

Kitchen Conversations

by
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

BETHANN: Eldest daughter of Barbara, late 30s-early 40s, uptight. Conservative work clothes.

BARBARA: Mother to Bethann and Brandi, late 50s-early 60s, soft spoken, sweet. Dressed plain clothes and sensible shoes.

BRANDI: Youngest daughter of Barbara, early-late 30s, in good shape, free spirited. Dressed in sweaty bike clothes.

SETTING

Modest kitchen/breakfast room of a suburbia home.

TIME

Current day, midafternoon.

ACT I
Scene 1

Setting: Modest kitchen/breakfast room of a suburbia home.

At Rise: Room is empty.

(BARBARA enters looking at medical papers. Puts keys and purse down.
BETHANN enters with groceries.)

BETHANN

Mom, seriously! I don't know why we don't just go and drop off your prescriptions right now.

(BETHANN puts groceries down. BARBARA sits at table, reads medical papers.)

BARBARA

I haven't told your father yet, dear.

BETHANN

You didn't tell him you were getting results today? Does he even know you HAD the PET scan?

BARBARA

(focused on the papers) Of course. But I really didn't see the point in worrying him with today's appointment. He would have insisted on coming with me. We all expected it to be nothing.

BETHANN

Mom. You have to call Dad.

BARBARA

I'll tell your Dad in my own way. Don't worry. You worry too much Bethann. You always have. Now would you mind pouring me a glass of tea?

BETHANN

I think you'd do better with water Mom. Tea has caffeine. Dr. Trotter always says...

BARBARA

You're completely right, dear. Would you get me a glass of water?

(BETHANN pours water, BARBARA gets a notebook and pen from drawer.)

BARBARA (looking at feet)

(to herself) Always hated these shoes.

(BARBARA kicks off shoes, sits at table, puts papers to side, writes in notebook.
BETHANN brings water.)

BETHANN

You want lemon?

BARBARA

No that's ok hun. This is fine. Thank you.

BETHANN

I'll get you some lemon.

(BETHANN slices lemon, BARBARA puts bare feet up on chair, writing.)

BETHANN

Mom! You're barefoot! You NEVER allowed us to come in the kitchen barefoot.

BARBARA

You're right. (apologizing for rule) Sorry. That was a stupid rule.

BETHANN (perplexed)

(Puts lemon in glass. Notices BARBARA writing.)

What's that? Your journal? You know I've read that journaling is very healthy. Therapeutic.

BARBARA

Yes dear.

BETHANN

Yes, you're journaling or yes, you know it's therapeutic?

BARBARA

Bikini wax...yes. Bikini wax.

BETHANN

Bikini what?

BARBARA

Bikini wax. I think I'm going to get a bikini wax.

BETHANN

A bikini wax? Why? You don't even own a bikini.

BARBARA

True, true. Maybe I'll put that on my list too.

BETHANN

Your list?

BARBARA

Yes. I've decided to make a list. One of those bucket lists.

BETHANN

Oh for heaven sake, Mom. You don't need a bucket list! We beat it before, we'll beat it again.

BARBARA

Now...I think I read somewhere there are different styles. Where did I see that article?

(BARBARA exits to inside BETHANN looks at medical papers. BARBARA returns with women's magazines, sits down, starts leafing magazines.)

BETHANN

So, exactly what did Dr. Trotter say? Specifically? I wish you had told me BEFORE your appointment. I could have taken you, gone with you. Where in here does it say...

BARBARA

(Sifts through several magazines.)

Maybe in Vogue...No...Redbook, No...Here. Cosmo. In here I think.

BETHANN

...the results of the PET...CT scan...I don't see...

BARBARA

(Flips through magazine pages and stops, pointing at magazine article.)

Yes! Here it is. It has pictures of all the different bikini waxing styles. Kind of like when you go to the salon and flip through the hair style books before you get a haircut.

BETHANN (not listening)

I can't find...

BARBARA (ignoring)

Well...I guess it is a haircut...kind of.

BETHANN (not listening)

...the report...

BARBARA (ignoring)

So, there's the American wax. I guess that's just the regular style. Then there's the French wax. Hmm...that looks interesting.

BETHANN

What? What are you talking about?

BARBARA

The different styles of bikini wax, dear. Look at this one, the French wax. What do you think? Looks kind of like a landing strip. I like that one. Then there's the European, The Moustache... that looks just like the French one.

(BRANDI, in sweaty bike clothes, enters outside door, rolling bike.)

BRANDI (brightly)

Hi Mom! Hey Bethann.

BETHANN

Brandi, leave that thing outside! You'll get the floor dirty!

