



WHY MY THIRD HUSBAND WILL BE A DOG

by Lisa Scottoline

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A Conversation with Lisa Scottoline

After making a career out of writing bestselling novels, what made you decide to write such a personal nonfiction book?

It does seem strange at first but it really isn't. When I think back to what I contribute to contemporary fiction it is that the trademark Scottoline heroine is strong, independent, funny, and someone you would really like to have as a girlfriend—in short, women just like your own mothers, daughters, sisters, or even yourself. I started writing when I realized these images of women weren't in pop culture in fiction in meaningful ways. I'm really proud to have realistic and fully realized women in my fiction, but I noticed my local newspaper could use more female voices, too. I missed those wonderful women columnists like Erma Bombeck, Ellen Goodman, and Anna Quindlen. I started writing *Chick Wit* using myself as my main character as well as my daughter, my mother, and my best friends, Laura and Franca. Basically, I told stories from my own life because I have so much in common with so many women. And I really think there is so much hardship in life and we can all use a laugh. In this book, I tried to bring out the richness of everyday life through humor.

The tone of the book is so intimate and you talk about being divorced twice. Were you hesitant to reveal details of your own life in such a personal way? How did you feel about being exposed?

In a way, again, it is not that much different from my fiction because I put so much of my heart and personal self into my novels that I've always thought if you read them, you'll know my soul. I tend to be an open book anyway, no pun intended, and I also thought my own life isn't that different from many other women. I would have loved my marriages to work out, but the fact is they didn't. I didn't expect to be so completely on my own at my age, but that's the way it turned out. Then I started thinking that there are lots of women like me whose lives didn't turn out as they expected, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. I think the real truth is that we all get to have a



happy ending if we try hard enough and there are all sorts of different happy endings. It was important to me to be truthful, because the truth is what resonates. The true things are what really connect people, whether in fiction or nonfiction. That is what is so great about books.

I understand you don't mind exposing your personal life, but how do your family and friends feel about being the subjects of your stories.

My family and friends share similar values and have the same sense of humor, so they are happy to let me share stories about them. As you can see, Daughter Francesca writes honestly about me, and I have no problem with it. Mother Mary is so excited about the book that she even came on tour with me and said she felt like a rock star.

I understand that this book has been optioned for a television series. How do you feel about that?

I'm thrilled about it for the same reason I started writing the stories and my novels. I love to see more images of women on TV that are real, strong, independent, and smart, all while dealing with the raising of a family in realistic and fun ways. I've often thought the everyday life of a mother is completely unsung and not well understood. I look forward to seeing TV images of ordinary, extraordinary women. Of course, I expect to be played by Angelina Jolie.

How do you feel about the reactions to the book, and do you take negative comments personally since it is such a personal book?

Happily, the critical reaction to the book was amazing, which thrilled me. Even though it is about my life, it still had to meet my own standards of writing. I take my craft very seriously. These stories require a somewhat different voice and style of writing than a novel, especially trying to make my point in a 700-word essay rather than telling a story that is 100,000 words long.

*About the
Author*

Most important to me is the reaction from the readers who have written so many heartfelt and touching e-mails letting me know that they feel connected to me through my stories. Any negative comment is bound to sting at first, but thankfully, the reaction has been overwhelmingly incredible, and beyond what I'd ever imagined.

Will there be a follow-up to this book?

Yes, there is a follow-up book and I still write the column and my life happily goes forward. Thing One and Thing Two are further back in my rear-view mirror and I have lots of new challenges just like everyone else. For instance, I found my first gray hair. On my chin. I write about that and lots more in the sequel to this book, *My Nest Isn't Empty, It Just Has More Closet Space*.

It is clear your primary relationship in your life is with your Daughter Francesca. You write about the great things. Do you guys ever fight?

The truth is that for me, the mother-daughter bond is far stronger than I ever could have imagined. We make each other laugh, we drive each other crazy, we can talk forever, we have a great time on road trips, shopping for shoes, and even cleaning the cat box. I know it sounds idealized but it isn't. I see lots of mothers and daughters come to my signings together and they feel the same way about each other. Frankly, I think it is a silent majority and I'm thrilled to celebrate that in these pages and give those women a face and a voice.

That's why I was so happy Daughter Francesca wanted to contribute to this book because she can write from the daughter's point of view, one which offers a very different perspective and that resonates with daughters everywhere. The final point is that while I'm a mother, I'm also a daughter. I sit squarely in the middle of the sandwich generation. Over time, all these roles change in subtle ways and I like to examine that.

