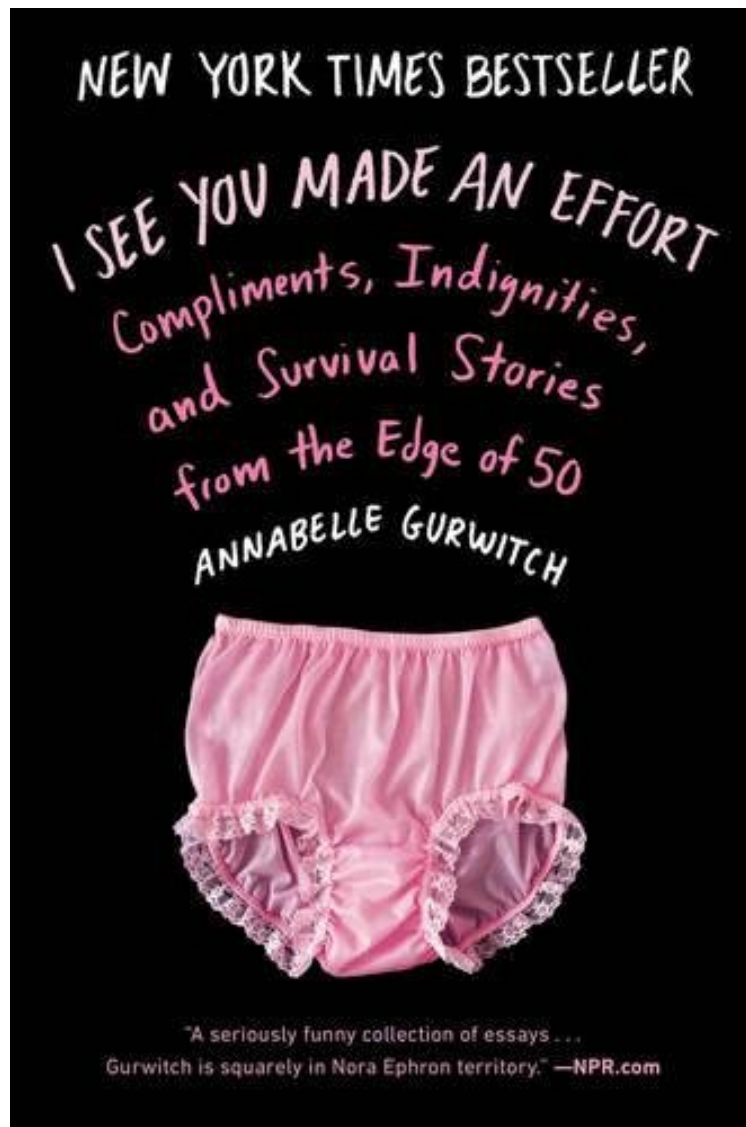


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I See You Made an Effort: Compliments, Indignities, and Survival Stories from the Edge of 50

Annabelle Gurwitch

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#361172 in Books Gurwitch Annabelle 2015-02-24 2015-02-24Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 .50 x .50 x 5.30l, .43 #File Name: 0142181870256 pagesI See You Made an Effort Compliments Indignities and Survival Stories from the Edge of 50 | File size: 59.Mb

Annabelle Gurwitch : I See You Made an Effort: Compliments, Indignities, and Survival Stories from the Edge of 50 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised I See You Made an Effort: Compliments, Indignities, and Survival Stories from the Edge of 50:

55 of 55 people found the following review helpful. Put On Your Big-Girl Pants, AnnabelleBy Lynne SpreenIt was funny, at times laugh-out-loud, but there's an undertone of depression in it that can only emanate from a young person who believes that getting old is a complete drag. Maybe it's because of Gurwitch's unfortunate choice of careers, wherein youth is the only currency. Maybe she has been brainwashed to accept the b.s. viewpoint of the media and our stupid culture, which rewards fecundity - or the appearance thereof - to the exclusion of everything else, over brains, wit, humor, style, experience, or knowing how to size up a con in 10 seconds instead of marrying him. I guess at 60 it's not that interesting to me anymore to hear young people opine on what it's going to be like to get old. For example, this dud: "I am not becoming anything anymore. That's the kind of thudding honesty that occurs at fifty." Come on, Annabelle, pull up those pink ruffly granny pants and stop whining. I became an author at 58, WAY after I was dead, ya big crybaby.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. This was funny and amazing.By Kindle CustomerThis book was so funny by I kept waking my husband, I laughed so hard. Yet so much was actually true, if exaggerated at times . I am 64 and totally enjoyed it. I read a lot of serious non-fiction, lots of history. Just finished a Holocaust book and needed something light. This was perfect, and without being really shallow.13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Gotta love her.By LastCoonassStandingThe title alone, "I see you made an effort", will strike cords with all friends who have a bit of age and experience. The reason there was curiosity in reading this book was actually due to the very bad reviews. Sometimes the bad reviews give more insight than the very good reviews.There is no way to sugar-coat the death of a friend and Annabelle was true with her feelings, thoughts, love for another, so if someone found it beyond poor taste to find a way to laugh at the absurdities of cancer perhaps they should write their own book.Reading this book brought giggles, snorts, guffaws, and just plain enjoyment to my life.