BRANDI

Yea...And let it get stolen? You know how much this bike cost me? I don't think so.

BARBARA

No, it's fine dear. She always brings it in. It's her baby.

(BRANDI leans bike against cabinets, gives BARBARA a long hug.)

BRANDI

Oh Mom...I'm so sorry...

BARBARA

It's ok honey. Brandi, sweetie, look at these bikini-waxing styles. Which one do you like dear?

BETHANN

Mom, can we get off the waxing? I think we should talk about your upcoming treatment. When are you supposed to start your chemo? I can't understand anything in these reports.

(Frustrated, throws paperwork on kitchen table.)

BRANDI

(Looking at magazine with BARBARA.)

Hmmmm...Personally...I like the Brazilian. Clean sweep.

(BRANDI kisses BARBARA on cheek, goes to pour a water and drinks.)

BARBARA

The...what? OH...I see. Oh my, no. The Brazilian looks just like an eight-year-old little girl. Nathan doesn't like that sort of thing, does he?

BRANDI

Yea, Mom. Most men do, because...

BETHANN

Brandi!

BRANDI

What?

BETHANN

Mom's treatment? Could we please? We need to coordinate our schedules.

(Pulls out cell phone and scrolls.)

I've got some vacation time coming up. How about you?

BRANDI

(Sits at kitchen table next to BARBARA, looking at style pictures in magazine.)

Calm down. Mom's picking out her bikini wax.

BARBARA

Hmmm...girls...what's this mean? What's a (slowly) va-jay-jay?

(BRANDI whispers in BARBARA'S ear.)

BARBARA

Oh. (giggles) Of course. Silly me.

BETHANN

Calm down? CALM DOWN? Do you know WHY Mom wants to get a bikini wax?

BRANDI

Ummm....Dad wants it neat and clean?

BETHANN

Nice, Brandi. Real nice. You always know the absolute most inappropriate thing to say. She's making her bucket list!

BARBARA

How about the Postage Stamp? Hmm...Looks hard to maintain.

BRANDI

What's wrong with a bucket list? I've got one.

BETHANN

For God's sake. Why the hell do you have a bucket list? You're not even 40!

BRANDI

I've had one since my 25th birthday. After those girls on campus were shot. You never know when you're gonna go.

BARBARA

That's what I think too, dear.

BETHANN

Shut up! Both of you! Mom, you're not going to die. You don't need a bucket list!

BRANDI

Yea, I'm pretty sure we're all going to die one day. I think it's kind of unavoidable.

BETHANN

Brandi! Will you please shut up!

BARBARA

Now girls. Please. It's ok. No one said I'm dying tomorrow. I just...I just have some things I want to get done. Things I've been putting off...for too long. Surely there's no harm in tying up loose ends, adding a little excitement. Might even be therapeutic, don't you think?

BETHANN

Maybe. But a bucket list just sounds like giving up. And you can't. *(pause)* Give up.

BRANDI

Na...sounds more like embracing life! What else you got on your list?

BARBARA (writing)

Let's see now...I've always wanted to go skydiving!

BRANDI

I highly recommend. Biggest physical rush you'll ever have. Be sure to pay extra for the videographer. They'll cut it with music and everything.

BETHANN

You are NOT going skydiving! At your age? Way too dangerous. Your knees!

BARBARA

(To herself) I'm not THAT old. Hmm...I've always wanted to go to one of those restaurants where you sit on pillows on the floor to eat.

BRANDI

Japanese?

BARBARA

No. The kind where you eat with your hands and there are belly dancers.

BRANDI

Moroccan! I love Moroccan food. Lamb with honey and almonds. Mmmm. So good.

BETHANN

I thought you were a vegetarian.

BRANDI

There was this place when I was in college. Really sketchy on the outside but wonderful inside. Lots of curtains, pillows, dark wood. The food was to die for. I don't remember the name...

BARBARA

Sometimes I do worry about you getting all the protein you need dear. Only eating vegetables.

BRANDI

Mom, I eat more than vegetables. I'm fine. Really, you ought to think about giving up meat as well. Studies show that red meat is linked to all kinds of cancer.

BETHANN

That's true. Didn't they recommend giving up meat in that support group you used to go to?

BARBARA

I doubt that giving meat up now would do me any good. Besides, Lamb. That sounds wonderful. I don't think I've ever had Moroccan food before. Now...what else. Let's see...

BRANDI

How about driving a race car? Deep sea fishing? Oh, wait I got it! Zip lining!

BETHANN

Are you insane? What is wrong with you?

