

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Keep on Laughing

By

PAUL ELLIOTT

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXXIII by
PAUL ELLIOTT

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(KEEP ON LAUGHING)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-312-1

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

Keep on Laughing

CHARACTERS

RACHEL: Mid-20s; Connie's very pregnant daughter.

BOBBY: Late 20s; Rachel's husband.

CONNIE HARLAND: Early to mid-50s; Rachel's dedicated Southern mother.

LEONA: Early to mid-50s; Connie's best friend; former owner of the Snip and Curl Beauty Parlor.

MILLIE: Early to mid-50s; certifiably ditsy but lovable; friends with Connie and Leona.

MICHEL (mee-shell): Late 20s; a young Frenchman.

Keep on Laughing

ACT I

(The curtain opens on the living/dining room of CONNIE HARLAND's home outside of Birmingham, Ala. It's early evening, and the house is empty but the lights are on.)

After a beat, we hear a key in the front door. BOBBY quickly enters, holding the door for RACHEL, who enters slowly. She's obviously very pregnant, and moving at all has become more than a bit uncomfortable. He quickly shuts the door behind her and then tries to gently guide her into a chair, which she refuses, pausing to get her balance.)

RACHEL. Well, that was certainly embarrassing. And humiliating.

BOBBY. Honey, they said it happens all the time.

RACHEL. Not to me. I wanted to crawl under the table.

BOBBY. I'm sorry.

RACHEL. It was bad enough thinking the babies were coming.

I mean, it felt real. I mean, I thought it was real. I mean, how would I know? I've never had a baby before. I thought they were labor pains. They were five minutes apart.

BOBBY. I know. I timed them. You just can't tell.

RACHEL. But gas? I'm expecting a baby and then suddenly, it's just one big gas explosion?

BOBBY. It wasn't that big.

(RACHEL pushes BOBBY out of the way as she heads for the stairs.)

RACHEL. Then why did you laugh?

BOBBY. Well, OK, it was funny ... and I was nervous ... and everyone was looking at us. There were even people in the next room who—

RACHEL. I get the picture. I was there, remember? And your laughing didn't—

BOBBY. Rachel, I didn't laugh— (*On her look.*) much ... OK, maybe a snicker. A little snicker. (*Another look.*) Come on, honey, you've got to see the humor in it. It sounded like a French horn ... with laryngitis. (*He demonstrates vocally.*)

RACHEL. That's right, humiliate me in my humiliation. Just one of the many reasons I'm never going to speak to you again.

BOBBY. Rachel, honey, I said I was sorry.

RACHEL. Not good enough. This is all your fault.

BOBBY. How was I to know salad could give you gas.

RACHEL. Not that. (*Indicating her big body.*) This! Just look at me. I used to be able to eat anything. I used to be skinny. Well, not skinny, but at least presentable. And now, this! (*Pouting.*) This pregnancy has screwed up my entire body. (*Accusingly.*) And you did this to me.

BOBBY. Honey, I thought we both had a part in this.

RACHEL. Yeah, but you got all the whoopee, and I'm the one stuck wearing a tent.

BOBBY. If I remember correctly, we both got a bit of whoopee that night.

RACHEL. Yeah, but I don't see you wearing a tent. And don't you tell me it was my idea. I'm going into my ninth month. I don't want facts. I don't want logic. I want sympathy.

BOBBY. I said I was sorry.

RACHEL. Not good enough. I want sympathy with jewelry ... and a margarita.

BOBBY. I can't help you with that.

(RACHEL turns around, studying the staircase.)

BOBBY *(cont'd)*. What are you looking for?

RACHEL. I said, "I'm not talking to you right now."

(RACHEL slowly lowers herself onto the steps with a groan and then lies back so she's now using the stairs as a shiatsu table, enjoying the pressure points.)

BOBBY. Rachel? Honey? That could hurt the babies.

RACHEL. Oh, come on, Bobby, they're fine. This is the first relief I've felt all morning ... OK, the second time I've felt relief. I swear it feels like they're having a party in there! Line dancing. The two of them, just stomping on my bladder.

BOBBY. It won't be that much longer.