“Annabelle Gurwitch is the child prodigy of the literature on aging. The only downside of this book is that it is bound to deepen your laugh lines.”—Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed* Actor and humorist Annabelle Gurwitch returns with a wickedly funny book of essays about the indignities faced by femmes d’un certain âge. Whether she is falling in lust at the Genius Bar, coping with her best friend’s assisted suicide, or navigating the extensive—and treacherously expensive—anti-aging offerings at the beauty counter, Gurwitch confronts middle age with candor, wit, and a healthy dose of self-deprecation. Scorchingly honest, surreally and riotously funny, *I See You Made an Effort* is the ultimate coming-of-middle-age story and according to Bill Maher, "it should be required reading for anyone between the ages of 40 and death. Scratch that—even after death, it's a must read."

****A New York Times bestseller**** “[A] rollicking collection of essays detailing the hazards encountered when a woman approaches 50....Gurwitch tackles all of it all with aplomb. Her witty writing allows for deft exploration of even the most sensitive and intimate subjects while still finding the humor in her situation...These essays contain a devilish good dose of fun.”—*Publisher’s Weekly* “A seriously funny collection of essays about teetering over the edge of 50...Gurwitch is squarely in Nora Ephron territory.”—*NPR.com* “Annabelle Gurwitch is a funny woman....At the center of the book is a serious question: How are we supposed to age? She convincingly argues that there is no longer a template.”—*Judith Newman, The New York Times* “Growing older may not be a picnic, but Annabelle packs her literary basket with riotous turns in *I See You Made an Effort*, her very funny, keen observations on middle age...Humor and sarcasm may serve as the driving force behind each of these essays, but profound insight into the absurdities of modern middle age ultimately infuses Gurwitch's smart, searing wit.”—*Shelf Awareness* (starred) “Whatever you do, do not mistake “*I See You Made an Effort*” as some kind of chick-lit book, because Annabelle Gurwitch’s essay collection about middle age is far from it. Rather, it’s a spot-on series of reflections on women in their 40s and 50s — the things they endure in the name of vanity and how society dictates so many of those things....But with each essay, or section, before she drags us down too far, she comes back with wit and another honest look at aging.... with a certain sense of humor and humility about getting older and learning to live with it.”—*Amanda St. Armand, St. Louis Post-Dispatch* “Gurwitch confronts ageing the way we all should—with a healthy dose of hilarious self-deprecation.”—*Mrs. Robinson Magazine* “Whatever you do, do not mistake *I See You Made an Effort* as some kind of chick-lit book, because Annabelle Gurwitch’s essay collection about middle age is far from it. Rather, it’s a spot-on series of reflections on women in their 40s and 50s — the things they endure in the name of vanity and how society dictates so many of those things....with a certain sense of humor and humility about getting older and learning to live with it.”—*Amanda St. Amand, St. Louis Post-Dispatch* “[Annabelle Gurwitch’s] unflinching and wickedly funny coming-of-middle-age story confronts the inevitable grit and glory of reaching the autumn of one’s life.”—*Amanda Montell, Time Out LA* “Annabelle Gurwitch takes us on a tour of the cruelest American punishment—female middle age—and along the way manages to highlight the existential questions that haunt every woman turning 50. Read, if you dare, *I See You Made an Effort*, and you will exit laughing at this rich display of Vintage Annabelle.”—*Caitlin Flanagan, author of Girl Land and Goodbye to All* “The stories in Annabelle Gurwitch's book are unexpected, imaginative and her observations just plain cracked me up. It's so great it should be required reading for everyone between the ages of 40 and death. Scratch that—even after death it's a must-read.”—*Bill Maher* “In this heartfelt and hilarious book, Annabelle Gurwitch infuses her razor-sharp wit with uncommon vulnerability and

