

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*On a sofa upholstered in panther skin
Mona did researches in original sin.*

Sylvia Plath

Speaking of Moms. Lisa's mom, Fran, came to visit us at the BIG TURKEYS in November, 2003, a month after Lisa's solo San Jose trip -- The Incredible Bouncing Cell Phone And Its Various Destinations Incident; the "we" slip and so forth. The three of us celebrated Thanksgiving together.

I like Fran and I believe she likes me, in spite of my having swiped her daughter from a normal life up north, luring her down to the wilds of Central America, to a place "even south of Miami" as Fran puts it. Fran had even read *In Search of Captain Zero* by then and to my surprise and relief, not only was not shocked at my criminal history, but liked the book a lot. As I say, it does portray me as a helluva guy.

We picked Fran up at the airport in San Jose and spent a night in the city before taking the puddle jumper to our home down south. The hotel was the same one I was staying at when I found out Lisa was sleeping with her ex-boyfriend and lying about it, which was nice for symmetry and nostalgia, given what Lisa revealed about herself this time.

The morning after picking up Fran and having a nice dinner out, Lisa woke up -- as usual I'd been up for a while -- and told me about a dream she'd had that night. Lisa relating her dreams in the morning is sort of semi-ritual we have. Lisa remembers her dreams in intimate detail. I hardly ever remember mine at all, which is probably for the best.

That morning Lisa described a dream wherein I grilled her about the affairs she had in 1995. The dream-me wanted to know about these guys, where they were now and so forth. The dream-Lisa got all flustered at this, the real Lisa said, since she “of course did not know where any of these guys are now.” (Exact words.) She then went on, detailing dream images but my mind was fixated on the implications of the year, 1995, so I don’t remember the rest. In the midst of this Lisa suddenly got up, as if she just remembered something, and went into her mom’s room, which adjoined ours. In retrospect, I believe she herself realized the implications of year and needed to get out of there before I said anything. She needed to regroup.

When I found out about Lisa’s sleeping with her ex-boyfriend then lying about it, and then, a couple months later, about the New Years Eve Guy and lying about that, Lisa insisted that this was aberrant behavior, that she was “not a cheater and a liar.” To buttress her point she volunteered the information that she never cheated on her ex-husband or her ex-boyfriend, nor lied to either of them about anything of significance. She was with the two of them for a total of 12 years, with no lovers in between, she’d told me.

There were a couple problems with this claim: When Lisa and I first got together and were swapping life stories, she told me that she’d had some affairs in 1998, after her divorce and before she committed to her ex-boyfriend. Without naming names, she’d even come up with details, like it’s possible I might’ve known one of the guys, who was from Montauk. When reminded of this claim, which she’d apparently forgotten about, she said, “Oh... That was bullshit.” When asked why she’d made the claim of affairs in ’98 if that wasn’t true, she said, “I don’t know.”

Notwithstanding the question of which claim regarding affairs in 1998 was true and which was a lie: The implications of the year in which she said she'd had the other affairs, 1995, were this: She was then married to her ex-husband. Sleepily awakening that morning, she forgot about her claim of fidelity to him; or, more likely, she forgot she was married to him that year.

Odd thing was, her de facto admission to cheating on her ex-husband had an upside. Her claim of fidelity to the men in her life over a dozen years had been a source of anguish for me. I mean here she was this perfect wife/lover over so many years, then as soon as she got involved with me, she was suddenly cheating and lying with abandon.

When Lisa came back in the room a few minutes later I asked her to repeat what time frame of the affairs the dream-me was grilling her about. She said, "1990." She was lying here, clearly, but instead of challenging her on that I reminded her that she was with living with her ex-husband in 1990, although they hadn't as yet married. This gave her pause. "I meant 1989."

"Lisa," I said, "you said 1995." There was absolutely no question that she'd said 1995. I had not miss-heard her. Lisa had admitted to cheating on her ex-husband and now was lying about what she'd said. Lying very badly. Here, Fran knocked on the adjoining door then entered, cutting off further conversation on the matter.

There was an aspect to her admission that worsened matters exponentially, regarding who Lisa is. Lisa had divorced her husband in 1997 because he'd had an affair. She hadn't caught him, nor had she even suspected what was going on. He'd admitted to it out of the blue, saying he was ending it and wanted to repair the damage he'd done and

stay with Lisa. But Lisa divorced him. She'd obviously had multiple affairs, never owned up to them, then when he had an affair (and admitted to it), she'd ended their marriage.

Think about the implications of that. God knows I have.

The next time we were alone and I had a chance to resume the discussion was the next day, after we'd flown down to our house. We were up in my office, Fran downstairs in the master bedroom. When I told Lisa that she'd admitted to having affairs in 1995, not 1990 or 1989, she changed her story again, saying that the dream me was grilling her about all her affairs, all the men she'd ever slept with.¹ To this I pointed out that she'd said she "didn't know where any of these guys are now" when she knew where at least two of them were now (her ex-husband and her ex-boyfriend) and that she couldn't seem to keep her story even a little bit straight, her reaction was an immediate temper tantrum tirade; the crux of her tirade was that she'd changed her life to come live with me in the wilds, cutting off life-long friendships and proximity to her family and so forth. This has been Lisa's M.O. when caught in a lie or other untenable behavior, as was the next phase of her defensive reaction that morning – tears leading to hysterics.

Fran was just downstairs and no question could hear Lisa's sobbing, if not the specifics or her diatribe.

This disturbed me greatly. This woman, whom I liked and wanted to like me, had come all this way only to be subjected to her daughter's obvious anguish, which I was of course responsible for; no matter that it was over a lie Lisa had told, a lie with major implications. And like most men, I don't deal with a woman's hysteria very well. I can't stand this sort of thing, as a matter of fact, nor having other people privy to it. And Lisa

¹ She would eventually change her story yet again, saying she was referring to some married mafia guy named Tony, from 1990, adding that her husband knew about him. The added problem with this was she'd referred to "affairs" and "guys." Not one affair with one guy.

well knew this: by caving in and apologizing I had cut short her hysterics in the past, not wanting our Tico workers or our neighbor to overhear Lisa's crazed outbursts.

In this case, Lisa was using her *mom's* presence shut me up on my challenging her on a lie, not caring that her outburst would upset her mother. And it worked, perfectly. I caved, telling her that maybe I was mistaken in the matter of the year of her affairs. Having done this, I couldn't very well bring it up again, at least not for a while. As was the case many times before, Lisa had won.

She knows very well how to handle me.