RACHEL. Maybe not for you, but for me, the doctors said I could have another whole month walking around like an elephant.

(BOBBY reaches out a hand to stroke the side of her face in sympathy.)

BOBBY. You don't look like an elephant.

RACHEL. Yes, I do.

BOBBY. Then you're my little elephant.

(BOBBY reaches to help RACHEL stand up.)

BOBBY *(cont'd)*. Now, come on, baby. Let me help you up. Your mom's plane should have landed an hour ago. We don't want her to come home and find you lying like that.

RACHEL (*getting up*). Why not? It's her fault too. And Millie's and Leona's.

BOBBY. Honey? What have they got to do with anything?

RACHEL. I'm sharing the blame. Right now, I am officially an equal opportunity blamer.

BOBBY (*laughing*). It's not their fault you're—

RACHEL. Oh yes, it is. They left us alone.

BOBBY (*trying to fit logic into her whining*). We were married, so I think they thought that was a good thing. I think they thought we'd enjoy the time alone.

RACHEL. And look what happened.

BOBBY. It didn't just happen, and besides your mother didn't want to go to France in the first place. You're the one who insisted. And you were right. The tickets had been booked a year in advance, and Millie and Leona were all packed and you said you'd be fine. And you have been.

RACHEL. Cutting wind in front of half of Alabama is not fine. And I don't want you going and telling Mom all about it.

BOBBY. I won't. I promise.

RACHEL. Oh, yes, you will. Once my back is turned, you'll go blabbing everything. You're always on her side. Nobody's ever on mine.

BOBBY. I'm not on her side. I'm on our side.

RACHEL (*mumbling*). You are such a kiss-ass.

BOBBY. I heard that.

RACHEL. I meant you to. You're always so Mr. "Nice-Nice." Nice, nice, nice, nice, nice.

BOBBY. Honey.

RACHEL. I know. I know. I'm sorry. Don't you ever get tired of me and just want to run for the hills?

BOBBY. No to the first, and sometimes to the second. But I'd come right back.

RACHEL. Everyone said being pregnant was supposed to be a happy time. Well, maybe at first, but after all this time, I just want it over.

BOBBY. I know. I know.

RACHEL. I just feel like I'm doing this all by myself.

BOBBY. That's just your hormones talking.

RACHEL. Well, I wish they'd shut up.

BOBBY. We're all here with you. And you've also got Miss Leona and Miss Millie.

RACHEL. Yeah, but they're not really family. I mean, family-family.

BOBBY. Rachel, they may not be in your gene pool, but they're certainly in your team pool.

RACHEL. I just worry about who's going to be there for our babies as they grow up.

BOBBY. Honey, what are you talking about? We're young. They're young. We're all going to be there. I may not have any of my own family to contribute, but I'm never leaving and neither are any of the rest of them, no matter how whiney and hormonal you are.

RACHEL. I'm not whiney and hormonal. (*On his look.*) OK, maybe a little. (*Another look.*) OK, maybe a lot. (*On his smile.*) But deep down, I'm lovable?

BOBBY (*wrapping his arms around her*). Yes, honey, deep, deep down, you're lovable. And you're going to be on your best behavior when your mom gets home. Aside from this morning's excitement—

RACHEL. Which she doesn't need to know about—

BOBBY (*agreeing*). Which she doesn't need to know about— everything has been great. OK?

RACHEL (*reluctantly*). OK.

BOBBY. Rachel? Honey?

RACHEL (*with more conviction*). OK!

(A taxi is heard pulling up.)

BOBBY. Omigosh, they're here. Remember. Everything is happy, happy, happy. We're all wearing our big-girl panties.

RACHEL (*starting to cry*). They are big, aren't they?

BOBBY. Honey, it's just a saying. Come on, it's your mom. She's home. (*He races for the door.*)

RACHEL. Wait, wait. How do I look?

BOBBY. You look beautiful.

RACHEL. I don't want to look beautiful. I want to look big and pitiful.

BOBBY. Sorry, you still look beautiful.

RACHEL. You have to say that.

BOBBY. Because it's true.

(BOBBY throws open the door and rushes out.)

