

The *Jeopardy!* Experience

1. Why?

Lynn read, well—everything. When we first met in 1974, she was reading through the entire works of Anthony Trollope (over 40 volumes). This was while she was still doing all her undergraduate work and while writing and keeping up with the new phenomenon of fan-fic, not to mention the strategies of the Flyers' third and fourth line match-ups, and putting up with a skinny, weird, hairy guy who kept hanging around. Other writers she “read through” over the years were Kathleen Norris, Catherine Cookson, Miss Read, Lucy Maud Montgomery (she especially loved her journals and letters), Samuel Delaney, C. J. Cherryh, Ursula K. Le Guin, Willa Cather, James Tiptree, Jr. (Alice Sheldon)—I'm sure I'm missing many. (Just for fun, Google some of the above writers to see the volume of work produced by each.) At the same time, she had favorite books she'd reread over and over: *McTeague* by Frank Norris, *1000 Acres* by Jane Smiley, *The Good Soldier* by Ford Maddox Ford, and anthologies of essays and short stories, like Gardner Dozois's *Year's Best Science Fiction* (many volumes) which conveniently came out every year just before we'd head to the beach for a week's vacation, a 700-1000 page paperback tome she'd read on the beach, and of course would finish on the second or third day.

The only reason I found out that she was reading the complete works of authors was when she'd say something like, “Wow, that was good. I wish there was more.” I'd ask why don't we go to Borders and get another book by him. “I've read them all now; there are no more.” It's too simplistic to say she was living out her online persona of “escapee” by losing herself in books, though that was part of it; reading certainly offered her a respite, like the beach for that one precious week each summer. But it was more complicated than that. Lynn was grounded in reality and only sought to escape her past.

When we were little, I think we all annoyed the adults around us with, “Why?” It starts out as a question but soon becomes an impish demand to every response: “Why!” Lynn read to answer those “whys,” with the seriousness of an adult and the playfulness and curiosity of a child.

There were connections to the “whys” in everything Lynn read. For Lynn, a common, discrete thread ran through all of Trollope, or all of Miss Read, or Ursula Le Guin. But inside each author's work were hundreds of connections weaving together hundreds of different “whys,” for we all learned as children that one “why” leads to another, and another. She was reading to make some final connection, to tie it all together. So it was more than just a search for knowledge. I think what made Lynn special was her ability to keep track of those millions of interwoven threads. If you were to say just a single word, like “caviar,” she could follow the hundreds of “whys” and tell you things you may have never known before. She'd tell you about the history

of the world's once largest caviar industry in Bay Side, New Jersey, at one time the caviar capital of the world (in New Jersey? Did you know that??). Or how chefs use spherification to create things like coffee “caviar,” or the effects of over-fishing on the caviar industry, or how poor her great grandfather was as an oyster shucker on the Eastern Shore. Think of a few words, and then think how many threads lead from each one to all kinds of books and stories: silk; nuns; Gandhi; baseball—anything. She was somehow able to keep track of all those threads and follow where they led, and remember it all instantly. Instantly is the key when we're talking about *Jeopardy!*

Lynn was the person you wanted on a long car trip. How else would I have ever found out about the Great Molasses Flood in Boston in 1919? (I know, right?)

That's the Lynn who was on *Jeopardy!*. She was quick to correct anyone who'd say something like, “How do you remember all that trivia?” She'd answer, “It's general knowledge, not trivia. Trivia is Nixon's shoe size; *Jeopardy!* clues deal with things everyone should know, like where Nixon was born.¹ *Jeopardy!* players are just able to access information faster.”



¹ Richard Nixon was born in Yorba Linda, California.

2: Culling the Herd

It started with a scrolling message at the bottom of the screen, at the end of the ABC nightly news in May 1992. All it said was “*Jeopardy!* auditions—Resorts Casino Hotel, Atlantic City—Call to register,” and a toll-free number. We weren’t really paying attention. “Did that say something about *Jeopardy!* try-outs?” Lynn asked.

That first night when the message scrolled past, Lynn jumped up and raced around the living room like a pinball, scrounging for pen and paper. We waited and waited for the message to scroll again, but it only scrolled that one time. The next night, the message scrolled again—just once, but we were ready. She called the number and got a busy signal each time she tried, but she eventually got through to a recorded message: “Thank you for calling. Please try again at 7:00 PM Eastern tomorrow.” I remember she used a string of hockey terms usually screamed at the referee or the opposing team. It took three nights of ever-increasing hockey terms to get through to a human, but she was finally able to register.

