

**GIRLFRIENDS**  
by Marla Porter

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# **GIRLFRIENDS**

## **CHARACTERS**

CLARA	40s
LAURA	40s
DEB	40s

## **SETTING**

Laura's living room.

## **TIME**

Present day, early Saturday afternoon

(Lights up on a comfortable living room.  
Laura and Clara are seated on the couch and  
drinking beer.)

CLARA

...or if they don't have a shirt on.

LAURA

You're kidding? They put shirtless profile pics up?

CLARA

Yes! In front of the bathroom mirror sometimes with those awful glaring lights.

LAURA

STOP!

CLARA

Why do men think we want to see their hairy chests?

LAURA

I know, right? And I'm married to a hairy chested guy.

CLARA

David has a hairy chest? Guess I never noticed. But *what* a sweetheart you married.

LAURA

Oh, I totally lucked out. Not that we don't have our moments.

CLARA

You and Deb both! David and Todd are such great husbands. Gives me hope that there are lots of good men out there. Okay, where was I? Oh! There's tons of pics of men holding up puppies

LAURA

Puppies?!

CLARA

Yes! Really teeny tiny fluffy ones, and those are kind of sweet... But the *worst* is when they're standing in a boat holding up a great big fish with its mouth gaping open.

LAURA

UGH! Why do men fish? Why are they HOLDING a fish?

CLARA

Trophy!

LAURA

Oh! Of course!

CLARA

I mean I know I'm not a vegetarian and maybe shouldn't talk... but parading a kill, holding that fish up or pulling up those antlers is NOT sexy or attractive. Just saying...

LAURA

God, I'm glad I'm married twenty years and escaped all this.

CLARA

Hey, so *where* is Deb? I thought you said she was coming over.

LAURA

She's on her way...texted me right before you got here.

CLARA

I hope nothing weird is going on with her.

LAURA

Yeah, come to think of it, we had lunch a couple of days ago and she did seem an awful lot quieter than she even normally is.

CLARA

Something's up... I hope her dad hasn't had a recurrence.

LAURA

Oh, right! Definitely hope not.

CLARA

But that doesn't make sense either. She would have told us if her dad was sick again and she's been weird for a couple of weeks now. Not returning my texts for a few hours or sometimes not even at all. And I got such a strange vibe from her at Todd's birthday party last weekend.

LAURA

Welllll, she *was* playing hostess and half of Todd's law firm was there and you know how she feels like she doesn't fit in with the lawyer wives.

CLARA

I know but she barely talked to *me* all night and that's not like her.

(doorbell rings)

LAURA

And there she is!

(answers door and Deb enters)

Deb! Hey honey!

DEB  
(subdued)

Hey Laura.

(crosses to hug Clara, then sits)

Hi Clara.

LAURA  
(exiting to kitchen)

Getting you a cold one.

DEB

Thanks.

CLARA

I was just telling Laura about my online dating stuff.

DEB

Oh. How's it going?

CLARA

Not so great... How are you? Okay? How's your dad?

DEB

He's okay... doing pretty good.

CLARA

Oh, good!

LAURA

(enters, hands Deb her beer, and sits back down)

Here you go. How's Todd?

DEB

Fishing up at his brother's place in Denton.

CLARA AND LAURA

(look at each other and burst into laughter)

Fishing!

Of course! He's fishing!

DEB

What's so funny?

CLARA

Nothing, it's nothing...

LAURA

Okay, so where were we Clara?

CLARA

Oh! Okay, so wait for it. This one guy? He didn't show his picture at all, just had a little cartoon robot face instead of his real face.

LAURA

Ohhhh.... married?

CLARA

How did you *know* that?!

LAURA

Oh honey, isn't it obvious?

CLARA

NO! Do you know what I honestly thought?



DEB

What?

CLARA

I thought, 'this guy must be sooooo handsome, he doesn't want women after him for his looks.'

LAURA

OH, Please! You did not.

CLARA

I did! Of course you nailed it. When I finally asked him why he didn't use a profile picture he admitted it was because he was married. That's *all* I need is to fall in love with another married man.

LAURA

Yeah, but thank God you and Steven never acted on it *physically*. You were pushing it with all those lunches though.

CLARA

I know, I know.

LAURA

And his wife Cheryl is *so* nice. I mean, if David were having lunch all the time with an old college girlfriend? Oh, no, no, no, no, NO. That would *not* fly.

CLARA

I know, I *know*.

DEB

Well, at least robot face was truthful. Married men need love too. Maybe his wife ignores him. Maybe she won't have sex with him.

CLARA

Have either of you ever wondered whether David or Todd ever had an affair?

LAURA

Oh, hell no! He follows still me around the house like a little puppy.

DEB

No, not really.

LAURA

Hey! Whatever happened to that new guy you started chatting with on the phone? That physics teacher...

CLARA

Oh.... that didn't work out either.

DEB

*Really?* What happened? I wish *something* would work out.