BOBBY (*cont'd, to everyone outside*). Hey!! Welcome back.

(Outside, we hear CONNIE, LEONA and MILLIE's voices mingled over one another as they get out of the taxi. Meanwhile, RACHEL is unsuccessfully practicing her pitiful poses inside.)

CONNIE (*from outside*). Bobby, honey, it's so good to be home. How are my babies?

BOBBY (*from outside*). Rachel's inside ready to pop.

LEONA (*from outside*). Hey Bobby, you look great. Mine are the red bags. And I need a drink.

BOBBY (*from outside*). Sure, I can get those bags.

MILLIE (*from outside, louder and more urgent than the others*). Stand back. I need to pee!

(CONNIE should be the first to enter, but MILLIE pushes past her heading for the downstairs bathroom. MILLIE is carrying a large handbag, containing the urn of Miss Mary, which she unceremoniously hands to RACHEL without really even looking.)

MILLIE (*cont'd*). Hey, Rachel, hold Miss Mary. I gotta pee!

RACHEL. Miss Mary?

(RACHEL acts like there's something distasteful in the bag and looks for a place to put it down, but CONNIE instantly focuses on her daughter and rushes to hug her, bag and all. LEONA excitedly follows CONNIE.)

CONNIE. Baby.

LEONA. You look wonderful.

RACHEL. Mom!

MILLIE (*trying to open the bathroom door*). Yeah, big as a barn! (*Bouncing around.*) Is there something wrong with this door?

RACHEL (*bursts into tears*). Mom?!

LEONA & CONNIE. Millie!

MILLIE (*still struggling with the bathroom door*). Well, I'm sorry. She is big—ger now than when we left.

(RACHEL cries even harder. BOBBY enters with some of the bags and sees RACHEL crying.)

BOBBY. Well, so much for wearing our big-girl panties. You'll have to forgive us. We've been having a hormonal-rush day.

MILLIE (*to BOBBY*). If someone doesn't get this door unstuck, we're going to have more than hormonals rushing around here.

(BOBBY instantly drops what he's doing to go help MILLIE with the door.)

RACHEL. But I do look as big as a barn.

CONNIE. You don't look as big as a barn.

BOBBY (*to MILLIE*). You have to turn the handle, Millie.

(Which he does and the door swings open. MILLIE rushes inside in relief.)

LEONA. Millie didn't mean it. Millie, come back here and tell her you didn't mean it. Millie?

(MILLIE sticks her head back out of the bathroom, now in anguish but trying to make amends.)

MILLIE. I meant it as a pretty barn. I really have to go now.

CONNIE & LEONA. Go!!

(MILLIE ducks quickly back into the bathroom.)

LEONA (*to BOBBY and RACHEL*). Stay young, you two. Getting older can be a bitch. The first thing to go is the bladder.

BOBBY. Is she (*Indicates MILLIE.*) OK?

LEONA. With Millie, it's hard to tell.

CONNIE (*patting RACHEL's stomach*). So how are my beautiful grandchildren-to-be acting today?

RACHEL. I think they're running laps in there. And how do we know they're going to be beautiful? What if they aren't beautiful? What if they come out with big noses—or big ears?

BOBBY. Rachel!

CONNIE. They won't.

LEONA. They'll be beautiful.

MILLIE (*coming out, looking relieved*). Of course they will ... unless they come out looking like my Uncle Ethan. He was born with a nose that looked like a crooked zucchini.

LEONA. Not helping, Millie.

RACHEL. Crooked?

MILLIE (*trying to make amends*). But they ate it for dinner.

ALL (*except MILLIE*). What?

MILLIE. The zucchini, not the baby. I mean, all you have to do is cut it into small pieces and nobody's gonna notice that it was crooked.

RACHEL. Mother?

CONNIE. Rachel, your babies are going to be as pretty as their mother.

(*MILLIE rescues Miss Mary's bag from RACHEL's grip.*)

MILLIE. Yeah, after they get past that little shriveled monkey phase.

RACHEL. Mom?

CONNIE. Millie!

LEONA (*jerking the bag away from MILLIE*). One more word, Millie, and I'm going to cram a monkey down your throat.

