



# MEET ME AT EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE CLAIM

by Lisa Scottoline and Francesca Serritella

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ST. MARTIN'S GRIFFIN



## *An Original Essay by the Author*

### **“Mother Knows Best”**

**by Lisa Scottoline**

If you have read this collection, you know that Mother Mary gives me lots of advice, some of it more useful than others. For example, Don't Put Too Much Food On Your Fork is not that helpful, since I lost my baby teeth. Watch Your Purse isn't always helpful either, especially since she often tells me this when no one is anywhere near us, in the produce aisle. But by far, the most useful advice she has ever given me is: Be Yourself. It's a profound little gem of wisdom, because it has so many applications—not only in everyday life but with respect to this book and writing in general.

If you ask me, and let's pretend you have, the most important thing in any writing is an original and authentic voice. If you are following Mother Mary's dictum and Being Yourself, you will write in an original and authentic voice. That voice comes from within, from your truest self, from your heart and soul. That's why good writers sound so different, one from the next. Modesty aside, I include Daughter Francesca and myself in that category, and you can see what I mean about voice by reading one of my contributions and one of hers, in this very collection. Though there are similarities between our voices, they are distinct. In fact, regardless of subject matter, you can tell whether Francesca or I wrote a particular story. Test yourself by covering the author with the top of your hand. I bet you got an A on the test.

Now, for people who are interested in writing or in understanding and appreciating books more deeply, the really interesting thing about voice is that voice transcends genre, subject matter, and every other classification. Those things are really superficial; those are the form atop the substance. That's why an author's voice can remain consistent regardless of whether the book is fiction, nonfiction, or just a story told over the telephone.

*“Voice comes  
from within,  
from your truest  
self, from your  
heart and soul.”*



I didn't know this myself because I started my writing life as a novelist. I have been doing that for twenty-five years, writing a series of mystery novels about the women in a law firm called Rosato & Associates, as well as a series of emotional stories about family life that are not a series, which are called "stand-alones" in publishing. One genius critic compared both types of books, saying that the Rosato & Associates books are crime stories with a family subplot, and the emotional thrillers are family stories with a crime subplot.

Rewind for a moment, to a few years back, before I began to write these true-life stories with Francesca, like *Meet Me at Emotional Baggage Claim* and *Have A Nice Guilt Trip* (you can find an excerpt in the back of this book). Frankly, I wasn't sure I could make the transition from writing fiction to writing nonfiction. But then I heard a wonderful quote by the director Francis Ford Coppola, which I will paraphrase as "nothing in my movies ever happened, but all of it is true."

I realized that that's how I felt about my novels.

They weren't false at all. They were emotionally true, and each one sprang from something that took place in my life that caused me to feel some deep emotion, one powerful enough to drive a 90,000 word, full-length novel. Why am I telling you this?

I'll give you an honest answer, because you deserve nothing less, and if you have read me in these pages, you know I'm a fan of the truth. And the truth is that I hope you will give my novels a try. If you liked this collection, I know you will like my novels, and the reason I know that is because my voice is the same. The voice in these books is exactly the voice—or the heart and soul—as in the novels. And this is true whether the novel is a crime story with a family subplot, or a family story with a crime subplot. It doesn't matter. That's only the form atop the substance. The substance is voice—the connection between author's soul and a reader's soul—an invisible bond as strong

## *Behind the Novel*

*"We need more voices in this world, each of us telling a story from the heart."*

as the cable on a suspension bridge.

So, if you would, please allow me to introduce you to my two latest novels. (You can find excerpts online; links listed below). One of them is *Accused*, the first novel in the Rosato & Associates series, which are the crime stories with the family subplot. In the book, lawyer Mary DiNunzio takes on the case of a young girl who believes that the man in prison for the murder of her older sister is, in fact, innocent. And at the same time, Mary has to decide if she really meant *yes* when she told her boyfriend she'd marry him. See what I mean about the family subplot? Love is involved, also three adorable octogenarians all named Tony, called The Three Tonys. You'll meet them in the excerpt, and I have crushes on all of them, which is scary.

The other is my stand-alone novel *Keep Quiet*, a family story with this crime subplot, and it's an emotional thriller that follows what happens when a father who wants to be the Cool Dad says *yes* to his teenager when he shouldn't—and almost brings about the ruin of his family. That's the family story, but I won't give away the crime subplot here. You'll know exactly what I'm talking about if you read the excerpt.

