the car.

MARY ALICE:

Oh my God!

BARBARA:

He didn't understand what was going on. He said you and Ric were playing some sort of game. I figured it out.

MARGO:

And you kept that secret? You didn't tell anybody?

BARBARA:

No. I told Frankie it was our secret and if he ever told anybody I wouldn't like him anymore. *(Proudly)* He was in love with me.

MARGO:

Damn, Barbara. I can't believe you knew.....and you never told.

BARBARA:

I knew a lot of stuff about you guys.

MARGO

Yeah, right.

BARBARA:

Sandra always said her hair got lighter naturally in the summer but she used Sun In. Elizabeth used to take the money Aunt Tessy gave her for the show and instead she got her friend Jody's brother Tony to buy them cigarettes.

MARGO:

Why Barbara you sneaky...

BARBARA:

And when you all got together and played cards. Margo cheated!

MARGO:

*(casually)* Oh come on you guys. They were games of pure chance. Didn't you ever wonder why I won all the time?

BARBARA:

And I never told on any of you.

*(Suddenly the group picks up on the sound of MARY ALICE crying.)*

BARBARA:

Mary Alice, don't cry. I didn't mean to upset you. It was a long time ago.

MARY ALICE:

It's not that. I just got a text from my daughter Ellen. My grandson got picked up for shoplifting and my son in law is out of town for work and Ellen can't go to the station because she's at her daughter's anorexia appointment. And I was supposed to pick up two of Annie's kids after we were done here because she has to take the little one for speech therapy because nobody can understand him at all. God, what a mess.

BARBARA:

It's ok, Mary Alice. We've got this. I'll pick up Annie's kids. Just tell me where.

MARGO:

*(phone in hand)* I've got my lawyer on speed dial. Tell me what precinct and I'll meet him there. I'll get him out whatever I have to do.

ELIZABETH:

Don't worry, Mar. Kids do stupid stuff. The cops understand.

MARY ALICE:

*(Still crying)* This is his third offense.

MARGO:

*(Finishing off a glass of wine.)* I'll stop at the bank on the way.

ELIZABETH:

Hang on, Margo. I'd better drive.

SANDRA:

And I'll drive you to pick up Ellen. I'll take.....which kid is anorexic?

MARY ALICE:

Libby.

SANDRA:

I'll drop you off at the police station and take Libby for ice cream.

*(They all rush out the door leaving BARBARA standing alone. Margo returns to urge her to join them and, as they leave, we hear MARGO)*

MARGO:

Wait. We didn't pick a book for next time.

## UNEXPECTED DANCING

GAYLE

YOUNG GAYLE

Gayle's house. GAYLE is slightly upstage, doing some household task without much enthusiasm. The radio is on. She tunes it until she finds the oldies channel. A very danceable song from the sixties comes on. Perhaps Land of 1000 Dances or Do You Love Me (Now That I Can Dance) Something that builds to a crescendo.

She pauses and lights come up on YOUNG GAYLE, downstage, dressed in miniskirt and go go boots. YOUNG GAYLE begins to dance. She dances full out from the very beginning.

GAYLE begins to move a bit to the music, tentatively. She tries to do a particularly tricky move, but can't quite pull it off. As the song progresses, GAYLE gets more and more into it.

As the song builds, both women dance in unison step for step.



## THINGS I'VE FOUND

### THE WOMAN

Things I've found. In no particular order of importance.

Yoga pants. Gentle yoga.

A great tinted eyebrow gel. You know how even though most of your eyebrows are gone, sometimes the ones that are left stick up and kind of curl. This stuff plasters them right into place.

That it doesn't matter how much you pay, there isn't a cream on the market that fixes wrinkles or age spots.

The ability to say goodbye.

The library. Lots of great free stuff and programs. Although if there's some local lady pretending to be Laura Ingels Wilder for two hours you might want to take a pass.

If I really can't do anything about it, I don't want to hear it.

Movies are ok alone. Dinner out no. But lots of my friends are fine with it, so whatever works.

Why old ladies have small dogs. A wonderful small dog.

Apparently I only thought I liked Chinese food. Since my husband died, I've had it exactly once. Classical music. Same thing.

The real me.

That people of my generation are aging better than our parents but whining about it more.

You don't need as much money to retire as they all said you did. For one thing, economists are mostly men and they don't get how much you save when you don't have to buy feminine hygiene products any more.

Peace of mind.

Purpose. I know now I'm not going to change the world. Not in the big ways I thought I would when I was young. But I can smile at the store clerk. Give chocolate chip cookies to the mail man.

I can pay attention when the little boy next door tells me about his collection of stones. One by one.

I can give people small moments. And that's all life is really, isn't it? A collection of moments. One by one.

Oh, and I found those black shoes. The ones that I can wear with my bunions. I'd tell you where they were but it's just way too embarrassing.

*Fade to dark.*