MILLIE. Don't be silly, Leona. You don't have a monkey.

LEONA. Believe me, I can find one. I swear, Millie, I've got to stop asking you how dumb can you get. You seem to be taking that as a challenge.

(*LEONA pulls Miss Mary's urn from the bag.*)

MILLIE. I know. (*Speaking to Mary in the urn.*) And to think, Mary, my mother always said I was an underachiever. I guess I showed her.

(*CONNIE lovingly takes the urn from LEONA and places it on the shelf.*)

CONNIE (*to the urn, with a touch of sadness*). OK, Mary, we're back where we belong ... I guess. (*Turning back to RACHEL.*) Honey, I know I should've come back sooner. In fact, when you get right down to it, I never should have left in the first place. But you were right, it was something Mary had wanted to do and the chance to see Paris was so ... I don't know ... alluring ... and things just kept coming up.

LEONA. They sure did and let's face it, we were having way too much fun. We saw so much. And keeping Millie out of trouble was a full-time job.

RACHEL. Miss Millie, were you getting into trouble?

MILLIE. No, of course not—but I did learn a whole lot of new French words. Like *oui*, and *oui-oui*, which, by the way, doesn't mean what you think it does.

BOBBY (*smiling*). Good to know.

LEONA. Millie kept saying *oui* to everything. (*Checking her watch.*) OK, I've been here five minutes. I need a drink.

BOBBY. Let me get you one.

LEONA (*heading into the kitchen herself*). That's OK. I'm faster.

BOBBY. I see some things haven't changed.

MILLIE. Maybe not with Leona, but for me ... wow! Bobby, Rachel, you won't believe how different France is from Alabama. Waaaay different!

BOBBY. I'll bet it is, Miss Millie.

MILLIE. They don't even speak English.

(LEONA returns with a bottle and glass, pouring.)

LEONA. It's France, Millie. They speak French. They don't have to speak English. I mean, they probably could, but don't. Or won't.

CONNIE. We tried to explain to Millie that when in France, you had to think like a Frenchman ... or woman. But it never seemed to stick.

LEONA. But then, we're talkin' Millie. Hardly anything sticks to Millie.

MILLIE. It's hard to think like them when they don't even listen.

LEONA. Millie, they don't listen if you just babble all the time. And you do tend to babble.

CONNIE. All the time.

MILLIE. I don't babble. They babble. I mean, I could hardly understand a word they said. And our driver kept getting us lost on the way to the hotel.

LEONA. That's because you gave him the wrong name of the hotel.

MILLIE. I said Hotel Merchant.

CONNIE. It was Hotel Marchant!

MILLIE. That's what I said.

CONNIE. Marchant, not Merchant.

MILLIE *(proudly, in her Southern accent)*. I'm from Alabama. We don't do accents.

CONNIE. So you see what we were up against. We got off the plane, and then we spent the next two hours driving around from one hotel to another until finally we ended up where our rooms were reserved.

RACHEL. Why didn't you just take over giving directions?

CONNIE. Because Millie was having so much fun arguing with the driver ... and frankly I was too exhausted from the packing beforehand and then the long flight. I guess I didn't realize how lost we were.

LEONA. And I just kept getting more and more excited.

BOBBY. I'll bet you did. I mean, you were in France.

LEONA. I know. And did you know there are over four thousand bars in Paris? That's like almost one on every other corner.

CONNIE. And Leona took it as her own private mission to visit every single one of them.

LEONA. I didn't make it, but I sure tried. (*Proudly.*) I was going for my *personal best*.

RACHEL. So, how was the hotel once you got there?

CONNIE. Wonderful.

MILLIE. Except ... (*Sotto voce.*) they don't have air conditioning in Paris, and it was hot.

RACHEL. No air conditioning?

CONNIE. It wasn't that bad. The rooms were absolutely beautiful, and I think it made everything feel ... more French.

LEONA. Besides, who wants to stay in your room when you've got all of Paris at your doorstep.

MILLIE. Or just out your window.

BOBBY. That's very poetic, Miss Millie.