CLARA

Why are you so annoyed?

LAURA

Yeah, Deb. What's up?

DEB

Nothing, nothing, just a headache I guess. Sorry! Okay, go on?

CLARA

Okay. So, first... I'll go on the record as saying there's nothing *wrong* with his fantasy, it just was hard for me to play along. He wanted to have phone sex and he had *very specific requirements*...

DEB

What does *that* mean?

CLARA

He said he wanted to do the phone fantasy thing pretending I was wearing a pale yellow sleeveless cocktail dress that was super short, with a simple strand of pearls, and seafoam green stilettos. Then he wanted to pretend we were hiking to this place in Big Bend where you have to climb up this hill and scramble down the other side to get to this pristine pool of water and for us to go at it up against the rocks.

DEB

He wanted you to hike in stilettos?

LAURA

Seafoam green doesn't go with pale yellow.

CLARA

It does if you have the right bag.

LAURA AND DEB

You're right!  
Of course!

CLARA

Okay, so the next night he wanted to have phone sex again with this new elaborate fantasy about my being an emergency room nurse and him being the patient and how sex on the gurney would heal him.

LAURA

Emergency room sex fantasy??? Sounds to me like you need to buy this dude a one-way ticket to the Arizona Home for the Terminally Bewildered!

CLARA

Well, I just wasn't in the mood! Two nights in a row? NO. I just wanted to chat about our day and how we were doing and just be NORMAL. But he said please, that he *really* wanted his fantasy, and I said no again, and then he *BLEW UP!*

LAURA AND DEB

Jesus!  
What an asshole!

CLARA

He started RANTING about how selfish women are and how we always get our own way about everything and that I could "just ask any man."

LAURA AND DEB

Such bullshit!  
Are you kidding?

CLARA

Right! Well, THAT bugged me. Women most certainly do NOT get their own way *all the time* and I don't hate men.

DEB

I can't even remember the last time I got my own way about *everything*. Maybe when I was two?

CLARA

He was *so* angry.

LAURA

Must be all that testosterone.

CLARA

Nah, testosterone doesn't make men angry. Good old fashioned Mama didn't love 'em or bad bosses or failing transmissions make them angry. Anyhow, so *that* was why I ended it... because he believed that all women always get their way *and* just how *angry* he was. I just told him our temperaments were probably not a good fit and wished him well.

LAURA

*Perfect* thing to say.

CLARA

Thanks! Besides! I *love* men! Well, not all men maybe, but most of the ones we know are pretty great.

LAURA

We do live in Austin...

CLARA

Yeah! Lots of feminist men in Austin. That guy Langston who runs my book club. Leonard at work, and of course David and Todd... and *Steven*.

DEB

Maybe you should be a lot more careful who you *start* talking to... so you can finally meet someone who *is* right for you.

LAURA

Jesus, don't *nag* her Deb.

DEB

You waste too much time on people who aren't right for you.

CLARA

I know! I agree. I'm trying... I know sometimes it may seem like I'm going for a gold medal in whining but I just get so discouraged about all this dating stuff and wish I *didn't care at all* since it's not happening.

DEB

So maybe you should try not to care *so much*. Men smell desperation and you just scare them off! Maybe you would be happier if you didn't want it so badly.

CLARA

Spoken like a married person...

DEB

I'm serious...

CLARA

Like a married person who gets to have sex whenever she wants. It's not even the sex that I miss so much but the *affection*. Holding hands in the movies and soulful conversations at two in the morning and quietly drinking coffee and doing the crossword at the breakfast table. I mean it's been *four years* since I've even held hands with anyone or kissed anyone, never mind had sex.

LAURA

HAH! Honey, let me let you in on a little secret.. married people do NOT have loads of sex, hardly any most months.

CLARA

You know, if Steven were in an accident and could never have sex again, I'd still love him.

LAURA

I know sweetie...

DEB

Okay, stop.

CLARA

I'd still love him if he gained a ton of weight or lost his job or lost all his money. I just love him.

LAURA

Honey! He. Is. Married.

CLARA

I know, I know!

LAURA

I thought you were doing so much better about getting over him.

DEB

You are just old *friends*. You had lunch a few times. That's *all*.

CLARA

I was getting over it. No. I am getting over it! But all this online dating stuff is kind of backfiring because it's bringing up the comparison. Nobody compares.

LAURA

*Married*. You know, Cheryl? Red hair, tall, quiet, makes pottery to sell at flea markets? He's *Cheryl's* husband. Honey, you don't want a married guy.



CLARA

No, of course not, but I just love him. I've been in love before and it was heavy and cloying and nerve-wracking. With Steven, it is light and sweet, like smelling fresh peaches... I mean, we didn't do anything to break his marriage vows, never even held hands.

DEB

Please stop.

LAURA

He was cheating... emotional cheating. Don't kid yourself. Maybe you should take a break from online dating if it's making you miss Steven. You were doing so good, it's been what? Six months since you last spoke to him?

