

Sister Lisa

1. Why did you enter the convent?

I was just 19 when my lover died... lover... I wish that word carried more meaning, but it's the only word I can think to truly describe what she was to me. We were in love. So in love that she became my whole world. Yet, when her father found out... she couldn't handle the shame and guilt and she... ended it.

I mourned for much more than a year over the loss of my Cynthia. I tried to dedicate myself to my coursework. I wanted to be a nurse, you know. But everything lost its luster. Nothing gleamed as bright without Cynthia and I came to realize that nothing ever would.

So I set fire to my meager possessions. Everything that reminded me of Thia turned to dust and ash (everything except for a lone photo of the two of us on the day of our high school graduation)... and I made my way to the Convent of the Sacred Heart to take a vow of celibacy. Fiona O'Farrell became Sister Lisa and I buried bury my past deep, deep down.

2. Have you ever questioned your faith?

I don't know if you can question what was never really there... though I constantly question people. There's no one on this earth that seems genuine and caring. Those that claim that they hate the sin and not the sinner... they're just as fast to pass judgment as anyone else.

3. Can you swim?

There was a time when I did swim. Warm summer nights in upstate New York make for great midnight excursions.

4. What possessions did you bring back with you?

A small, red leather journal. I try to journal each and every day... my photo of Cynthia is tucked tightly in a pocket on the back cover. A clothbound Holy Bible with a purple pagemarkers ribbon... seemingly random verses are underlined. A rosary. 2 knitting needles and 3 balls of red yarn.

5. What do you think are in the crates your Mother Superior told you to escort back to New York?

I hadn't given it much thought... but, if I know that toothless old bag, it was sugar. The whole damned city is starving, but she's not willing to go without her two (or six) lumps in her morning coffee.

6. Do you have an opinion about US-Cuban relations?

Cuba is an unstable hot spot. Every day it seems there's some new coup in that tiny country. I'd say we should steer clear entirely, but - for the sake of fostering democracy and providing income to the Cuban people - we should remain somewhat involved.

7. Which saint do you consider your greatest source of inspiration?

It was my Thia... now I rely on my memories of our most cherished moments to remind me that some good can come out of this miserable life.

8. What did you do during the first day of the voyage?

I gave ginger root to those experience sever seasickness and began work knitting hats for the orphanage.

9. Do you miss your family?

Sometimes, yes... but missing people that care little for you or your wellbeing is difficult. The moment my parents realized why I mourned Thia's death so passionately, they simply said that, as far as they were concerned, I was no longer their daughter... maybe I became a nun to appease my mother and father. Maybe I wanted them to think that I wasn't who I was, but - even then - I don't think they were convinced.

Before I took my vows, my mother kept saying, "Lisa. You don't have to do this. I'll set you up with that nice O'Sullivan boy or that McLaughlin boy..." But, she could see the disgust in my eyes. I don't know that I could ever hide it.

So - I guess it's good that I'm a nun. No one ever tries to set me up with no one.

I heard that sissy is doing well. I think she even married that nice O'Sullivan boy and had a few tots of her own. Ma and Pa both passed this last summer. I wouldn't even have known, but my aunt Dierdre thought to send me a card. Tragic accident during a routine sailing trip.

10. What do you do for fun?

As a younger girl, I found great enjoyment in ballet, but - these days - there's not a lot of fun to go around. I try to keep myself occupied by strolling in Central Park, knitting, and - occasionally - I try to see a nickel show... but money at the convent doesn't often allow for such selfish activities.

The Sisters and I played BINGO last week... I won a couple of rounds and used my winnings to buy a bottle of blackberry brandy.

11. Are there any of the Church's teachings you don't accept?

Well, now. I think the answer to that question is perfectly obvious. Love is love and not even Jesus should be able to say otherwise.

12. Did you have the chicken or the fish for dinner?

The fish. The chicken looked dry and possible undercooked.

James Billings

1. Why did you agree to be recruited by the State Department?

I was tired of playing second fiddle to the Porcellian trust fund boys. My parents were dead. My sister missing. I had just found my girlfriend, Alexis, blowing Alastair--that pimply little weasel--in my own bed. A change of scenery was...attractive, to say the least. Dad used to say a little service never hurt anybody...well, I was going to put in my time and see if he was right.

2. What went wrong at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba?

It's been 10 years of the good life at State, and all it takes is a :):):)ing spic to ruin everything.

