

My Name

You couldn't swing a dead cat at my high school graduation without hitting a girl named Lisa. Thank goodness as the Salutatorian of my class, walking across the stage second behind my friend Brett Costley who now designs computers for Hewlett Packard, I was in one way distinct from the herd of robed Lisas filling the gymnasium that day.

The cruel irony is that my mom and dad thought that they were giving me an original name. While pregnant with me, they saw a movie with a character named Lisa, a name that they'd never known anyone else to have. When, as a third grader, I first inquired about the origin of my name, I envisioned on the movie screen a brave and noble heroine whose name I shared. However, my fantasy quickly faded when my mom responded honestly to my string of questions that she really didn't remember anything about the character in the film. They had simply liked the name and thought it would be unique.

At the age of eight, after receiving the crushing news that my name had no significance at all, I wished that I had a new name, that I were called Encyclopedia instead—like my favorite ten-year-old detective Encyclopedia Brown who could always solve the mystery by noticing the clues that the adults overlooked. Later, as an eleven-year-old in a racially divided community, I wished I were named Scout so that I could stand against prejudice and discrimination. As an uncool teen, I wanted to be named

Janie and imagined myself one day sauntering back into my hometown as an independent woman after experiencing the world.