BARBARA

I don't know about the race car. Your father doesn't even trust my driving the suburban. No fishing, but that zip lining. Judy did that with her grandkids in Costa Rica last year. The pictures were amazing. Yes...I think I'll add that one to my list. Zip lining in Costa Rica.

(Writes in notebook.)

BETHANN

Oh, for crying out loud! You think Dad's going to go for that?

BRANDI

Dad could probably benefit from a little shot of adrenalin. Besides, I'm sure he'll totally support Mom. Where is he anyhow? I didn't see his car.

BETHANN

He's on a job site. *(pause)* He didn't know she had the appointment today. I didn't know until she called me for ride home. She took the bus this morning.

BARBARA

I didn't want to worry him. He knows Dr. Trotter ordered the PET scan as a precaution because my liver enzyme readings were off. We were all pretty sure it was because of my new meds.

BRANDI

And what did the scan say?

BETHANN

That her breast cancer is back! I told you that already.

BRANDI

I know but what do the liver enzymes have to do with the canc-

BARBARA (hurriedly)

Yes, yes. Enough about all that for now. Like you said we've been through this before. So, what do you girls think about your father and I taking a cruise?

BRANDI

Awesome! Mexico? Aruba? Caribbean? Alaskan?

BARBARA

And I've always wanted to ride the camels, see the pyramids. Oh! And swim with the dolphins.

BRANDI

You could do the dolphins in Mexico during your cruise and cross two things off your list!

BETHANN

Mom, unless there's something I'm missing, I don't think you can plan any trips right now. You've got chemo scheduled, right? When do you start?

BARBARA

I haven't scheduled that yet dear.

BRANDI

I don't understand. Last time they wanted to start you immediately.

BARBARA

Well, I just wanted to talk to your father first, that's all.

BETHANN

Mom, does Dr. Trotter know you haven't scheduled your chemo yet?

BARBARA

Yes dear. Dr. Trotter and I had a nice long chat and we're all on the same page. Now...what do you girls think of swimming with the sharks?

BRANDI

I think you have to scuba dive to do that Mom.

BARBARA

Hmmm....scuba diving.
(Writes in notebook.)

BETHANN

Good grief. I'm calling Dad.
(Pulls out cell, scrolling.)

BARBARA (suddenly enraged)

(Grabs phone away from BETHANN.)

No! You will NOT call your father! I will tell your father when I'm damn well good and ready. I'll tell him in my own way and not while you girls are here. Do you understand?

BETHANN

(very long pause) Mom. What's gotten into you?

BARBARA

(long pause) I'm sorry, dear, I just... I spent the last five years dreading today. Dreading the cancer coming back. Everyone said there was a good chance it wouldn't. But I knew. I just knew.

BRANDI

All this time, you never said you were worried. You always said, "Gone and good riddance".

BARBARA

I should have you worry along with me? You were in grad school. (to BETHANN) And you were in the middle of a divorce. I really didn't think you needed the extra burden. All this time I've done as I was told. I took the treatments, felt horrid, no appetite, lost my hair, took my meds, ate right. Yoga, support groups. All of it. And here are.

BRANDI

But Mom...it worked. You were in remission for, what, five years?

BETHANN

Five and a half years. And the sooner you start treatment the better. You'll do your treatment again and you'll go into remission again. Right?

BRANDI

Right. I know it was rough going for a while, but we'll be here more to help you through it.

BARBARA

I know you will. *(pause)* Now, I'm feeling a bit tired. I think I'm going to lie down and rest.

BETHANN

Good idea. We can just finish unpacking the groceries and will wake you up when Dad gets here.

BARBARA

No, no. The best thing you can do for me now is go. Bethann, I know you need to get back to the office and Brandi, how many more week do you have to get ready for the MS 150?

BRANDI

Mom. It's fine. I still have three weeks.

BARBARA

Go on and finish your ride dear.

BETHANN

Promise you'll tell Dad today? And call in your meds. And figure out a schedule for your chemo.

BARBARA

Yes, dear, I promise I'll tell him today and I'll call you both tomorrow.

BRANDI

Love you Mom.

BARBARA

You too sweetie.

(EVERYONE hugs, says goodbye. BRANDI rolls bike out door.)

BETHANN

Mom. You know I'm here for you. Brandi too. And Dad. *(pause)* I Love you Mom.

BARBARA

I love you too.

(BETHANN exits, BARBARA closes door, closes eyes, takes a deep breath, pulls out another medical report from purse with full dx, sits, reads, shakes head.)

BARBARA

OK. Six months. Six good months. *(pause)* I'd better get busy.

(Starts writing furiously in notebook.)

BLACKOUT