grace. Gurwitch bravely shines a light into the darkest corners of her soul and somehow you still come away laughing. You will feel like you are curled up on her couch, sharing a glass of wine and doing that rare and wonderful thing: connecting.”—Jillian Lauren, author of the New York Times bestselling *Some Girls* “I See You Made an Effort is so funny, humble, and nutty that you’ll wish Annabelle Gurwitch lived next door. I laughed and commiserated with all the indignities of getting a wee bit older in a youth-obsessed world. I teared up at her on-going frustrations with her teenager, which mirror my own. I enjoyed her open hostility and deep love toward her husband, which also (don’t tell anyone) mirrors my own. After reading this book, you won’t feel alone in your secret thoughts anymore. And you’ll laugh really hard—the frosting on the cake!”—Julia Sweeney, author of *If It’s Not One Thing, It’s Your Mother* “Smart, hilarious, and deeply moving, *I See You Made an Effort* captures the highs (few) and lows (more than a few) of not just turning fifty, but turning fifty in our time. From “having work done,” to mothering a mortified teenage son, to revealing the truth about married sex, Gurwitch lays bare the harsh reality of hitting the half-century mark in a way that keeps you simultaneously laughing and turning pages.”—Cathi Hanauer, author of *Gone* and editor of *The Bitch in the House* “Hooray for Annabelle Gurwitch, whose funny and clear-eyed book proves that the best way to face aging is with copious amounts of laughter. Peals not peels!”—Henry Alford, author of *Would It Kill You to Stop Doing That?* “Annabelle Gurwitch proves that fifty is the new funny! *I See You Made an Effort* is a hilarious romp through mid-life’s ups and downs, sags and droops, younger men and rompers and the voices of our mothers.”—Lisa Bloom, author of *Think and Swagger* “Annabelle Gurwitch was always one of my favorite actresses, and now she’s become one of my favorite writers. Her riff on living at “the intersection of feminism and Feministing” stayed with me. With as much heart as social commentary, *I See You Made an Effort* is ultimately not about aging out of anything—it’s about aging into a bigger and better version of yourself than your younger self ever imagined.”—Jill Soloway, creator of *Transparent* and *I Love Dick*, director, producer of *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Six Feet Under*, and author of *Tiny Ladies in Shiny Pants* “Annabelle Gurwitch is the child prodigy of the literature on aging. At the youthful age of fifty, when most of us are stealthily burning our AARP magazines so the neighbors don’t find them in the recycling, she has figured out how to make the humiliations of aging hilarious. The only downside of this book is that it is bound to deepen your laugh lines.”—Barbara Ehrenreich, New York Times bestselling author of *Nickel and Dimed* “Annabelle Gurwitch’s *I See You Made An Effort* is a little like going to get a mammogram with Lucille Ball.”—Jeanne Darst, author of *Fiction Ruined My Family* “Annabelle Gurwitch stares into the maw of middle age and makes you laugh, cringe, hoot and holler. She turns fifty into a battle cry and a hallelujah.”—Felicity Huffman “Whip smart and Ephron-funny, *I See You Made an Effort* is beautifully written and tender-hearted. It’s a love letter in your pocket for the inevitable journey that lies ahead.”—Jane Kaczmarek

About the Author Annabelle Gurwitch is an actress and author of *You Say Tomato, I Say Shut Up*, a self-hurt marital memoir co-written with her husband, Jeff Kahn, now a theatrical play in its third national tour; and *Fired! Tales of the Canned, Canceled, Downsized Dismissed*. Her *Fired!* documentary premiered as a Showtime Comedy Special and played film festivals around the world. Gurwitch gained a loyal comedic following during her numerous years co-hosting the cult favorite, *Dinner a Movie*; her acting credits include *Dexter*, *Boston Legal*, *Seinfeld*, *Melvin Goes to Dinner*, *The Shaggy Dog* and *Not Necessarily the News* on HBO. Most recently, she starred in the adaptation of Grace Paley’s *A Coney Island Christmas* by Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Donald Margulies at The Geffen Playhouse. Live appearances include New York Comedy Festival, 92nd St Y, Upright Citizens Brigade and story salons in both New York and Los Angeles. She has served as a regular commentator on NPR and a humorist for *TheNation.com*. Her writing has appeared in *More*, *Marie Claire*, *Men’s Health*, *Los Angeles Times* and elsewhere. Gurwitch is a passionate environmentalist, a reluctant atheist, and lives with her husband and son in Los Angeles.

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My computer was moving sluggishly. A year ago, upon press-ing the start button, my machine swiftly jumped to attention. Now the familiar sight of documents dotting the photograph of my thirteen-year-old son was replaced by a black bar inch-ing across a dull gray expanse, like an octogenarian with a walker creeping through an intersection. Then the software failed to load altogether. It was going to take a stroke of genius to get it working again.