 *Meet the Family*



April Narby

Lisa with Mimi



Golden Girls Penny and Angie



Blair Relyea

Ruby the Corgi. Small stature, big attitude.



April Narby

Daughter Francesca and her Pip, the city dog who loves to visit the country



April Narby

Lisa with Tony, the anatomically incorrect Cavalier

About the Author



Buddy, Lisa's pony



Mimi and Vivi



The ultimate Golden Girl, Lucy



Mother Mary speaks softly but carries a big rolling pin



Lisa and her brother, Frank, relax in Miami

Ideas for Book Groups



I am a huge fan of book clubs because it means people are reading and discussing books. Mix that with wine and carbs, and you can't keep me away. I'm deeply grateful to all who read me, and especially honored when my book is chosen by a book club. I wanted an opportunity to say thank you to those who read me, which gave me the idea of a contest. Every year I hold a book club contest and the winning book club gets a visit from me and a night of fabulous food and good wine. To enter is easy: All you have to do is take a picture of your entire book club with each member holding a copy of my newest hardcover and send it to me by mail or e-mail. No book club is too small or too big. Don't belong to a book club? Start one. Just grab a loved one, a neighbor or friend, and send in your picture of you each holding my newest book. I look forward to coming to your town and wining and dining your group. For more details, just go to www.scottoline.com.

Tour time is my favorite time of year because I get to break out my fancy clothes and meet with interesting and fun readers around the country. The rest of the year I am a homebody, writing every day, but thrilled to be able to connect with readers through e-mail. I read all my e-mail, and answer as much as I can. So, drop me a line about books, families, pets, love, or whatever is on your mind at lisa@scottoline.com. For my latest book, tour information, special promotions, and updates you can sign up at www.scottoline.com for my newsletter.

—Lisa



The Wednesday Evening Ladies' Literary Guild of Mineola, N.Y., submit their photo for Lisa's book club contest.

Keep on
Reading



Reading Group Questions

1. Lisa dedicates the book to ordinary, extraordinary women everywhere. She wanted to celebrate average women—such as herself, her mother, her daughter, and her girlfriends—and the strength they muster to face the challenges of life. In what ways can you relate to Lisa and her adventures? Who in Lisa’s book can you most closely identify with? Do you have a Mother Mary in your life?
2. Lisa grew up reading Erma Bombeck in the newspaper and loved her books, and many readers have remarked that her columns remind them of Erma’s, but with a modern twist. Do you agree or disagree? Why? And why aren’t there more memoirs about the domestic lives of moms and families?
3. Lisa has some very close girlfriends, who she would do anything for and who would do anything for her. Who are your closest friends and how did you meet? How are you similar to your friends, and how are you different? Do you think a friendship is a true friendship if you have to work at it? Why or why not?
4. Some women swear by Spanx, but Lisa hates them. How do you feel about Spanx? What statement do you think they make about women today and what about the pressure for women to look ageless?
5. Lisa thinks that parenthood is a series of letting-go points with our children, whether it’s to kindergarten or to college. She admits she has trouble letting go of Daughter Francesca. For those of you who have gone through this transition with your child, what do you think was the hardest part? How did you deal with it? What are your thoughts about Lisa’s theory that parents do not own a child, but rather children own themselves, and are merely gifted to parents for a time?



6. Lisa has a house full of animals, and she wouldn't want it any other way. Do you have a special animal in your life? What do you think about the connection Lisa makes between divorces and acquiring animals?
7. Which of Lisa's stories could you relate to the most? Which was your favorite and why? Which one made you laugh out loud? Which one made you cry? Which one would you most likely share with a friend?
8. How is Daughter Francesca's relationship different with Mother Mary than with Lisa? What similarities do you see between Lisa and Daughter Francesca's relationship and Lisa and Mother Mary's? How are they different? Are either of these relationships similar to one in your own life?
9. Lisa and Francesca find everyday moments extraordinary. What are some of your favorite ordinary, extraordinary moments?
10. A great stage actor once said that "dying is easy, comedy is hard." Agree? Do you think it's harder to write humor than straight prose? Why aren't more memoirs written with humor? Do you think that humor makes a memoir seem less worthy, or "lightweight"? What is the relationship between mirth and pathos?

Keep on
Reading