

For every woman I've ever liked or loved

Oprah G

I just googled the name Lisa. There were 145 million matches. Television hosts, media moguls, philanthropists. If it can be done, you can bet that somewhere there's a Lisa that's doing it. Hundreds of thousands of Lisas doing hundreds of thousands of things every single day. Whether a Lisa is robbing a house or organizing a neighborhood watch to prevent another Lisa from ripping her off, she is judged only by her action, not her name. It doesn't look too hard being a Lisa. As far as names go, it has nothing attached to it. When you're a Lisa, you're free to live a life devoid of constant judgment—no name to live up to, no name to live down.

Then I googled Oprah. Twenty-four million matches. Television host, media mogul, philanthropist. One person. Do I really need to say her last name? Didn't think so. Twenty-four million matches and everybody knows who I'm talking about. One Oprah has taken the name and rendered it completely powerless for the rest of us. Let's just say your name is Oprah and you have the misfortune of not being *that* Oprah, no matter how good you are in your chosen field, how close you are to uncovering the mysteries of universe or guessing the amount of jellybeans in a jar, you simply don't measure up. We're living in a world where only one Oprah matters.

Bad news for me. I'm Oprah Goldstein.

As my mother has told everyone within earshot since a certain someone burst on the scene, she had intended to name me Ophira but the hospital staff misspelled it on the birth certificate and it stuck. Or more accurately—I was stuck with it. Hold on for a second. I'm being mildly annoyed.

“You ready to go. I don't want to miss the previews.”

“In a minute,” I answer.

That's Sam or Scam as I more commonly refer to him. He's the guy I hang out with. He doesn't want to miss the previews. I don't mind if we do. It would mean missing him giving his commentary on each of them the second they're over. “Wait for DVD,” he half-whispers when a trailer comes on that doesn't interest him. Really? So, the biggest put-down he can think of is that the movie still merits enough attention to rent it. Wow. That'll show those movie studios once and for all. One time there were five previews and he said it five times. Yes, I laughed at a couple of the voices he used, but that only encourages him and that's not always a good thing. The worst part is that he may not even get those movies on DVD. So his declaration of their mediocrity is negated by the fact that he's not even keeping his promise. I can't stand when someone

doesn't keep a promise—even a dumb one.

Did I mention I'm almost 30? In guy years, that's one billion six hundred and forty-three. And by almost 30, that could mean I'm just over 30 or just under. I'll be sticking with that for as long as I can. Everyone I know has gotten married, is getting married, or is constantly talking about what it's like to be or get married. They all got married in the same time frame. Ages 25 to 29. That means everyone on earth, or at least the earth I inhabit, met the person they were ideally suited for within the same five-year period. What are the odds of them all being so lucky?

Scam just popped his head in again. That's the downside to the home office. If it weren't for being able to work in my underwear and take naps, it would be an absolute nightmare.

Oprah W

I am the queen of the front lawns. I have sold more homes from a front lawn than most agents do from inside the house. If it's got four walls, a roof, and a door, I can sell it, and I will sell it for more than anyone else. Watch me work my magic on the front lawn of the bungalow on Eighth. It belongs to a very ordinary looking middle-aged man whose name I barely know.

“I made a promise to Rob Hansler,” he said, in a please-convince-me way.

“But didn't Hansler also make a promise that he'd get you offers? That was six months ago and you're still here.”

“It's not a seller's market.”

“Who told you that?”

The man looked at me, slightly embarrassed.

“Rob Hansler.”

“If it's not a seller's market then it's a buyer's market. You gave him six months. If I don't move it in three, go back to Hansler and he can continue failing you.”

I reached in my pocket and pulled out my business card with the speed of a cowboy pulling a gun from his holster. The man took the card, looked at it, and giggled.

“Is something funny?” I asked.

“Oprah...like on TV.”

“Yes, that’s me. Oprah Winston. If you’re a regular viewer of *The House-hunter* then you already know...”

“The What-hunter?”

Seeing that he understood “hunter” and not “house,” I proceeded to talk a little slower.

“My TV show. On channel 2?” I said, sounding out the syllables for the mentally impaired.

“Oh. That’s local. I’m talking about real TV.”

That’s the moment where, although still completely in control, I began to unravel just a tiny little bit.

“My show is real. The people that watch it are real. The offers they get on their homes because of me are real.”

