

Lean In With Liz! by Rachel Bublitz

Characters (in order of appearance):

Elizabeth, female, any race, mid thirties. A new mom on maternity leave.

Liz, female, any race, thirteen years old. Elizabeth at the age of 13, ready to change the world.

Great Aunt Lizzy, female, any race, forties to sixties. From the late 1800's, a suffragette. Has fantastic posture.

Setting:

A living room littered with baby toys and dirty laundry.

ELIZABETH rocks the baby in her arms and hums a lullaby. She sets the baby down in a crib, then backs away slowly and sits on the couch. She takes out a box of cookies and a young adult novel, and quietly digs into both.

LIZ enters, surveys the room, then goes to the baby.

LIZ

(Pointing to the baby)

It smells like poop.

ELIZABETH looks up from her book and cookies.

ELIZABETH

Oh, God.

LIZ

Or does it just reek 24/7?

ELIZABETH

I just changed her diaper.

LIZ

Then I got some bad news for you.

ELIZABETH

She's asleep.

LIZ

How are you not smelling this?

ELIZABETH

Look, this is- This is my only time. The only nap she has where I can just do nothing. There's no laundry to fold or dishes to wash or dinner to make, I can just sit back and-

LIZ

Fill your mind and body with garbage?

ELIZABETH

I don't want to do this right now.

LIZ

Aren't you a little old to be reading about teenage wizards?

LIZ plops down on the couch and steals a cookie.

ELIZABETH

I only got three hours of sleep last night. THREE. And not all at once either. 30 minutes here, an hour there. I'm tired. I'm cranky. I smell like puke. All I want to do is read a crappy book and eat cookies. I don't want to argue with 13 year old me about how I'm not living up to my full potential or some crap.

LIZ

I guess somewhere deep down inside, you still know what's good for you.

ELIZABETH

GO AWAY!

LIZ

Quiet, you don't want to wake the precious baby.

ELIZABETH

I hate you.

LIZ

How very teen angst of you. Isn't that supposed to be my line?

ELIZABETH

Look. I know I'm-

LIZ

Supposed to be back at work.

ELIZABETH

I had extra vacation saved up.

LIZ

No one at the office thinks you're coming back, *Elizabeth*.

ELIZABETH

Well, they are wrong, *Liz*.

LIZ

Said they've seen it a thousand times. Maternity leave turns into vacation days which inevitably becomes your two weeks notice.

ELIZABETH

I'm not quitting.

LIZ

We had plans.

ELIZABETH

I know.

LIZ

BIG plans.

ELIZABETH

I'm not quitting my job... I'm just taking more time off than I had planned-

LIZ

I knew this would happen.

(Pointing to the baby)

She wasn't a part of the plan.

ELIZABETH

I grew up! Things change.

LIZ

You're never going to be President sitting here stuffing your face with cookies.

ELIZABETH

I'm never going to be the President. That was just a crazy pipe dream I grew out of.

LIZ

It's not! Lawyer, judge, governor, president. I mapped that out on my 12th birthday, and now you're telling me you're gonna just quit?

ELIZABETH

I told you, I am not quitting.

LIZ

MATERNITY LEAVE IS OVER! GO BACK TO WORK!

ELIZABETH

I don't want to miss all the stuff. Her first steps and talking and all that. I made a person! That's a pretty big accomplishment.

LIZ

Yeah, you and everyone with ovaries can make that happen.

ELIZABETH

Hey!

LIZ

We had it all! Smart, great personality, willing and able to put in the hours of work required. Think of all those nights you stayed up to study. Working on less than three hours of sleep and doing just fine.

ELIZABETH

I was younger then, and I pumped enough caffeine into my body to power a blimp!

LIZ

You're a sell out. Leaving your job because of a *baby*? Jesus, you're like the poster child for the patriarchy.

ELIZABETH

I'm not quitting.

LIZ

Okay, then when are you going back? I'll pull out my day planner and pencil it in.

ELIZABETH

... Next month probably. Maybe after. I've been-

*(Takes a deep breath, says the next line
fast, like ripping off a band-aid)*

I've been thinking of taking more time off and just getting the second one out of the way.