Jenkins and I had some spic talking about god knows what - Jenkins speaks the language, I don't - some crap about the Nicaraguan president and some asswipe village in the middle the jungle. He can tell we don't care, and that the United States :):):)ing government couldn't give two shits about el Presidente and his junta, and whatever they did to his poor baby hermano. So he gets all desperate. Starts shouting at Jenkins. I don't know much of the ol' ess-span-yol, but I know the word for gold. Oro. The dumb :):):)er pulls a scrap of paper out of his coat. A map, or something. Start pointing at it, practically screaming, ORO! ORO! ORO!

Clearly, he doesn't understand the vagueries of international finance. The gold standards gone, baby.

Unfortunately, neither does Jenkins. He gets this greedy smile, and pulls his piece on me. Not a :):):)ing word. Just a grin and a gun, and goodbye to 8 years together listening to spics piss and moan about their problems for Uncle Sam.

But Jenkins is blind as a bat. He takes a shot that hits nothing but air, and then I go for my own piece, and that's that. Seein' Jenkins there, I know I can't leave the spic alive. Ain't nobody gonna believe him. So I grab Jenkins gun, pop him in the chest, and then leave my piece laying next to him. I grab the map for safe keeping, should I ever decide to take a trip down to Nicaragua. I dump some rum on the sheets, drop Jenkins lighter on it, and step out of the blaze into the sunlight.

The official report says Jenkins shot the spic over a woman. Some maid. I think I named her Marisol. Pretty name.

3. Do you think your wife suspects?

That money grubbing bitch? As far as she knows, the State Department is a god damn travel agency. If she knew about the spic's treasure map, she'd try to kill me herself.

4. Why have you drifted apart?

She's greedy, stupid, and she doesn't :):):) like she used to. I can get better tail from the locals, and better conversation with the dog.

5. What did you bring with you on this trip?

A couple of suits, my piece and my passport.

6. What did you do during the first day of the voyage?

I drank and I played poker...first at the official tables, and then down in the hold with some of the crew. I'm down \$400, but unlike everyone else on this damned boat, I know everything the crew knows.

7. What do you think of Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbor' policy?

I couldn't care less. It's basically the same thing we've always done with a different name. When we decide it's time to make trouble, there will be trouble. Not before. Not after.

8. What do you wish you'd majored in at Harvard?

Drama. The guys that weren't fruits got all sorts of tail.

9. What is your happiest memory?

Fishing with Dad on the lake behind the cabin in Maine.

10. What did you do during WWI?

I served as the defense attache at the embassy in Paris. Officially. I spent most of my time running absinthe and cigarettes to GIs making their way through France.

11. Can you swim?

Yeah. A bit. But it's been a long time, and I'm a lot older than I used to be.

12. Did you have the chicken or fish for dinner?

Neither. I've got nothing in my stomach but rum, headache powder, and peanuts.

13. What are you prepared to do for your country?

Anything short of dyin', as long as it's for MY country, and not some god forsaken rock sticking out of the Carribbean.

Mary Billings

1. Why did you insist on accompanying your husband on this trip?

Mary aspires to be a vital cog in his business relations. She uses all her abilities and resources to ensure deals go through. She's not afraid to get her hands dirty and enjoys the limited opportunities she gets to rub elbows with people of power or influence. And it's been so long since traveling out of the country. Why should he have all the fun?

Also, Mary believes she can make her husband rich. That excites her. That excitement overpowers her fear of large bodies of water.

2. What is your biggest regret?

Mary wishes she married a more powerful man.

3. What did you do during the first day of the voyage?

She sought out as many officers as she could to form relationships.

4. Do you think your husband knows what's going on?

It's possible but he's very distracted and even if he did know it wouldn't matter.

5. Can you swim?

Yes, but Mary has a phobia of large bodies of water and will not enter one willingly. She hates that she has to come on a boat with her husband and deeply resents him for it.

6. What kind of relationship do you have with your children?

They probably have more affection towards the nanny. Mary is not an uncaring mother, but she is ... distracted.

7. What did you bring with you on the trip?

Many sets of clothes, accessories, hats and a purse gun. The excitement of procuring the gun gave her more of a thrill than she thought it would. The thought of taking a life scares her but having the potential power over that life is a rush.

8. How far are you willing to go?

She's not sure but the prospect of travel and getting away from home is a welcome relief. She's still testing her limits.

9. What do you do while your husband is away at work?

She makes sure that business relations are stable at home while he travels. Mary has made enough contacts to stash away some funds from James for her own wants and needs. He's away so often to Cuba that she needs to entertain herself often with trips to the theater and occasionally making outlandish purchases to add to her exquisite hat collection.

It's obscene.

10. What did you see at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba?

Mary was having a grand time simply being away from the children until she thinks she saw James seducing another woman in the lounge. She wasn't sure it was him and convinced herself she didn't care. Until she realized that she did.

The matter remains unresolved.