The Glendale Galleria Apple Store is staffed by a crew whose average age could be summed up as: if you have to ask, you’re too old to want to hear the answer. After checking in, I am told my personal genius will meet me at the Bar.* Homo genius are outfit- ted uniformly in T-shirts announcing their membership in an elite tech-savvy species. Mine sports a headband, which artfully musses his hair. He is wearing a name tag that reads “AuDum.” I ask him how he pronounces it.*Word on the street is Apple wants to hire more women, but go to your local store, and you’ll notice that the majority of the Geniuses are male.“Is it a creative spelling of the first man, Adam? Is it a Sanskrit chant—Auuuuuuuum? A percussive sound?”“No,” he replies. “It’s pronounced autumn, like the season.”“Are you in a band?”“No, my mother gave me that name.”“You belong to a generation of great names,” I tell him. I am thinking of the kids whose instruments I check out every Friday afternoon in the music department at my son’s school. Each stu- dent’s name is more interesting than the next: Lilit, Anush, Rea-son, Butterfly, Summer and Summer Butterfly, which seems like both a name and a tone poem. I make sure to repeat their names before wishing them a good weekend, reasoning that in classes of forty-five students, this might be the only moment in their school day when they get individually recognized. Or maybe I’m doing it because it’s just fun to recite their names out loud. Coming as I do

from a generation of Mandys and Mindys, Lisas and Leslies, Au-Dum's name is an instant clue that my Genius and I are separated by decades in which progenitors have gifted their offspring with intriguing names. AuDum begins talking about his mother and I hold my breath, wondering if he will say that she is my age. Thankfully, he says she's a bit older, sixty-two. She's a speech pathologist who lives in Albuquerque and he admires her work. I am charmed by his obvious affection for his mother. He has been well cared for, I think, as I notice that he has good teeth. Braces? Maybe not, but definitely regular dental care. As he examines my computer, he tells me my hard drive is dying. "But it's so young—it's only a few years old." He explains that computer years are like dog years times three, making my computer only slightly younger than I am. "But there were no outward signs. It was doing just fine until recently." "Nobody knows exactly why computers fail," he tells me. "It's not like people, who have a steady decline—the end can come without warning. You're catching it just in time," he says, adding, "do you have an external hard drive?" I tell him I do, thinking that if my Apple Time Machine* weren't the size of a wallet I would jump inside it and go back in time so I could be his age. While I was there, I would also correct a few of the numerous errors in judgment I've made in my almost fifty years on the planet. To start with, I would change all my PIN numbers, secret passwords, and security codes to the exact same thing. † I also went door-to-door to register voters for John Kerry in 2004, made phone calls for John Edwards in 2000, and took pottery classes after the maudlin melodrama *Ghost*, with Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze, came out in 1990. I'm not sure which was the biggest* The Apple Time Capsule, or Time Machine, is the most technically advanced and popular external hard-drive gadget Apple has on the market. I bought it because I liked the name. ‡ I would try to come up with one memorable code but not: 123456, 12345678, or Password, Pussy, or Baseball. A successful hack of millions of Yahoo accounts on July 12, 2012, revealed that's what the majority of people use as passwords. misstep, but a trip back in time could, at the very least, keep half a dozen ill-formed ashtrays out of California landfills. Judging from his appearance, it seems a distinct and sobering possibility that AuDum Genius might have been born the same year I was throwing clay. "So, how old are you?" "Twenty-six." He is closer in age to my son than me by a