

# Breast of Show

by

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## DESCRIPTION

Felice Gallagher-Jimenez runs Breast of Show, information and products for breastfeeding mothers, out of her street-level unit in a very exclusive residential building. Elizabeth Thornton, president of the building association, fines her for keeping her street door open for her “moms,” an action that Felice must challenge and not accept.

## CHARACTERS

- ELIZABETH THORNTON
- FELICE GALLAGHER-JIMENEZ

## LOCATION

- Elizabeth Thornton’s apartment

## SET

- Table
- Two chair
- An elegant tea pot, two cups, sugar, milk on a tray
- A letter in an envelope
- A bag of breast-feeding paraphernalia

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*ELIZABETH THORNTON, coiffed and impeccable in a fashion that went out of fashion in the mid-1960s, sits backbone-straight at a table while FELICE GALLAGHER-JIMENEZ empties a bag of breast-feeding paraphernalia on the table. There is a china tea service on the table as well set for two.*

ELIZABETH

This isn’t necessary—

*FELICE shakes out the bag.*

FELICE

Here we go.

ELIZABETH

Ms. Gallagher.

FELICE

Gallagher-Jimenez.

ELIZABETH

I invited you here as a courtesy—

FELICE

Don't think I haven't heard "the Breast Nazi" around the place—

ELIZABETH

There's really no need—

FELICE

Or "boob" as in "booby" as in "booby hatch"—

ELIZABETH

Again, there's no need—

*FELICE points to the pile.*

FELICE

Now, do you see anything here that constitutes a clear and present danger to the domestic tranquility of the building?

*FELICE holds up certain objects as she speaks: a breast feeding bra, bottles, pumps, nipple shields—the possibilities are endless. FELICE also doesn't mind thinking that she's making ELIZABETH feel uncomfortable, though it's unclear if that is happening.*

FELICE

You'd think—this is interesting—from what our fellow condo association members are saying, that I'm peddling porn out of my unit—what'd'ya think of this?—or belching cheap beer in the common areas. It's just breast-feeding gadgetry for breastfeeding females.

*FELICE grabs her own breasts and goes rat-a-tat-a-tat like they were machine guns, then laughs.*

FELICE

My nuclear nipples!

*ELIZABETH lets the silence settle.*

ELIZABETH

Are you finished?

FELICE

Depends.

ELIZABETH

Will you at least sit down? You seem to have made the sort of point you like to make.

*FELICE ponders what ELIZABETH has said.*

FELICE

I can sit down.

*ELIZABETH points to the paraphernalia.*

ELIZABETH

And this has made its point as well, so its job is done. Go on, it can go away.

*FELICE concedes and begins gathering the items back into the bag.*

FELICE

Did you breastfeed your children?

*ELIZABETH's expression doesn't change, but it does, but FELICE either doesn't notice or ignores it.*

FELICE

I breastfed mine, until I had to stop because of the cancer scare, but I tell you that it wasn't easy getting info or a decent fitting bra in this city, which is why I started Breast of Show so that no one had to be humiliated by what had humiliated me. And feeding the child in public?! You'd think that when I flopped it out—

ELIZABETH

Ms. Gallagher-Jimenez—please stop—please—for just a moment—so that we can get back to why I asked you here.

FELICE

I know why you asked me here.

ELIZABETH

I don't think you do.

FELICE

Well, I know the condo association has fined me—\$250.

ELIZABETH

For leaving your street-level door open, which we have repeatedly—

FELICE

I paid \$825,000 for my unit—I'll leave the door open if I want.

ELIZABETH

The rules say—

FELICE

You ever tried to open that brass motherfucker of a door, especially when you're lactating and have a babe in the carriage or the carrier and lugging the equivalent of D-Day in your prep bag? Leaving it open so they can get to my goods and my services is an act of simple kindness. Fine me all you want—I'm keeping it open, as long as the weather lets me. And you didn't answer my question about breastfeeding your kids.

*ELIZABETH slides a letter over to FELICE.*

ELIZABETH

Let's focus.

*FELICE opens it, reads.*

FELICE

You're not serious.

ELIZABETH

We will get an injunction if needed.

FELICE

Breast of Show is not a retail store.

ELIZABETH

You—sell—materials.

FELICE

I provide a community service—

ELIZABETH

You charge fees—

FELICE

—a goddamn important community service—and the zoning allows for that.

ELIZABETH

That's not for you to say.

FELICE

Or for you and your fellow condo-mints to say, either. Damn! Damn!

*FELICE leans back, a little stunned at the moment, a little winded, a little thrown off-kilter.*

ELIZABETH

Are you all right?

FELICE

I—don't—can I—may I—have some tea?

ELIZABETH

Of course—that's why I have it.

*ELIZABETH pours FELICE a cup.*

ELIZABETH

Sugar? Milk?

*FELICE declines both. ELIZABETH hands the cup to her. FELICE drinks. ELIZABETH drinks. FELICE calculates. ELIZABETH calculates about FELICE's calculations.*

FELICE

Breasts—the trouble they can cause! Tits all over a billboard and people just call that “natural,” it’s just “the way.” But a nipple in a toothless mouth in a restaurant—this doesn’t have to be a war.

*FELICE holds out her cup.*

FELICE

May I?

*ELIZABETH takes the cup and saucer, refills it, hands it back. FELICE laughs.*

FELICE

That’s funny.

ELIZABETH

In what way?

FELICE

I would’ve just brought the pot over and poured it in, like a diner waitress! You take it, hand it back—you serve—that’s a distinction with a difference.

