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new york times bestselling author

lisa scottoline

and

francesca serritella



**best friends,
occasional enemies**

the lighter side of life as a mother and daughter

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The Occasional Enemies Part



By Lisa

Daughter Francesca and I are very close, but that doesn't mean we don't fight.

On the contrary, it means we do.

So if you're currently fighting with your daughter, or merely fussing from time to time, you've come to the right place.

Let's start with the notion that the no-fighting model isn't the best for mother-daughter relations. I know so many women who feel bad, guilty, or inferior because they fight with their daughters, and they needn't. To them, and to you, I say, flip it.

What?

Flip that notion on its head. If you fight with your daughter, you raised her to think independently from you, and to voice her own views.

Yay!

You're a great mother. Know why?

Because the world doesn't reward the timid. Especially if they have ovaries.

In my opinion, conflict between mother and daughter is normal and good. Not only that, it's love. I say this not as a social scientist, which I'm not, but as a real-life mother, which

I so am. So if your daughter is fighting with you, here's the good and bad news:

The good news is you raised her right.

The bad is you have a headache.

Forever.

Just kidding.

Francesca and I are best friends, but at times, we're at odds. Enemies, only momentarily. Like most mothers and daughters, we're so attuned to each other's words and gestures that even the arching of an eyebrow can convey deep meaning.

If somebody plucks, we're in trouble.

We never have really huge fights, but we have car rides to New York that can feel as if they last cross-country.

Wars of words.

We go on and on, each replying to the other, swept along in a girl vortex of words, during which we parse every nuance of every syllable, with special attention to tone.

Tone is the kryptonite of mother-daughter relationships.

As in, "I don't like your tone."

Also, "Don't use that tone with me."

And the ever-popular, "It wasn't what you said, it was your tone."

It was ever thus. Francesca and I got along great from the time she came out of the egg, and I used to tell her that she wasn't allowed to whine, but she could argue with me. In other words, make her case for whatever she wanted.

Never mind that she was three at the time.

Oddly, this turned out great. She was the Perry Mason of toddlers, and more often than not, she was right. Or she felt completely heard, which was often enough for kiddie satisfaction.

She argued for punch balls from the gift shop at the zoo, dessert before dinner if she ate all her dinner, and the wearing of Cinderella outfits on an almost daily basis, complete with tiara.

What girl doesn't want a tiara?

Another thing I did when she was little was to let her vent. I had no idea how I came upon this idea, but I used to give her the chance to say anything she wanted to me, without interruption, for a full minute.

And I mean, *anything*.

She was even permitted to curse at me, though she didn't know any profanity at that age. It got only as rude as "butt face."

Ouch?

She's still permitted to argue with me and vent her anger. And she accords me the same permission. Even though we're writing books together and we adore each other, we can still get mad at each other. And that valve releases the pressure from the combustible engine that is the mother-daughter relationship.

It's just hot air, anyway.

Bottom line, we're close, so we fight, and the converse is also true. The conflict strengthens us, because it's honest, hard-earned.

And the more honest we are with each other, the closer we are. You'll see exactly what I mean, in the pages that follow.

So enjoy.

And watch your tone.



We Are All Ferraris



By Lisa

I just got home from a terrible blind date, and that's the good news.

Because it was still a date, so it counts.

It got me out of the house on a Saturday night, all eyelined and underwired, and though it ended badly, I still regard it as a good thing.

Why?

Well, it's not that I feel the need to go out, though I never do.

And it's not that I feel the need to have dates, though I've had only a handful in the past four years, most of them blind.

Not literally, which would probably help.

Bottom line, if I remembered sex, I'd miss it.

But I'm not all pathetic and sad about it, and if you find yourself in a similar position, you shouldn't feel bad, either.

Here's why.

You're not alone. You may feel that way, thanks to TV commercials for breath mints and Valentine's Day, but you're not the only one.

There's me.

And there's lots of women like us, who end up manless in middle age, whether by choice or not. I know, because I get

lots of heartfelt emails from widows and divorcées, as I am becoming the poster child for inadvertent celibacy. By which I mean, not woe-is-me celibacy, but more like, Oh, has it really been that long?

Also, why don't I miss it, when I used to like it well enough?
And why aren't I on a mission to find a man?

To begin, let me tell you about my blind date. I thought he was nice, handsome, and smart, which is three more things than I ever expect. And we were having a great time, yapping away through his first and second vodka. But by the time he got to his third vodka, his words slurred, his eyes glistened, and he blurted out the following:

"I miss my girlfriend. I don't know why she broke up with me. The kids didn't like her, but I did."

Uh oh.

This would not be a happy ending. He told me the next day that it was the only time he'd ever tried to kiss somebody who was putting her car into reverse.

That would be me, and can you even believe he went in for the good-night smooch?

Could it be worse?

No.

But even that isn't the point.

Don't miss out on the fullness of your life because something is missing. Take a lesson from my horrible blind date. He was bemoaning the loss of his girlfriend, when he had a perfectly fine woman sitting across from him, ready, willing, and able.

Oh, so able.

In other words, a man is not a passport to life. If you're alone,

you can't go into suspended animation. You have to live your life and you can be happy.

You just have to make yourself happy.

How?

Flip it. If you think that being on your own is the problem, turn that idea on its head. Make being alone a bonus. If you're on your own, you don't have to ask anybody's permission to do anything, or take anyone else's opinion into account.

You're not single, you're *a capella!*

And all you need to do is figure out what makes you happy.

So try things. Try anything. Paint. Draw. Take piano lessons. Read a book. Keep a journal. Write a story. Go to night school. Volunteer. Sing. Rearrange the furniture. Join something.

Dance!

Do whatever you like. And since I bet you've spent most of your life taking care of others, take care of yourself. Get your hair done. Your nails. Spend a little money on yourself. You deserve it. Buy a new outfit and parade around.

Look at you, girl!

If you're unsure what else to try, here are some of the things that make me happy: namely, my daughter, dogs, friends, work, books, reading, cats, a big TV, a pony, opera, and chocolate cake.

My life and my heart are full, and I don't feel lonely, though I live alone.

As for the occasional date, if it happens, great. But if it doesn't, I'll live.

Happily.

So make yourself happy, and maybe along the way, you'll meet a man who doesn't like vodka so much, but no matter.

The point isn't him.

It's you.

For once.

And, finally.

Sometimes I visualize myself as an exotic sports car, like a Maserati or a Ferrari, that leaves its garage only occasionally.

Not everybody can drive me, and I don't wait to be driven.

I'm not that kind of car.

And neither are you.

So hit the gas, and live.



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