decade. As he checks out my computer, I pepper him with questions. "What qualifies one to be a Genius? Is there much training? An IQ test?" Just as he's about to answer, another of his tribe, Sean Genius, comes over and deferentially asks what even I know to be a simple question. "What do you do if someone forgets her iTunes password?" AuDum helps him out and I compliment him by noting that some Geniuses seem more gifted than others. He tells me that he was certified at the thirty-two-acre Apple campus, located at 1 Infinite Loop in Cupertino, California. The hotels are owned by Apple, the blankets have an Apple stamp, and would-be Geniuses eat on plates stamped with the Apple logo in Apple-owned cafés and are regularly whisked past restricted areas where classified research takes place. In fact, he will return for further training soon. "Ooh," I tease him excitedly. "You could be a spy, pretending you're there to train, but you're really sneaking in to collect intel for Intel. The James Bond of computer tech." He looks at me blankly. Clearly the reference to Bond doesn't hold the kind of cachet it did for generations of men before him. Should have said Jason Bourne. That's when he suggests a radical move. "Are you up for it?" "I am." He wants to strip my computer down completely and then carefully, slowly and deliberately, he will reload my hard drive. In order to make this work, I will have to agree to do everything he says, even if it sounds a bit unusual. "In order to give something, we have to take something away," he tells me. Is he quoting the Bible or a sacred Steve Jobsian aphorism? I have no idea, but he had me at "reload." We will need to download any applications I use and the process may take all night. During that time, I shouldn't do anything to harm or disturb the computer, he warns, or we'll have to start all over again and can I manage that kind of painstaking process? I'm forty-nine years old, I have all of my own teeth, most of my wedding china is still intact, and the baby who was cut out of my abdomen while I was awake has made it to puberty under my watch, so yes, I think I can do that. I nod my assent, swallowing hard. He tells me to take everything off. I remove my data silently and swiftly. He begins his maneuvers, and I want to hear more about his mother. "Were you always close, or did you find your way back to her as an adult?" "Oh, we were on the same team until maybe thirteen or fourteen and then it got tough. She was having a hard time, too. She got divorced, changed careers, we moved around, but then things turned around after I went to college. Now we're close." I take out a pen and paper to write his words down—like I'm an anthropologist taking field notes on the maturation process of young men. His grandmother died last month and his mother is "freaked" about being the oldest person left in her family. He's been calling a lot to help her make peace with that. His hands are nice, I notice, nails filed, but a quick glance down the counter shows me that all Geniuses have clean hands and filed nails. Maybe it's code, like the way Disney once required employees at the park to be clean-shaven.* I may be looking at the last of the Apple manicures, but I hope not. It's nice to see good grooming on twentysomethings. It's kind of old-school, or rather, my school. His hands glide confidently over my keyboard, but my laptop keeps stalling so I have to keep reentering my password. I try to punch in the digits breezily, but he's standing so close, right next to my crooked pinky, the one with osteoarthritis. The process is laborious as I attempt to type with my pinky tucked under my palm, hoping he doesn't notice the swollen middle joint. It's possible, even probable, for someone so young to assume it's broken or disfigured from a sports injury—at least I hope so. My Genius sets the download in motion, hands me my computer, and with a brief good-bye, he promises that we'll finish what we started in* In January 2012, under pressure from Disneyland Paris park employees who insisted on keeping their goatees,