CONNIE. No, I'm afraid she's being literal.

MILLIE. I am! Everything I wanted was just outside my window.

RACHEL. Oh, you had a great view!

BOBBY. What did you have? The Eiffel Tower?

MILLIE. No. My room was on the top floor, but with no air conditioning, I threw open the window ... right into the room of the hotel next door.

RACHEL. Next door?

MILLIE. I mean, there was a real skinny alley or something between, but basically right next door. And I mean, next-next door. It didn't bother me at first, because nobody was using that room, but then a group of young men moved in.

BOBBY. Young men?

MILLIE. I think they must have been Olympic gymnasts or something like that, because they looked like it.

LEONA. Millie, I thought you said you didn't look.

MILLIE. I didn't ... at first. OK, maybe I peeked.

LEONA. Peeked, huh?

MILLIE. Well, they were always leaving their window open, which I could understand, you know, with no air conditioning and all. But their shower door was right across from the window—

CONNIE. You could have closed your window.

MILLIE. But it was hot!

RACHEL. I'll bet it was.

MILLIE. Anyway, they didn't seem to mind, and who was I to complain ... (*More confidentially.*) But I can say this about that, it didn't take me long to realize I missed out on a whole hell of a lot in my marriage to Herbie. Whoa, a whole lot! Anyway, one day we started talking—

CONNIE. Wait a minute, I thought you said you didn't—?

MILLIE. I mean, well, I didn't start it, but one of the guys saw me and said hello. At least I think that's what he said. Anyway, what was I supposed to do? Be rude? He needed to borrow my ironing board ... although for the life of me, I didn't know why. I mean, he hardly ever wore any clothes. But then it was Paris and it was hot ... (*Proudly.*) and I didn't want to appear to be an old prude.

LEONA. No, an old slut sounds so much better.

MILLIE. No, silly, I just mean—

CONNIE. We know what you mean, Millie.

MILLIE. I was just being neighborly. He wanted to borrow the iron too.

LEONA. Of course. What's an ironing board without an iron?

MILLIE. Anyway, he used the ironing board to make a bridge between their room and mine ...

BOBBY. Whatever happened to that rule ... never leave Miss Millie alone?

CONNIE. We didn't know about it. Millie, who usually shares everything, didn't mention all the strange men—

RACHEL. Men—?

CONNIE. Crawling in and out of her room those first few days.

RACHEL. Days?

MILLIE. Well, my room *was* a lot bigger, and there were *three* of them.

RACHEL. Three?

CONNIE. Once I found out, I of course moved her to a room with a less exciting view.

MILLIE. Yeah, from young men to an old Eiffel Tower. And let me tell you this about that. I did not consider that a fair trade.

LEONA. To be honest, they actually turned out to be OK guys ... gave me a lot of good tips on the best bars to hit first.

RACHEL. I'm shocked.

BOBBY. I've got to admit, I am a bit, too.

LEONA. I know, but we were all busy. They were our first days in Paris, and with Connie tied up with Michel and me touring the local bars—

RACHEL. Michel?

LEONA (*backtracking*). Michel? I didn't say Michel. I said museums. Connie was tied up with museums. The Louvre, the—
BOBBY. It didn't sound like you said museums. (*Turning to MILLIE.*) Millie?

MILLIE (*adamantly, torture couldn't make her talk*). I know nothing!

RACHEL. Mother? Who's Mee-kell?

MILLIE (*correcting*). It's Michel.

RACHEL. OK, Michel.

CONNIE. Who?

RACHEL. Michel, Mee-kell ... whoever or whatever that is? What's going on?

CONNIE. Oh, Rachel, nothing's going on. Why would you think anything's going on? I think it's about time I unpacked.

RACHEL. Mother?

CONNIE. OK. All right. It was nothing. I did, sort of, meet a guy in Paris, and his name was Michel.

RACHEL & BOBBY. Mother? Mom?

CONNIE. And ... he was a nice guy.

LEONA. He was better than nice. He was drop-dead gorgeous.

MILLIE. A hunk.

BOBBY. Well, good for you. That sounds great.

CONNIE. Thank you, Bobby. It was.