*ELIZABETH pauses, teapot hovering. Then she decides on the approach she wants to take. She places the pot down and gives FELICE a direct look.*

ELIZABETH

You’re kind to say that. But I don’t think there’s a difference at all.

FELICE

What are you saying to me?

ELIZABETH

Only this: I’m sure you act with the same care toward your—

FELICE

My what?

ELIZABETH

I was going to say “customers”—

FELICE

Don't do retail—

ELIZABETH

And I was going to add that that's probably not what you call them.

FELICE

My moms—that's all I call 'em, my moms.

ELIZABETH

So, toward your moms.

FELICE

I know you have two children.

ELIZABETH

It was—interesting.

FELICE

Momhood.

ELIZABETH

Momhood. Mothering.

FELICE

And thus to breasts again—

*ELIZABETH shifts in her chair, leans forward on the table, hands clasped together.*

ELIZABETH

Breasts. You mentioned cancer.

*FELICE puts her cup down and slides the cup and saucer forward, positions it—buying some time.*

FELICE

I did mention it. Cancer-free for a lucky seven years.

ELIZABETH

Your son and daughter—

FELICE

He's seven—I had to stop it with him because of the “C,” but my daughter got the full breast buffet.

ELIZABETH

I want to let you know that I am the same—though I have been “free,” obviously, for a few more years than you.

*FELICE plays with the cup and saucer while she thinks.*

FELICE

Well, you just never know.

ELIZABETH

Breastfeeding, you asked.

FELICE

Bad manners on my part—

ELIZABETH

With my first child—

FELICE

Really, you don't [have to]—

ELIZABETH

With my first child, Ms. Gallagher-Jimenez—no. The manners of the day did not allow it. So, bottle-fed and upraised he was. With my second child—

*ELIZABETH pulls FELICE's cup towards her and puts it one side—a mannered stall.*

ELIZABETH

With my second child, also no. But not because of manners. Biology intervened.

FELICE

How bad?

ELIZABETH

They took both.

FELICE

Both.

ELIZABETH

The manner in those days. I was glad, and I wasn't. Missed the pleasure—infrequent, but still. But missed the danger as well—I had two children to raise, so it was good to miss the danger.

*A silence settles into the room.*

FELICE

You should come meet some of [the moms]—

ELIZABETH

Of course I would like to meet them. I appreciate their struggle. You and I both appreciate it.

FELICE

So come.

ELIZABETH

I will.

FELICE

Great.

ELIZABETH

However, meeting your moms won't change two facts. One, you have thirty days to pay the fine, per the association's rules. And, two, the brass motherfucker of a door will remain closed.

*A thick silence settles in the room. ELIZABETH takes FELICE's letter and replaces it in the envelope and slides it back across the table.*

ELIZABETH

And if that's not satisfactory to you, the association has a ready response.

*FELICE stands up. Without hesitation, she takes off whatever shirt she is wearing, plus her brassiere, if she's wearing one, and stands unhaltered in front of ELIZABETH—the attitude is “I've still got 'em.”*

*ELIZABETH does not look away.*

ELIZABETH

You are going to have to sell a lot of breast-pumps and nipple shields to do what you want to do.

*FELICE puts her clothes back on.*

FELICE

Good thing getting pregnant doesn't go out of fashion. Good thing breasts are here to stay. Good thing nice people are still in the majority.

*FELICE shoulders the bag. ELIZABETH stands.*

ELIZABETH

I think it turned out better this way. Besides, how could you have known not to try to soften me up? I gave you some useful information for the next steps you want to take.

FELICE

There are steps—and there are steps. I'm thinking about science and technology. I'm thinking about automatic doors. I'm thinking about the rules and automatic doors and doorbells. And the state's Division of Human Rights.

ELIZABETH

Your tax dollars at work.

*The two women appraise each other.*

FELICE

I can read what the association's rules let in and keep out just as well as anyone.

ELIZABETH

May all mothers have protectors with such good eyes.

FELICE

I'm going back down to do my community service.

ELIZABETH

Don't forget to send in the check with the payment coupon. Address is right on it. Or you could drop it off to me personally.

FELICE

When can I expect you to visit?

ELIZABETH

Once the fine is paid, all things are possible.

*FELICE moves to leave, and she has every intention of leaving. But because she is who she is, she instead turns to face ELIZABETH.*

ELIZABETH

Yes?

*FELICE hesitates.*

ELIZABETH

Go on.

FELICE

You said it would be a waste of time with you, softening you up.

ELIZABETH

I know myself well.

*FELICE goes to say "So why?", but ELIZABETH stops her.*

ELIZABETH

I said I gave you some useful information.

*With only the slightest hesitation, ELIZABETH undoes her jacket and her blouse to show FELICE what is not there.*

ELIZABETH

I call the scars my scarlet letters. One is not minimized like this without—effect.

*ELIZABETH closes up her clothes, smoothes herself back into shape.*

ELIZABETH

First I was made a woman. Then a mother. Then breastless, first by surgeon, then by an evaporating husband, then by the sleek disregard of my two children. It is a scale of diminishment that at some point I refused to let own me any more.

*ELIZABETH picks up the envelope and hands it to FELICE.*

ELIZABETH

I believe this is yours.

*FELICE takes it.*

ELIZABETH

The one thing that has never betrayed me is the savage loneliness behind my scarlet letters. I trust it more than anything else. Your “moms” never had a chance against it.

*FELICE tears the letter into precise sections and drops the pieces in her bag.*

FELICE

I don't litter.

*They face each other.*

*Blackout.*