11. Did you have the chicken or the fish for dinner?

The chicken. Mary cannot stand fish or anything that comes from the water.

Eduardo Martinez

1. Why did you let them recruit you into the human smuggling ring?

Money. It's always about money. At 20,000 pesos a head, you can buy a rich life in Cuba.

2. What do you keep in your cabin?

Nothing incriminating. I keep a full shaving kit, aftershave, and lotions. I sneak brandy from the kitchen and keep a small carafe and a couple of glasses in the closet. My clothes and uniform are there as well, all pressed and sharp. I try not to leave my knife there and always carry it with me.

3. What did you see at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba?

The thing I remember most about it was her eyes. Her eyes were dark and deep and full of fear. They dragged her into that hotel room and I never saw her again. I knew I should have gone after her but I was too scared. Besides, the money was too good.

4. How do you feel about the first-class passengers?

It's a love/hate relationship. Most of them wouldn't know what a hard day's work was if it bit them in the ass. Spoiled and rich, they live life easily. I hate them all but, by god, I wish I were one of them.

5. Can you swim?

Yes. It's something you learn when pulling bodies of failed crossers from the ocean.

6. Where did you hide the body?

Which one? One was in the jungle, deep so no one would find it. Although why anyone would look for a whore is beyond me. The other was in a dumpster behind the rent-by-the-hour hotel. She was good, too. It's a shame she asked for my name. The rest I don't recall, it's been so long.

7. Do you have an escape plan?

I always have a plan. I've got a bag ready and I've timed the number of steps to the nearest lifeboat as well as the time it would take to get there.

8. What did you do during your free time the first day of the voyage?

Walked around the ship, looking for potential marks. Old women with money are easy prey. I also planned my escape, just in case.

9. Two stewards work the Captain's table at dinner. Which of the people at the table did you serve? (James Billings, Mary Billings, Sister Lisa, Charles Darabont, Stephen Lucas)

Mary Billings and Sister Lisa. I had hoped to chat them up. Mary has the air of money on her while Sister Lisa probably wouldn't be missed by anyone.

10. How did you end up working on the Morro Castle?

I called in a favor. I needed to get away quickly. The body in the jungle was found by a stupid farmer.

11. Do you have an opinion on US-Cuban relations?

Whoever pays me the most will earn my favor. How they deal with each other is none of my concern.

12. What happened to your sister?

The cops determined she had an accident and fell down the stairs. I'm pretty sure the statute of limitations has run out on the case.

Charles Darabont

1. Can you swim?

Yes... assuming calm waters and plenty of sunshine. I spent a LOT(perhaps too much) time on the beaches of Cuba.

2. What do you think of Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbor' policy?

Well-intentioned, but incredibly naive. Most, if not all, of these lesser nations in our hemisphere simply do NOT have the wherewithal, education, or dare I say, breeding to rule themselves. They need a strong hand extended in friendship, but without equivocation or pretense as to who is in charge, in order to help them govern their affairs effectively. Democracy is a wonderful idea, but impractical without our direct aid and assistance in ensuring its continuance. Or at least that is what I used to believe... it does not seem to matter so much now.

3. What did you do during the first day of the voyage?

I spent most of my time in the parlors of the ship, drinking and carousing with those of my sort and ilk, putting the best face possible on the circumstances of my departure from Havana.

4. What did you see at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba?

A most unfortunate falling out twixt Meyer Lansky and one of his lieutenants, Samuel "Little Sammy" Dickstein, during a gentleman's soiree and poker game to which I was an invitee. Not something I care to dwell upon, nor to recount unless pressed, as my future is uncertain enough without earning the wrath of a rising figure in the shadowy world of gangland America. Suffice it to say that Mr. Lansky didn't take well either to his inability to account for certain missing monies, nor his tone in answering questions about said funds, and I consider myself lucky that Mr. Dickstein's passing was as quick as it was, as it was not a sight I care to ever see again. I, at least, left the game with an apology from Mr. Lansky, and his request to send him the bill for the cleaning of my cravat and suit jacket...and my life, of course, for which I imagine I should be thankful.

5. What did you bring with you on your trip?

Ah, yes! All my worldly goods, of course, as my service and presence in Cuba is no longer required. A steamer trunk of my clothes, my maternal grandfather's gold pocket watch, my Harvard class of '20 ring, a cigarette case, and several cartons of Havana cigarettes, several bottles of Havana rum and British gin, and a pearl-handled .41 Rimfire double-barreled Derringer. And a photograph of Gabriel and I laughing as we ate dinner at a hotel in Aguaverde, in a small and secluded seaside hamlet just outside of Havana. He was so beautiful in that picture, with the afternoon light just so... so beautiful in any light, and in every way.