Disney gave up its no-facial-hair policy the morning. I exit, cradling my computer through the mall, into my car, and back home. I am an impatient person. I've never managed to carry out complicated recipes or blow-dry my hair all the way to the back of my head, but I am on a mission, and when I arrive home I leave the computer to complete the process. I instruct both my husband and son not to disturb it under any circumstances. That night, everything I do seems supercharged with new purpose. The next morning, after driving my son to school, I shower and stand in my closet, wondering what to wear. I have no idea. I haven't known what to put on for the last few years. I'm aging out of my wardrobe. Skirts are too short. The legs are still good, but the folds of skin at the knee should not be seen, unless in colored tights, but even then, colored tights just don't seem age-appropriate. Many of my dresses are just too flouncy, ruffles circling the face are too Humpty Dumpty, flared skirts too flirty, tight clothing looks lumpy and anything blousy seems to emphasize my lack of a waist. Is this the moment I head into the Eileen Fisher years? In my thirties, I glanced at Fisher's ads with fleeting interest, but as I edged into my forties, I began to linger on the images. Even with a cursory look, Eileen Fisher's clothes look like a cross between a hospital gown and a toga. What is the message? We need soft fabrics next to our dried-out skin—anything with more texture might chafe? We must disguise our bodies in flowing robes lest we appear overtly sexual—or worse, turn others off? Eileen shows only solid colors, no patterns at all, ever, as if to suggest that patterns might clash with the lines and angles on our faces. I do seem to look better in solid colors, and though the hospital togas threaten to reduce us to clichéd depictions of elder counsels in dystopian science fiction movies, Fisher's draping fabrics do smooth out some of the indignities of aging. Swaths of material gently cascading over the area where your waistline once was can make you appear . . . if not slimmer, then longer. Leaving your house wearing a duvet cover could probably work, too. Ironically, Fisher uses young models in her ads now. Her website has just one gray-haired lady, and she isn't even modeling the clothes*—she's featured in a video tutorial on how to tie a scarf. The other clothing lines that cater to women over forty are Chico's, with their loud resort patterns and animal prints, and Jil Sander, whose minimalistic designs and color palette (ranging from gray to charcoal) are subtle and chic but so expensive I can't even afford to gaze upon them. The only thing I've found that fits both my body and state of mind is business suits, but I can't show up for my Genius appointment dressed like I'm headed to a corporate board meeting. I try on a pair of new jeans that I was steered to purchase by a mother of four who's in her fifties. My friend likes them because they have a high waist without being mom-jeans boxy. I pair them with a dark blue button-down shirt and a black sweater. I look* In 2009, when Eileen Fisher announced she wanted to target younger customers, a lot of women over fifty were pissed off! Incidentally, American women over fifty spend more than \$25 billion a year on clothes. We also have more discretionary income than any other demographic group. Why'd you break up with us, Eileen? like a plainclothes detective. It's the best I can do. I put on a minimal amount of makeup. Have to keep it light; at forty-nine, any excess looks like Sylvia Miles's aging hooker character from *Midnight Cowboy*. (It's worth noting that Ms. Miles was actually thirty-seven when she shot that film.) Then, I carefully twist a length of bright yellow silk into "The Pretzel." Yes, I did watch the six-and-a-half-minute scarf-tying video on the Fisher site. A middle-aged woman dressed in a simple black outfit, no jewelry, with a close-cropped hairstyle I call the "man-do" (a look favored by Judi Dench, elderly nuns, and white-pride militias), solemnly wraps herself in colored scarves, smiling wanly each time she completes a knot. Over and over and over again. Some techniques are genuinely intriguing, but I was also tempted to lob the "Loop and Drape" over a ceiling lamp before roping it around my neck and stepping off a chair. The scarf's official purpose, like that of its older cousin, the turtleneck, is to cover the gobbler, but standing in my closet, I realize that the scarf also adds color and some *je ne sais quoi*. I know what the "quoi" is now—it's the last vestige of feminine flair of the pared-down wardrobe of the middle-aged woman. I cast it aside and leave the house looking like a cop. I arrive at the store and start to panic. I don't see my Genius anywhere and I fear he has taken my computer through some kind of unconventional protocol and it will never be the same. But then I catch his eye as he emerges from behind an Apple paneled door and I break into a sweat. Is it a hot flash? Oh, God. But no, it's something else. I have fallen in love with AuDum Genius. The story of his affection for his mother, coupled with my being totally dependent on whoever can repair what has become my most essential appendage, has endeared him to me.* He smiles and I can see he's wearing that same headband and his hair might be a little greasy, but his nails are filed and the teeth are good. The teeth are good, I assure myself. I can live with that. I'm not on the appointment list projected on the Apple screen, but he motions me over to the Genius Bar. I stride ahead, pushing through the pain from a recent tennis injury so my limp will go unnoticed. ("Recent" meaning five years ago, when I twisted my right ankle playing tennis and the orthopedist told me I had "boomeritis."†) I sit attentively as AuDum resuscitates my hard drive and reveals more about himself. It is our second date, after all. He studied urban planning. He likes to sketch and takes on small graphic-design gigs because there's a dearth of work in his field. He shares an apartment with two roommates and he is thinking of going to Norway, where there might be better employment opportunities. "You should do that. It's the perfect time in your life to have an adventure. If it doesn't work out, you can chalk it up to 'things I did in my twenties,'" I tell him, his head buried in my device. "I have twenty-three years of experience on you, so I know what I'm talking about," I add with authority. I have now announced* In February 2012, iVillage published a survey indicating two-thirds of married women prefer Facebooking to sucking face, or any other sucking, for that matter.† "Boomeritis" is an officially recognized medical term coined by an