LIZ

Second what?

ELIZABETH

The second baby.

LIZ

A SECOND BABY? What? Hold on now, you want MORE BABIES? Jesus. You're never going back are you?

ELIZABETH

No, no, I am, I'm just- I'm considering staying home for a few years and then going back once the second one is in preschool or something.

LIZ

You have years of vacation time saved up?

ELIZABETH

No, I'd have to leave the firm

LIZ

You mean QUIT the firm you dirty liar!

(In a mocking voice)

I'm not quitting, of course not. Not me, not quitting at all, except oh right, OF COURSE I'M QUITTING!

(In her regular voice)

I was going to change everything! Fix the country! Save the freakin' world!

ELIZABETH

So things aren't what I thought they were going to be when I was 13! Life is- Look, I love my family and there will be job when I'm ready to go back, the world will always need lawyers. And if not, I mean, okay yeah, it wouldn't be the worse thing ever to just-

LIZ

If you say stay home with your kids I will smack you in the face.

ELIZABETH

Sorry, you grew up. You changed. Now get out of my head so I can finish this chapter before her naps over.

LIZ

No way. This is an emergency, I'm gonna have to pull out the big guns.

ELIZABETH

Please, I'm so exhausted and you're not going to change my mind.

LIZ

PRESENTING GREAT AUNT LIZZY!

GREAT AUNT LIZZY enters, wearing a dress from the late 1800's and carrying a sign that reads: "VOTES FOR WOMEN."

ELIZABETH

Is that really-

LIZ

Yep.

ELIZABETH

How did you-

LIZ

Called in a favor, okay? Look, Aunt Lizzie was the *real deal*. Fought hand and foot to get women the right to vote! Our ancestor, a true blue suffragette! Her picture hung in our bedroom since our sixth birthday. She's our hero. Our *namesake*. She was the one that inspired us to dream big and expect more than what the world was willing to give. You wanna give up before you made any changes? Fine. But you gotta tell her. Tell her why you're such a quitter.

ELIZABETH

Aunt Lizzy?

GREAT AUNT LIZZY

Are you two young ladies here for the rally?

LIZ

Yeah, sure why not.

GREAT AUNT LIZZY

Then I must express my utter disappointment in your choice of clothing!

ELIZABETH

Excuse me?

GREAT AUNT LIZZY

It's women like you giving our movement a bad name! PANTS? I've never been so scandalized in all my days! We have to REASSURE the people that giving women the right to vote will not lead to such inappropriate attire! Don't you see? That's exactly what they're afraid of!

LIZ

Wow, relax, it's not a big deal, and you're kinda getting off topic, I-

GREAT AUNT LIZZY

But of course it is a big deal, young lady! We have to be crystal clear on what we're fighting for. It's not as if we're suggesting that women leave the house and enter the work force! It gives me chills just to think of it. That would lead to the utter destruction of our society!

LIZ

But, but, but I want to be President one day!

GREAT AUNT LIZZY

Well I'm sure you can find a great charity or organization to lead if you-

LIZ

No! I want to be President of the country!

GREAT AUNT LIZZY laughs.

ELIZABETH

Hey! Don't laugh at her. She could be president one day.

GREAT AUNT LIZZY

You're serious? God in heaven! I'm sorry this- You two are much too extreme for my taste, I'll have to leave you and find the ladies I'm accustomed to rallying with.

(Moving to exit)

And if you'd like my opinion, which of course I feel honor-bound to give, after all if us women aren't banding together in solidarity, what hope do we really have? It's like my mentor Bertha Jenkins always says: "We must lift up every woman we meet, that is the only way to reach the greatest of heights."

LIZ

Yes! That is more like it! Lay on the sisterly knowledge Lizzy!

GREAT AUNT LIZZY

Run, do not walk, but run back into your skirts. You will be hard pressed to find young men keen to marry women dressed as unfeminine as you. Good day.

GREAT AUNT LIZZY exits.

LIZ

NO! NO, NO, NO! You're- GREAT AUNT LIZZIE COME BACK! Tell her, tell her how she has to work! You have to tell her!... Holy crap! Holy CRAP! Did she really? But she was supposed to- HOLY CRAP!