LEONA. But we didn't encourage it at first.

RACHEL. Why not?

MILLIE. Because he was crazy.

BOBBY. Omigod, crazy? Are you serious?

CONNIE. No, not crazy, crazy.

MILLIE. But crazy.

LEONA. At least we thought he'd have to be.

RACHEL. Why?

MILLIE. He kept wanting to date your mother.

BOBBY. What?

RACHEL. That's terrible.

MILLIE. That's what we thought.

RACHEL. No. I can't believe you two are her friends.

LEONA. Well, we are.

RACHEL. Then how could you possibly think a man is crazy for wanting to date my mother?

BOBBY. Yeah, wasn't that why Miss Mary left you all that money in the first place? All those first-class tickets around the world? To travel and experience life? You know, *Viva La France!*

MILLIE. Well, I was experiencing life, and Connie changed my room. *Viva La Crapola!*

RACHEL. Not your kind of life, Millie. Bobby was talking about Mom's kind of life ... museums, quiet walks in the afternoon, a nice older man buying her wine under the Eiffel Tower.

CONNIE. Good grief, Rachel, you make me sound ancient.

RACHEL. You know I didn't mean it that way, but—

BOBBY. Age isn't everything.

CONNIE. On that we agree.

BOBBY. What do they say? "Age is a matter of mind."

LEONA. "If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

CONNIE. See!

RACHEL. Yeah, yeah. It's a nice quote, but Mom, we have to be realistic.

LEONA. Ooooo, I hate "realistic."

RACHEL. Don't be silly. I'm all for Mom dating again. I think it's about time. I think it's wonderful. How old was he? Was he a silver fox? You know, *sleek and sixty*? Sixty-five?

CONNIE (to LEONA). There she goes again, reaching for ancient!

RACHEL. No, I'm not. I was just throwing out numbers.

MILLIE. Yeah, old numbers.

RACHEL. I'm sorry. Forget the age.

CONNIE. Thank you.

RACHEL. The important thing is, was he kind, loving and self-supporting?

LEONA. Ah, yes, rich.

RACHEL. No. I didn't mean rich-rich. But secure ... and vital.

CONNIE. But just not that vital.

RACHEL. Mom, I'm trying to supportive here. I'm on your side.

BOBBY. Yeah, me, too. So, just how old was this new man in your life? Sixty?

(CONNIE isn't responding, but behind LEONA and CONNIE, MILLIE offers lower hand signals to keep the guessing going lower.)

RACHEL. Younger? That's good. Fifty-eight? Fifty-seven? Fifty-five?

BOBBY. Wow, Mom, was he younger than you?

CONNIE. Wouldn't that make headlines? Older woman cops a feel of younger man!

RACHEL. Mother, nobody "cops a feel" anymore.

MILLIE. Especially of a man. I mean, what would she be copping a feel of?

LEONA. The mind boggles.

RACHEL & BOBBY. Oh!!

MILLIE (*suddenly realizing*). Oh!!

BOBBY. So how much younger was he? Fifty? Forty-five?

(*No response from CONNIE.*)

RACHEL. Are you serious? Was he forty? Thirty-eight? Thirty-seven? Mom, you're scaring me—thirty-five?

(*Still no response from CONNIE.*)

BOBBY. OK, Mom, enough with the guessing game. Cut to the chase. How old was this dude? You're not talking thirty? Omigod, Rachel, she not talking—thirty!? Twenty-nine!?

RACHEL. Mom, that's crazy!!

MILLIE. That's what I said!!

LEONA. But ...

BOBBY. There's a but?

LEONA. Oh, and it was a cute one.

MILLIE. Two handfuls.

RACHEL. Mother!

CONNIE. I didn't say that, Millie did.

RACHEL. But you smiled.

CONNIE. So, I like to smile. (*Changing the subject.*) What's for dinner?

RACHEL. Oh, no, no, no. No! You don't get to change the subject. How old was he?

CONNIE. Well, he wasn't fifty. We've already established that.

BOBBY. How not fifty was he?

MILLIE (*blurting it out*). He was thirty-two!