Thank you very much for reading Francesca and me, and for sharing your hearts and souls with us. We appreciate each and every one of you, because you are more precious than you know. Thanks, too, for listening to my advice on writing and voice, and I hope those of you who wish to will write your own stories, whether they are literally true or not. We need more voices in this world, each of us telling a story from the heart, so don't ever second-guess yourself, should you decide to write one down. Go for it, and always remember what Mother Mary said.

Not about watching your purse.

Be yourself.

*Accused*

<http://us.macmillan.com/accusedarosatoassociatesnovel>  
LisaScottoline

*Keep Quiet*

<http://us.macmillan.com/keepquiet/LisaScottoline>

Now Available, in hardcover, from St. Martin's Press



## *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](http://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](mailto:lisa@scottoline.com). For my latest book and tour information, special promotions, and updates you can sign up at [www.scottoline.com](http://www.scottoline.com) for my newsletter.

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*Keep on  
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The Bunnies Book Club of Scottsdale, AZ,  
submit their photo for Lisa's book club contest.



## Reading Group Questions

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1. Lisa writes, in her title essay, that “precious few books are devoted to a mother’s relationship with her adult child,” a fact that she finds “crazy” since the mother-daughter bond becomes “more important, not less, as time goes on.” But Lisa acknowledges that we bring our own emotional baggage into our relationships. Lisa’s is her need to nag. What is *your* relationship like with your own mothers, or daughters (or sons)? What emotional baggage do you think you have brought into your relationships, and how do you think it effects your relationships?
2. In the essay “Shakespeare Was No Dummy,” Lisa discovers that Mother Mary’s official name was different than she thought. Have you had any experiences similar to Lisa’s, in which you find out something really surprising about your parent later in life? Lisa goes on to discuss how important names are, and how they can impact our identity, and/or our children’s identities. What are your favorite names, and why? If you could change your name to any name you want, what would it be? Did you, or do you, have baby names chosen for your child before you ever had any? What are they, and what do you like about them?
3. In “I Love You, Man,” Francesca jokes about the “manly” side of her friendship with Lisa. How do men and women’s friendships differ? What stereotypes are designated to men and women in regard to their friendships and how true do you think they are? What special things do you do with your friends that define the uniqueness of your relationship?

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Reading*

4. In Lisa's essay, "Happy Birthday," she reflects on getting older, and admires the strength she sees in her aging and more fragile mother. What lessons can we learn from our parents' generation? In what ways do you see yourself in your parent(s)? Which attributes of theirs would you like to emulate, and in what ways would you like to be different?
5. Francesca writes about the ups and downs of living in a big city and about the challenges of connecting in such a large and anonymous place. What advice would you give to Francesca in regard to city living? How would your advice differ if she were living in a suburb? Where do you think young people should go to meet people? What are the benefits of living in new and different places? What are the challenges? Tell about your experiences.
6. Lisa and Francesca both write about their summer with Mother Mary. There are some laugh-out-loud moments, some very cranky exchanges, and some tender times, but every minute, even the arguments, are fueled by love. What are your favorite memories with your parents, and which ones do you treasure the most? Which one would you go back and change if you could?
7. Often there are historic events that become defining moments in our collective consciousness, and Francesca writes a very moving and insightful essay about 9/11. Which major historic event had the most impact on you? Where were you when you learned the news? How did the event change you?





## Reading Group Questions

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8. Throughout the book, Lisa and Francesca share stories about their family including Mother Mary and Brother Frank. But, in “Bittersweet,” Lisa talks about having two families, the one you are born into, and the one you create. Who in your life do you consider family? How do those relationships differ from those with your actual family members?
9. In “Skype Appeal,” Francesca gives us a look at what it’s like to date in today’s modern technological world. In what ways do you think dating is easier, and in what ways is it harder? Has technology improved communications between couples, or made it more difficult? How?
10. Lisa and Francesca write deeply felt and moving letters to each other at the conclusion of this book. They set forth what they wish for each other in the future, and the letters are saturated with love and concern. If you were writing a similar letter, to whom would you write it, and what would you say? Who do you think would write a letter to you, and what would they say to you?

*Keep on  
Reading*