orthopedic sur-geon in 1999 for injuries boomer-aged people get when they exercise as vigorously as when they were younger. I spent six months in “the boot.” The boot has become something of a status symbol, a middle-age must-have accessory—it’s an advertise-ment of your virility.my age. He’s a Genius, so he might have figured it out already, but he doesn’t say, “You look young for your age,” which I decide to let pass without comment, even though I have read that Ge-niuses are supposed to make the customers feel warm and wel-come in the store and that would be the warmest and most welcome thing to say.He’s typing in codes and waxing on about which cities have the best infrastructures and I am fantasizing about his possible Wiki-pedia entry: After AuDum Genius met Annabelle Gurwitch [we have the same initials—we can share monogrammed luggage and towels], he began his innovative and transformative design work. But I know that’s a stretch. I don’t have the money to become his patron. I would love to be his Peggy Guggenheim; alas, the best I can aim for is to be his Mrs. Robinson.*This idea has nothing to do with my actual marriage, though I have started to suspect that the timbre of my husband’s burp has been specifically calibrated to annoy me. More than half of our communication revolves around who will volunteer first to pick up our kid, our dinner, or our sex life. If you were to catch a glimpse of my face during the throes of passion, you might mis-take my expression for that of a bartender at four a.m., shaking her last martini—one who enjoys her work and wants to please every customer, but is also relieved her shift is ending soon.All of which is to say that we’re in the middle of our marriage. I have come to appreciate that there are some great things about*It’s been widely noted, but is always worth repeating, that Anne Bancroft was only six years Dustin Hoffman’s senior when she played his seductress in *The Graduate*.the middle of a marriage. The way neither of us understands fla-vored coffees or movies where people exchange bodies, and no matter how angry we are, we’ll stop in the middle of an argu-ment to watch our cats do something cute. But middles can be thankless. Beginnings are always exciting, even if in a car-crash/ impending-disaster way. Endings, even heart-wrenching ones, can be energizing. Friends who have gotten divorced go on diets and dates. Even when those end badly they make for good stories.The historical precedent for the kind of female May-December fling I’m considering isn’t great, especially if you’re looking for something long-term. In fiction, it doesn’t end well for Emma Bovary, Countess Olenska, or Mrs. Robinson, for that matter. Even Samantha’s infamously tireless libido in *Sex and the City* couldn’t forestall the inevitable breakup with her hunky blond boy toy Smith.I also hate the term “cougar.” There isn’t a name for men who date younger women; it’s just considered normal. I do have girl-friends who have booty calls with younger men, and one friend who, after two divorces and three children, is happily dating a woman ten years younger. Another, also divorced with kids, leads sex tours of Paris for women who, as she advertises on her website, have already “married, divorced, cut our hair off, and reinvented.” All of that sounds positively exhausting to me. I had plenty of random sex in my twenties and thirties.I have held a special fantasy for one of my exes. He’s the path not taken. A tall, remote, Italian Catholic heartbreaker, the polar opposite of my five-six, adoring Jewish husband. That he dumped me unceremoniously, by all accounts is happily married with kids and has never once in twenty years reached out to me hasn’t stopped me from daydreaming about the call or email imploring me to run away with him. That is, until I ran into him in a restau-rant this year. He looked weathered but still had his rakish swag-ger. We embraced, but before the shock of this reunion could even register as sexual tension, he began recounting the details of his recent hip-replacement surgery.Dear God, I just want one night of Genius sex before I hit the half-century mark.But where would we do it? At his apartment? No. There might be hairs of unknown provenance on the soap, black towels, and sheets that haven’t been changed recently. Plus, one of his room-mates might be there, and no one can witness this act.My house? No. What if he accidentally puts on one of my kid’s T-shirts, strewn around the house as they are? We also have kid artwork hanging everywhere and it just seems wrong that we would sneak by the watercolor rendering of a dinosaur pooping as we head into the bedroom. On top of that, my menopausal brain fog makes it impossible to keep schedules straight, so there is a good chance I would pick an inopportune moment to hook up and AuDum would arrive just in time to witness our nightly ritual of haggling with our teenager over homework versus Internet time. But there’s another big problem, and that’s the “ick” factor of having sex in the bed I share with my husband. That didn’t seem to bother California’s governor Arnold Schwarz-enegger when he had an affair with his housekeeper, whom he probably asked to make said bed afterward. Plus, at any given moment, a pair of Spanx might be crumpled in a ball at the foot of our bed, a tube of hormone replacement cream on the night-stand, or one of the many pairs of tweezers I hide around the house might have migrated under a pillow. Our bedroom is a mine field of erection killers—just ask my husband.Cannot go to a cheap hotel. A cheap hotel does not figure into this or any other fantasy I have at this age. It will need to be pricey. I really can’t afford an expensive destination, but it’s the only way. Yes, I’ll need to dip into our savings. Hopefully, I can write it off as a business expense, which it technically is. The business of getting old. Once I find the correct establishment, I’ll go up to the room first, and AuDum will need to wait for a brief interval to avoid being spotted by anyone I know. This will give me time to get ready, and I need it.It’s been eighteen years since I’ve taken my clothes off in front of anyone other than my husband, my gynecologist and women in the locker room at the gym. I’ll really need two or three weeks, if not months, to get my body affair-ready. I will also need to pur-chase new undergarments. I own bras and panties that are nice enough for fifteen years of marriage, but fall under the category of “underwear,” and for an affair it will really need to be “linge-rie.” Plus, I will need to get the full Brazilian, which I tried once when I was pregnant but it was so painful, I left it half done. My single friends