“I didn’t mean any offense. It’s just that I never met anyone with the same first name as...”

And my complete in control unraveling continued.

“I don’t have the same first name as anybody! The somebody you’re referring to has the same first name as me!”

The man attempted to hand me back my card.

“Would you like to know when you lost the listing?”
he asked.

I turned away from him, pulled out my phone, and speed dialed.

“Hi. Lori. Remember that bungalow on Eighth? Yes, from the virtual tour. Sunken kitchen. Right. The owner said he’d drop it five percent below list. Sure, but if you have to fly in, pack a carry-on. It’ll be gone by the time you reach baggage claim. Great. I’ll tell the owner.”

And with that, I turned to the owner again.

“Would you like to know when I sold the listing?”

He looked at me, speechless. I continued—

“You need to be out by the 30th. Keep my card. You’ll need a place to live.”

Oprah S

“Oprah shakes her ass.”

“What?” I said, in disbelief.

“Oprah shakes her ass.”

“I heard you. I just don’t know.”

“Can you think of a faster, easier way to get five grand?”

He had a point. I couldn’t. And I need that money for something important. Really, really important. As I know all too well, if I’m going to be a model slash actress I needed to start in my teens, not at 21. That’s what they said when I met with Volaire Model and Talent. After I filled out a questionnaire, I did a cold reading in front of the heads of the agency, Perry and Christie Cavanaugh. I’m not sure if they were brother and sister or husband and wife, but this much I did know—they had style and they knew what they were talking about when it came to talent. Anyway, I did the longest monologue I could find from *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer* and when it was over I stood, waiting. They talked about me like I wasn’t even there.

“She stumbled over a few of the lines,” said Perry, meanly.

"But she nailed the scream," Christie said in my defense.

Perry looked at her.

"Fine. She did nail the scream," he added.

"The scream is everything," Christie continued.

"The scream isn't everything. The right music is what makes a scary scene."

"I could come back with music," I said, trying to be cute, funny or helpful. None of them worked on Perry who still hadn't looked at me once.

"She thinks she needs to bring music to an acting audition. How green do we want our talent to be?"

"I think she was being funny," Christie said, getting it. She looked at me. "You were being funny, right?"

"Absolutely," I said.

They looked at each other again. They looked at my picture for what seemed like a billion years. They had my future in their hands.

"Oprah Star. The name's a nice hook," said Christie, taking my side again.

"It's kind of gimmicky," Perry responded. "Is it real?"

"No," I answered. "I chose the name Star just to put that out into the universe."

"I meant the Oprah part."

"Oh. My mom gave me that name because she thought it would make me strong," I added.

Truth is that was all she ever gave me. Shortly after I was born she left me to be raised by her sister and the incredibly creepy boyfriend who may not have touched me but always looked like he was about to. I got out of there as soon as I could in search of something to believe in. And that led me to where I was standing.

Perry and Christie whispered to each other. I had never been so nervous in my entire life.

Oprah F

The women in the other cubicles never ask me to have lunch with them. Well, at least not lately. They did a few times a while back but they were probably just doing it to be polite. Doesn't matter. I have my own friends. Better friends. I like to spend my lunch checking out TMZ or PerezHilton or searching a good Oprah collectible on eBay. I have a huge collection at home. I once bought a bowl that she actually ate from. I know it's real because it came with a picture of her eating granola from that exact bowl. I have the napkin that's in the photo too. All that I'm missing is the spoon. To an Oprah collector, that's the Holy Grail. And I can't have it.

Why?

Because some eBay seller who goes by the handle Hippobottom listed the bowl and napkin at fair prices and I bought them. Then when I inquired about the spoon and Hippobottom realized how much it meant to my set, he listed it for a thousand dollars. I better stop thinking about that or I'm likely to throw something so let's get back to Oprah.

I subscribe to her magazine, I have all her shows since 1986 on DVD, and I've watched any and all movies that she has produced or starred in. My

biggest dream is that some day a magazine or TV show does an article on my collection the same way they did with the guy whose house is decorated with every Happy Meal toy. Hey, maybe she will feature me in her magazine or on her TV show. I sent pictures to her producer. It could happen!

Every night I go to bed happy because I love that my name is Oprah Fanning. I even went as far as to start a chat room for anyone out there who happens to have the same name. I check it every day and so far I'm the only one in it. That could change at any time.