RACHEL & BOBBY (*gasping*). Thirty-two? Omigod, Millie. Thirty-two!

MILLIE (*she's said too much*). I know nothing!

CONNIE. Actually, he was not thirty-two.

RACHEL & BOBBY (*relieved*). Thank God.

CONNIE (*under her breath*). He was twenty-nine.

BOBBY (*again upset*). Twenty-nine? Omigod. Was he after your money?

CONNIE (*equally upset*). Wait a minute! Do you think that is the only reason a man of twenty-nine would look at me?

BOBBY (*backpedaling*). I didn't mean that.

CONNIE. Oh, yes, you did.

RACHEL. OK, yes! Look at you. You're ... a mother. My mother. And you're almost twice that age.

CONNIE. I am not twice that age. I'm not that old.

RACHEL. Don't quibble over a few years.

CONNIE. I'm not quibbling. I'm not twice his age ... I'm eight years younger than twice his age ... plus one year. Not that I was adding it up ... or subtracting it. Anyway, that's not the point. I'm only ten years older than he is, plus twelve.

RACHEL. Plus twelve? Mom, no matter how you count it, that's a twenty-two-year difference.

MILLIE & CONNIE. Is it?

CONNIE. I hadn't noticed.

LEONA. Twenty-two years? Omigod, Connie. Congratulations!

CONNIE. Thank you, Leona. (*Back to RACHEL.*) And you. Just because you were always smart in math doesn't mean you know anything about men and women.

RACHEL. I'm married.

CONNIE. Well, other men and women. And he was not after my money. Because I don't have any money.

RACHEL. Why else would he want you?

MILLIE & LEONA. Ooooooo. Burn.

CONNIE. Excuse me? Maybe he liked my smile. I didn't ask him.

LEONA. Besides, they had other things to talk about.

BOBBY. I'll bet they did.

RACHEL. Like where'd you get all Miss Mary's money you're flashing all around?

CONNIE. We weren't flashing anything.

LEONA. We had our own money.

RACHEL. Yeah, but first-class air fares, first-class travel—

CONNIE. How would anyone know how much our tickets cost? How would he have known whether we flew first class or coach—?

LEONA. Or hung onto the wings. Occasionally, with Millie sitting next to me, I kinda wished that. But for her, not me.

RACHEL. Well, I'm sure the hotel wasn't all that shabby.

CONNIE. Yes, it was nice.

LEONA. Really nice. It had a bar in the lobby.

MILLIE. But without air conditioning. Don't forget that. I had to open my windows.

LEONA. Millie, zip it. We've been there, done that, bought that ironing board.

RACHEL. Mother, you were in France for crying out loud. You know what Frenchmen are like.

CONNIE (*defiantly*). Well, I certainly do now. And trust me, once you go French, you never ...

RACHEL. Never what?

CONNIE. Uh ...

LEONA. You never butter your croissants the same way.

BOBBY. Mom, was he really twenty-nine? That's my age.

CONNIE. So?

BOBBY. But, but ... that's my age, and I'm married to your daughter.

CONNIE. Why do you think I said no?

RACHEL. "No" to what?

BOBBY. To dating?

RACHEL. To going out with him?

BOBBY. To, oh, I don't want to think about it?

CONNIE. To all of the above!!

LEONA. And to marrying him.

BOBBY & RACHEL. What?!

CONNIE. She's right. He asked me to marry him.

RACHEL. Was he crazy?

MILLIE. See!!

BOBBY. Rachel!

RACHEL. That came out worse than I meant, but, but ... you're my mother. Why did you even go out with him in the first place?

CONNIE. I don't know. It was flattering. Do you know how long it's been since I've even been asked out for a coffee?

LEONA. And he was cute.

MILLIE. Yeah, he was really cute.

RACHEL. But, but you're my mother.

CONNIE. And just maybe, maybe he made me feel that I could be more than that.

BOBBY. Mom—

CONNIE. I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. Being your mother has always been the most important thing in my life. And that will never change. But maybe he just made me feel young again. Or maybe young for the first time.

BOBBY. Mom—?

CONNIE. Like maybe I was still a reasonably attractive, intelligent woman who still maybe had a lot of life ahead of her to live.

