

LISA

"Lisa Scottoline's legal suspense novels are a law unto themselves—biting humor, social satire, snappy dialogue, and surprising plot twists." —Nelson DeMille

SCOTTOLINE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Everywhere That

**MARY
WENT**



Lisa Scottoline

*Everywhere That
Mary Went*

For Franca, and for Kiki

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“All rise! All persons having business before this Honorable Judge of the United States District Court are admonished to draw near and be heard!” trumpets the courtroom deputy.

Instantly, sports pages vanish into briefcases and legal briefs are tossed atop the stock quotes. Three rows of pricey lawyers leap to their wingtips and come to attention before a vacant mahogany dais. Never before has a piece of furniture commanded such respect.

“The District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania is now in session! God save the United States and this honorable court!” The deputy casts an eye in the direction of the dais and pauses significantly. “The Honorable William A. Bitterman, presiding.”

Judge Bitterman sweeps onto the dais on cue and stands behind his desk like a stout regent surveying his serfdom. His eyes, mere slits sunk deep into too-solid flesh, scan the courtroom from on high. I can read his mind: Everything is in order. The counsel tables gleam. The marble floor sparkles. The air-conditioning freezes the blood of lesser life forms. And speaking of same, the lawyers wait and wait.

“You won’t mind the delay, counsel,” the judge says indifferently, sinking into a soft leather throne. “After all, waiting is billable too.”

An uncertain chuckle circulates among the crowd in the back of the courtroom. None of us defense lawyers likes to admit it, but we will bill the time—we have to bill it to someone and it might as well be you. The plaintiffs’ bar doesn’t sweat it. A contingency fee has more cushion than an air bag.

“Well, well, well,” the judge mutters, without explanation, as he skims the motion papers on his desk. Judge Bitterman might have been handsome in a former life, but his enormous weight has pushed his features to the upper third of his face, leaving beneath a chin as bulbous as a bullfrog’s. Rumor has it he gained the weight when his wife left him years ago, but there’s no excuse for his

temperament, which is congenitally lousy. Because of it my best friend, Judy Carrier, calls him Bitter Man.

“Good morning, Your Honor,” I say, taking my seat at counsel table. I try to sound perky and bright, and not at all how I feel, which is nervous and fearful. I’m wearing my navy-blue Man Suit; it’s perfect for that special occasion when a girl wants to look like a man, like in court or at the auto mechanic’s. The reason I’m nervous is that this oral argument is only my second—the partners in my law firm hog the arguments for themselves. They expect associates to learn how to argue by watching them do it. Which is like saying you can learn to ride a bike by watching other people ride them.

“Good morning, Your Honor,” says opposing counsel, Bernie Starankovic. Starankovic blinks a lot and wears a bad suit. I feel a twinge of guilt for what I’m about to say about him in open court—that he’s too incompetent to represent our client’s employees in a class action for age discrimination. If I win this motion, the class action will evaporate, our client’s liability will plunge from megabucks to chump change, and its aged ex-employees will end up living on Social Security and 9-Lives. Defense lawyers consider this a victory.

“Good morning, class,” replies Judge Bitterman. I force a fraudulent chuckle. The boys in the back do likewise.

“Ha-ha-ha!” Starankovic laughs loudly. “Ha-ha-ha!” The bogus sound caroms harshly off the walls of the cavernous courtroom, ricocheting like a subatomic particle long after everyone has fallen silent.

“Duly noted, Mr. Starankovic,” says Bitter Man dryly, and Starankovic wilts into his chair. The judge’s eyes shift in my direction. “Miz DiNunzio!”

“Yes, Your Honor!” I pop up and grin, like an overeducated jack-in-the-box. Popping up and grinning isn’t something they taught me in law school, but they should have, since it’s a damn sight more useful than Property. I learned it on the job, and it’s become a conditioned response to more stimuli than you can count. I’m up for partnership in two months.

“You’ve done your homework for this morning, haven’t you, Miz DiNunzio? I expect no less from a former student of mine.”