6. How did you end up working for the State Department?

There wasn't much else the third son of Arthur Cosgrove Darabont COULD do but go into the service of his country as a diplomatic attache. Father wanted to make sure that I had a job befitting the status of our family, but one in which he was assured that I would be elsewhere so as to not embarrass him or my brother Arthur, Jr. He certainly underestimated my ability in that regard.

7. Why did you resign your position?

Resign? [laughs, a sharp barking laugh] Well, I suppose that is in fact what I did, but that implies a certain amount of choice in the matter that was not really existent. Between you and I, let us just say that it was best for all involved that I vacate my position in Havana and return immediately to New York. I do not remember what happened that night, the night after the poker game in Lansky's suite, nor will I ever truly know, but I cannot believe that I could have brought myself to do such harm to Gabriel ... and yet I was so drunk... and so angry, because he told me he was leaving me... and yet, that could not have been me that did... that.

So much blood... so much blood everywhere, covering me... the bedsheets... the walls. Oh, his beautiful face was so broken, his head smashed from the marble dolphin statuette. NO! I cannot accept that I responsible for that, and I will not! I just... can't remember.

8. What did you do during WWI?

I remained home, and in college, while the flower of America's youth went to France to do their duty for their country. Father would not hear of any of his sons going abroad to fight in "Wilson's war", particularly after sweet Jamie, my older brother and dearest confidante, enlisted and subsequently died at Chateau-Thierry. Most of my friends and fellow classmates rose to the call, and I should have been with them. I would have counted myself lucky to die on the fields of France, but Father saw to it that I would not follow in Jamie's footsteps. There is not a day that does not pass without my wish to have gone and died in my brother's stead. The world would be so much a better place with Jamie alive and myself in Flanders Field.

9. How did you manage to graduate from Harvard?

Through judicious application of paternal influence, despite the excessive embraces of alcohol, and the illicit and innumerable trysts with the nameless but beautiful young men of south Boston.

10. How are your relationships with your family members?

Father and Arthur, Jr. barely acknowledge my existence. Jamie sleeps in Flanders Field, and Mother, the only other person in this world to truly understand me, sleeps with him despite continuing to draw breath and staring sightlessly east from the windows in our ancestral abode on the upper East Side.

11. If you had to come up with a large sum of money on short notice, how would you do it?

Simple enough. I would tell Father that I've made a mess of things again with some dashing young thing who will embarrass the family name with tales of our escapades unless he is paid a certain sum to keep it mum. It wouldn't be the first time such a thing happened, and Father could certainly afford it and has paid it in the past.

12. Did you have the chicken or the fish for dinner?

I am reasonably certain it was the fish. Of course, I was so busy being charming AND drunk, I do not recall if I ate or not, but I distinctly remembered ordering the fish because the handsome young steward recommended it... and I am generally not disposed to act contrarily to the advice of a beautiful young man.

Stephen Lucas

1. What did you do during the first day of the voyage?

I walked the ship, looking for any obvious problems that would need to be included in the ships audit. I also had drinks in the bar with James & Mary Billings.

2. What discrepancies have you found in the Morro Castle's records?

Several days worth of records are missing. Most of the missing records are from the day after leaving port in either NY or Havana. Also, supplies that were ordered and delivered were never recorded in the records. Finally, there are several staterooms that were booked by the same person for every voyage over the past year, but never checked into.

3. Can you swim?

Yes, quite well

4. What languages do you speak?

English, Spanish, and Italian

5. What happened to your brother?

He died in a boating accident while on vacation in Bermuda. His body was not recovered.

6. What did you bring with you on the trip?

My travel bag contains my suit, 4 changes of clothes, a pistol, a flask of rum, pen & paper, and an extra pair of shoes. I also have 2 books-a novel and a history of Rome.

7. What did you see at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba?

In the pool, I saw a fight break out between Lucky Luciano/Frank Costello and Tyrone Power/Johnny Weissmuller. I also saw a group of men wearing hooded jackets walking through a darkened hallway, there was something wrong with their movements, but I can't pinpoint what it was.

8. How do you feel about your lower-class upbringing?

I don't speak of it to anyone, I have left that life behind me. I hope to never see my fathers farm in Westchester, NY ever again.

9. Why do you think Eduardo is avoiding you?

I believe that I Eduardo may have been among the group of hooded men that I saw at the hotel. If so, he surly knows that I saw him. He may also be responsible for the missing records.

10. What are your career goals?

To move up in the Ward line, eventually holding an office job in NYC. I would like to retire to Cuba some day.

11. Have you traveled on the Morro Castle before?

Yes, twice

12. Did you have the chicken or the fish for dinner?

Chicken