LIZ puts her head between her knees and tries to not hyperventilate.

ELIZABETH

Calm down, she's- It was a different time and-

LIZ

SHE WAS MY HERO! OUR hero.

ELIZABETH

I know, but-

LIZ

We're *named* after her! She fought so women, and she doesn't even, and now here you're sitting, I'm sitting, I mean here I am all grown up and quitting my job to stay home with a stupid baby. And that's just the *first* stupid baby! You already want another stupid baby and who knows how many stupid babies you'll have after that! I'm- I'm toast. Why'd I study so much? Who cares that I'll graduate valedictorian from Stanford, apparently women aren't meant to do anything that requires a brain.

ELIZABETH

Don't say that.

LIZ

Don't you talk to me, baby factory!

LIZ cries. ELIZABETH puts an arm around her.

ELIZABETH

You're forgetting something.

LIZ

I'm forgetting nothing! My future is doomed, and the woman I based all my dreams on thinks I should put a dress on so I can find a stupid husband.

ELIZABETH

... What about mom?

LIZ

What, does she think women were meant to stay barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen too?

ELIZABETH

No. She stayed home and took care of me, of you, until kindergarten. She took us to museums and the zoo. She taught us to read. And then worked her butt off to get her masters degree when we were in elementary school, remember all those crock pot meals?

LIZ

I hate stew.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, and then she was a teacher, and then she was elected to the school board. Mom got the high school to create an all girls math team-

LIZ

I'll be on that team!

ELIZABETH

I know! And she got the bilingual program going and she wrote like countless grants to get kids computers and the science room at the middle school and she even set up that scholarship program with the Rotary Club. And she's still going strong. I mean mom, mom never quit. And I'm not going to either. Not really. It's not an either or thing, it's- I can't not go back to work. I just want to spend these first few years home giving my daughter the best start she can have. And really, I'm lucky that I can do that, a lot of people don't have that luxury.

LIZ

But it's still not fair, I mean why does it have to be you? Why can't her dad stay home?

ELIZABETH

Because I want to. I want to be the one-

LIZ

But its always the moms, the women. Men never-

ELIZABETH

That's not true.

LIZ

Okay, maybe not, but it's not as much.

ELIZABETH

I don't have an answer for that. This is something I feel like I'm meant to do. And later, when she's older and goes to school, well I guess we'll see then.

LIZ

Hold up, no "we'll see then" baloney, you better cross your heart and hope to die.

ELIZABETH

Okay fine. I promise.

LIZ

... So, you really think becoming President is outta reach?

ELIZABETH

Probably, but maybe not. Who knows, I'm young, got a few years before I can even apply for the job.

LIZ laughs.

ELIZABETH (CONTINUED)

What? What's so funny?

LIZ

You think you're young! HA!

ELIZABETH

I would throw you out the window if I could.

LIZ

Bet you would, probably wouldn't go so well for you in the long term though.

(Stands)

Okay. I'll see ya later!

ELIZABETH

Take your time on coming back, no rush.

LIZ

You wish.

LIZ exits, then pops her head back in.

LIZ (CONTINUED)

And seriously, check the bambino. She reeks.

LIZ exits. ELIZABETH looks over at the baby, and decides not to check her. She lays out on the couch and cracks open her book. The baby cries.

ELIZABETH

Of course.

ELIZABETH gets her game face on, then picks up and smells the baby.

ELIZABETH (CONTINUED)

Damn, the little twerp was right.

ELIZABETH exits to change the diaper. End of play.

Rachel Bublitz is an award winning and internationally produced playwright. Her play *Of Serpents & Sea Spray*, had its world premiere with Custom Made Theatre Company in 2016, and will have a second production with This Is Water Theatre in 2017. Rachel has also worked with Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco Playhouse, Plan-B Theatre, Salt Lake Acting Company, the Wyoming Theater Festival, and PianoFight. When she isn't writing, she's chasing after her two viking like children, and learning about weather in her new home of Salt Lake City, Utah. For more, visit www.RachelBublitz.com.