CLARA

Almost eight. It's just that... It just, it just feels like he's *my person*, even if I never see him again.

LAURA

Oh honey... you haven't *met* your person yet. I promise.

DEB

STOP!!!

CLARA AND LAURA

What *is* it?

What's *wrong*?

CLARA

Oh Deb! What is it?!

LAURA

We're listening sweetie...

DEB

Geeze, this is so hard to say.

CLARA

What is? It's okay, Deb. It's just us.

DEB

I'm leaving Todd.

LAURA AND CLARA

What???

You're kidding!!!

DEB

I am.

LAURA AND CLARA

Deb! Honey!  
Omigosh, Deb!

DEB

I'm in love with someone else and he's leaving his wife.

LAURA

Who?

CLARA

Who is it? Someone you met in your watercolor class?

DEB

No.

LAURA

Who is it?

DEB

It's Steven.

CLARA

Steven who? Someone from yoga?

DEB

No. *Steven.*

CLARA

*Steven?*

DEB

Yes. Steven. Steven Cooper.

LAURA

Oh, Deb!

CLARA

My Steven?

DEB

Well, he's not really your Steven, is he? You just have a crush on him.

CLARA  
(stunned, taking it in)

A crush?

LAURA

No. He's *not* Clara's Steven. He's Cheryl's Steven. *Cheryl's*.

DEB

I told you, he's leaving Cheryl. He's telling her tonight.

CLARA

A crush?

DEB

Clara, he cares about you very much!

CLARA

No. No... We were in love.

DEB

He loves you *as a friend*.

CLARA

As a friend?

DEB

Yes! Very much! But he was never in love with you.

CLARA

How do you *know*?

DEB

He told me.

LAURA

Deb, what happened?

CLARA  
(to herself)

He *told* you? You guys *talked about* me?

LAURA

Tell us *what happened!*

DEB

I know we've all known each other since college and so I never thought of him that way. I mean we've always all thought he was so cute because he just *is*. But three weeks ago I ran into him at Central Market and we sat down and had a beer and then we had another and then he started telling me that he was falling in love with me. And then he kissed me and that was that.

CLARA

He *told* you he wasn't in love with me?

DEB

Not then, but a few days later. Clara, I'm so, so sorry... He wants you to find someone and be happy too.

LAURA

What about Cheryl?

DEB

What *about her* Laura? What do you think? He's leaving her. Marriages end.

CLARA

What did he say exactly?

DEB

Doesn't matter. What matters is that I care about you. He cares about you. *We* care about you.

LAURA

Shut up Deb, you're making it worse.

DEB

What about that Langston guy you used to like so much at your book club? He was *perfect* for you, smart, well-read, handsome. Or what about that cute waiter at Brick Oven we all like to flirt with? There are lots of men you might like.

CLARA

(still stunned, to herself)

No. But he was in love with me. He *was*.

DEB

He. Was. Not.

CLARA

I can't believe this.

LAURA

Oh Clara, honey...

CLARA

No wonder I'm still single. I don't even know what love is.

DEB

Quit telling yourself stuff like that. You just make yourself miserable telling yourself all this crap.

LAURA

Deb! Shut up!

CLARA

I don't *KNOW*! All I know is I just... I guess I just see my hope for love like a hologram lighthouse in the distance. It's not a *real* lighthouse and sometimes it flickers as though about to go out and I am about to be in complete darkness. I mean, hope is never real, is it? Sometimes I ask myself if I need my hopes, my illusions, and my lighthouses? Can I live in the world exactly as it is with clear sight? Can I live with the *truth* that the future is, and always will be, dark? Honestly, I just don't feel brave enough. So if my hologram lighthouse of hope flickers all the way out, I'll just have to resurrect it, patch it up. Steven is my... *was* my...lighthouse.



DEB

Clara?

CLARA  
(fighting back tears)

I gotta go.

LAURA

Okay sweetie.

DEB

Clara? Please?

CLARA  
(exiting)

Laura, I'll call you later.

DEB

*Please?*

LAURA

Are you even in love with Steven?

DEB

I don't know. But I want to find out.

LAURA

Do you? Really? Are you seriously willing to destroy so many lives for a little fact-finding mission?

DEB

I can't NOT live my life because of Clara's delusions. I can't. She'll *be* okay.

LAURA

Will she? I'm so glad you're confident.

DEB

She will. She *absolutely* will. And so will Cheryl and Todd. We will all be *okay*. It'll just take time for the dust to settle.

LAURA

Poor Clara. I guess she does need her little hologram lighthouses. Oh. Excuse me. *Delusions*. My mistake.

DEB

Laura, please don't be that way. I need my friends right now.

LAURA

I guess we all need our delusions.

DEB

Are we okay? Please tell me we're okay.

LAURA

I dunno Deb. Are any of us?

DEB  
(beginning to cry, exiting)

You want me to go? Okay, I'll go. Just please....

LAURA

Bye Deb...

**END OF PLAY**