tell me that bare is the new black for men, so I hope the computer gets repaired quickly, as I will need to start accli-mating myself to the hairless penis through pornographic Inter-net surfing. What will AuDum Genius and I talk about? Best not to let it slip how pissed off I am that my son is getting a C in PE and that he's definitely not going to Ming-Na Davydov's bat mitzvah if he keeps it up. Or that I need to get a mole that's changed shape checked on a part of my back that I can't see, and would he check it? Safe topics might include movies or books, but not films about senior citizens falling in love at resorts in India, or anything with Meryl Streep, and no mentioning that I am currently reading a book titled Why Men Die First. I could suggest a late-night sup-per from room service, but he'd have to read the menu to me or I'd be pulling out my reading glasses. Note to self: Don't say, "In my day" out loud. Also avoid "nowadays." "Nowadays" is a touch-stone used by aging persons to describe things that happened "in my day." The word "touchstone" is also a touchstone for AARP territory. Talking is out. Drinking is better. While I wait for him, I'll put on mood music. Since he's about the same age as my nephews, I should put on some dubstep, only I hate its incessant thumping sound. I'm sure it sounds good if you're sucking on an Ecstasy pacifier at a rave in the desert, but I would rather have my spleen removed and filleted in front of me than be high in the middle of a sweaty crowd ringed by porta-potties. But if I put on something like Fleetwood Mac or, God for-bid, Marvin Gaye, I risk dating myself. I've got it: jazz. Jazz has always been the perfect soundtrack for doing stupid things. But my son and his middle school band play all the standards, so jazz is off-limits. A more pressing issue is, what's the right position? I'm not comfortable with someone ogling my ass if I can't observe the reaction, so doggie gets a thumbs-down. Missionary seems too same-old, same-old. It has to be something where I can achieve maximum attractiveness and get the most bang for my buck, so there's really only one choice. Movie sex. Up against a wall. Glam-our magazine calls it "Stand and Deliver," while in the Kama Sutra it's "Climbing the Tree." He leans into me, pressing my back hard up against the hotel wall. I tilt my face slightly upward, always a flattering angle, while his tongue traces the arc of my neck. The wall can be the perfect excuse for not completely disrobing; in fact, a wrap dress would be ideal, providing easy access while covering my poste-rior. He pushes the layers of my dress open and moves his hand up my thigh. I order him to take my panties off slowly so, as he kneels down, I'll have time to reach for the small tube of vaginal lubricant I've hidden in the folds of the wrap dress and quickly insert a dollop. Balancing on my good ankle, I wrap my leg around his body as I reach for him, but I've forgotten about a condom. We could take the half-hour AIDS test and forgo it, because there's no way I can get pregnant, but he can't know that; it would take away an element of danger, so I hope he's got one or the hotel can send one up quickly. The only thing is, it's really tough to get the up-against-the-wall thing to work—our heights have to be just right, and he'll need a certain amount of upper-body strength, which he might not have developed working at the Apple store. I'll also need to keep my right leg aloft. If I can find a hotel room that has a rock-climbing wall—we are in Los Angeles, after all—I could anchor myself on a foothold. Yes! I wedge my heel into a foothold a few feet off the ground and pull him inside me. "You're good to go." "Yes," I whisper. "I mean, yes?" His voice is louder than I expected. I look down and see that I'm gripping the counter tightly. My mouth feels dry and my heart is pounding when something soft brushes my arm. It's a strand of hair. I snap my head to the right and see a girl with long straight brown hair. She is standing next to me at the counter. She's dressed in typical California fashion: sneakers, tight gym pants, and hoodie. She's a bit fleshy. She might even be pregnant. Her face is unmistakably young and fresh. Her skin is tan, tight, and creamy. She smells fertile. "My next customer is here," he says, rotating my computer so I can see the folder he's created for my retrieved documents. He has named it "Old Annabelle." "What?" "Listen, if you need anything else," he says as he motions to another Genius, "Logan can take care of you." "But, but . . ." He points to the Apple screen and then to the luscious girl. "I've got to move on." It falls to Logan Genius to move the items from the "Old Annabelle" folder into a new one that I've suggested we name "Vintage Annabelle." With a swift click, the offending word dis-appears. I am careful not to engage Logan in any small talk. As Logan wraps up with tips on how to keep my computer as good as new, I catch sight of AuDum heading toward the exit. His shift must be over. The Apple shirt is gone, a nondescript T-shirt in its place. Out of his uniform, he looks different. His pants taper down his calves and stop just above his ankles in a way I find unflattering on someone past puberty. He has a slight lilt to his gait, as if his feet aren't solidly touching the ground. He gives me a little wave. It has a slightly reluctant quality to it. AuDum has sorted the clutter on my desktop, skimmed my docu-ments and scanned through my most private emails. He knows everything about me there is to know without being intimate, but I can tell by the wave and his red high-top Keds that we will not be hooking up. AuDum leaves. I feel a bit sad but also extremely relieved. AuDum goes home, heats up some ramen and takes out his sketchbook. He lies on his bed and starts to draw a woman. It's a woman with brown hair. The brunette in the hoodie. He's cap-tured her inner glow. I have also made the picture. The side of my head hugs the corner of the frame, just out of focus. They will meet tonight for a drink. If that goes well, in two weeks they'll be at a rave, dancing to dubstep, somewhere in the desert. I hope they don't go and fall in love. After all, she might be pregnant and he really should move to Norway. "Since you went away the days grow long, and soon I'll hear old winter's song." I hear the sound of the walking jazz bass line coming from my son's room. "But I miss you most of all, my dar-ling, when autumn leaves start to fall."