RACHEL. Mother, “life” isn’t a bunch of maybes.

LEONA. But if it is, maybe Connie isn’t just a middle-aged divorced woman with a daughter who whines and complains about everything.

RACHEL. I don’t whine and complain. (*Turning to BOBBY.*) Do I?

BOBBY. It’s your hormones.

LEONA. Rachel, honey, you’ve been on an emotional roller coaster since you were a baby.

MILLIE. Not that we don’t love you, but even I thought you were crazy. And that’s really crazy.

(RACHEL bursts out crying, throwing herself in CONNIE’s arms.)

CONNIE. Come on, honey. She didn’t mean it.

RACHEL (*angrily, whining and complaining*). I don’t whine, and I don’t complain!

CONNIE. And yet, you’re doing both right now.

RACHEL (*throwing herself into BOBBY’s arms*). Bobby?!

BOBBY (*soothingly*). It’s just your hormones.

CONNIE. And Bobby is a saint! (*To RACHEL.*) Rachel, honey, I love you to death—and I never *thought* I was unhappy—I *wasn’t* unhappy, and if I’d never started traveling, I guess I would have never known the difference. But Mary left us those tickets when she died, and while our trips to Italy and Germany last year were both fantastic, this trip to France was somehow different. From that first night in Paris, it felt like my whole world just exploded.

BOBBY. I'm sorry.

CONNIE. Oh, I'm not. Sometimes it takes an explosion to get your attention.

BOBBY. Well, if some guy proposed to you after just five weeks in Paris, that explosion must have been earth shattering.

CONNIE (*remembering*). To the core—

RACHEL. But, Mom!

CONNIE (*to RACHEL*). OK, OK. You're right. Paris is Paris and ... here is here.

BOBBY. You make "here" sound like a cemetery.

CONNIE. Yeah, well, being here is going to force me to bury a lot of good memories.

BOBBY. I'm sorry. I don't think anyone should ever bury good memories.

CONNIE. Thanks ... and I mean that, for being you and for taking care of everything while I was gone. (*Changing the subject.*) But now I'm back. OK, enough! Who's hungry?

LEONA (*holding up her drink*). Not me. I'm on my Alabama liquid diet.

RACHEL. As opposed to ...

LEONA. It all depends on the country. In Italy, it was the Italian liquid diet; in France, the Parisian; and here it's—

RACHEL. The Alabama liquid diet.

LEONA. The only difference is what I use for chasers. Here, I wash everything down with a cold beer ... before and after ... and maybe a few more thrown in between.

RACHEL. Between what?

LEONA. Gin, vodka, tequila, bourbon, schnapps, whatever. I'm a cheap date, but I'm not a pushover.

BOBBY. I'm sure you're not.

LEONA. Damn straight. The way I see it, as long as someone else is paying, I'm drinking. And men are always willing to pay.

RACHEL. Really?

LEONA. Because a lot of men, especially those who hang around bars—OK, my kind of men—are willing to pay to see a woman degrade herself. But, I never degrade myself. (*Proudly.*) I'm an Alabama lady. I'm practically a legend. I can drink anybody under the table and just get a slight buzz. It's genetics, runs in my family—

MILLIE. Yeah, alcoholics!

LEONA. No ... there were no alcoholics in my family. A lot of drunks, I grant you, but no alcoholics. Alcoholics are when you can't handle it. Me, I can handle it. Have I ever had a divorce. No. I may have slept around a lot. OK, more than a lot, but I never got divorced.

MILLIE. You never got married.

LEONA. But I never got divorced. You keep score your way, I keep score, mine. (*A beat.*) Have I ever had any regrets? (*A poignant beat, thinking, then loudly, shaking her head in the negative.*) Nahhhh! I'm thirsty.

MILLIE. And I'm hungry.

CONNIE. I think we could all use some food.

BOBBY. That's a great idea. You guys sit down, and I'll fix something.

CONNIE. No, that's my job now. Vacation is over. It's back to life as usual. Bobby, could you please take my luggage upstairs?

BOBBY. Sure, Mom. Glad to have you back.