A week later, we drove over the bridge to Resorts Casino Hotel. (Merv Griffin owned *Jeopardy!* and Resorts at that time.) It was Lynn’s first time in a casino. We



were directed to the Carousel Cabaret (Lynn’s first time in a cabaret), where we sat at a long bar (Lynn’s first time sitting at a bar) and took a ten-question test designed to cull possible contestants from “the herd.” After a quick “Oh, come on!” from Lynn, I took the test too, solidifying my position within said herd. I remember none of the questions, but Lynn remembered one. See if you know it without peeking: “Name the Canadian province to the left of Saskatchewan.”²

The herd of hopefuls was directed to the casino floor; we were told that our name would be called if we passed the test. After 50 or so names, Lynn’s name was called—well, sort of. “Lynn Looper?” “It’s Loper,” she muttered. Apparently, there was another error too, because **my** name wasn’t called. We were led upstairs and down a very long and wide hallway. At a set of double doors, we were met by a *Jeopardy!* contestant coordinator who explained that only those whose names had been called could go into the conference room. I gave Lynn a kiss for luck and took twenty dollars and myself down to the casino floor. I figured I’d play for as long as I had money. I was back upstairs in less than five minutes, sitting on the floor outside the closed and locked conference room doors. Fifteen minutes after that, a large group of people came out—but not Lynn. Half an hour later, a smaller group came out, but still no Lynn.

Half an hour after that, the doors opened—and stayed open. A few came out, but I didn’t see Lynn. I thought, *Oh no! She was let out while I was still in the casino and I*

² “Name the Canadian province to the left of Saskatchewan.” Lynn answered, “What is Alberta? BUT, it depends on which way I’m facing. If I’m facing south, it’s Manitoba.” The contestant coordinator said Lynn was the only one out of hundreds to point out the ambiguity.

missed her! She's probably wandering around downstairs looking for me. I heard some voices coming from the conference room, so I anxiously looked in. To my instant relief, Lynn and a small group of people were gathered around the contestant coordinator. As I got closer, I heard the coordinator saying that they'd all be added to the contestant pool in Hollywood (my mind is screaming, *She made it!!*), and their names would be drawn at random from a card file. "Even though you've all passed the audition, it's not a guarantee that you'll be called. If you don't get a phone call within the next month or two, it means we had enough contestants to round out the season, and you'll have to wait for another contestant search. So thank you all and good luck!"

Lynn was stunned. On the ride home, she told me about the audition: a fifty question written test (the number of clues in a game), a mock game, a second mock game, and finally, a "stand up in front of the room and talk to us about anything" ordeal. Lynn kept telling me, "I made it. I made it!" Then, with her typical "optimism," she said, "They'll never call. I don't care. I just wanted to see if I could pass the test to get on."

Two weeks later, Lynn got a call at work. "Lynn Loper? This is Kelly? (Lynn said she like, you know, totally ended every sentence with a question mark?) I'm calling from Hollywood? Can you come out and play *Jeopardy!* with us?"

3: Getting There

In the second week of August 1992, my right hand suddenly began hurting. I wasn't a *Jeopardy!* contestant on my way to California, but despite that, I quickly figured out that Lynn had been tightly clutching my hand in fear for the past hour—and we hadn't even gotten off the runway. It's not like she'd never flown before. She flew to Europe on a high school trip, 'though she was unconscious both ways from the meds they'd given her to keep her calm; and she took a short ride in my brother-in-law's plane once, which she liked, but as I remember it was a little single-engine craft, not the carrier-based, A-3 "Whale" jet he flew in the Navy. We were on U.S. Air to LAX. Lynn called them U.S. Scare. Maybe that had something to do with the pain in my hand.

We were cash poor then. We'd just signed a sales agreement on our first house, but we were still waiting for the mortgage to be approved. Any money we spent would impact our chances of getting the mortgage. We had to be in Hollywood by Tuesday, August 11th, at 10:30 to begin filming (does that sound cool, or what!?!), but it was too expensive to fly out on a Monday, so we got a discounted rate by flying out on Saturday.

Lynn was very excited when we got to LAX because, well—we got to LAX. We got an economy rental car (a Mustang!) and, steering with my one good hand, headed to the Best Western Canoga Park Motor Inn way out north of Topanga Canyon, 'cause the Beverly Hilton (also owned by Merv Griffin) where *Jeopardy!* suggested we stay in Hollywood?—not in these shoes. *Jeopardy!* doesn't pay for anything for their contestants, except parking at the studio and lunch for one. Keep that in mind when you see someone from the East coast come in second. They had to pay their way out to Hollywood, pay for their accommodations, and, if they wanted to keep the second place prize, had to pay the taxes on the prize package value *before* they could receive it.



We followed the signs to the 405 north, then the 101 out of L.A., and finally up to our motel in like, oh-ma-gaud the Valley I'm shur! Totally. Lynn kept seeing all these signs with place names that she (until now) had only read about: Inglewood, Fox Hills, Brentwood, The Getty, Bel Air, Sherman Oaks, Encino, Tarzana, Reseda. I even have a note she jotted down of a sign we passed on the 101: "Litter removed next 2 miles. Bette Midler Adopt a Highway." We checked in at the motel, treated ourselves to a nearby Sizzler for dinner, then waited in the room for Tuesday. When I suggested we go explore the sights tomorrow, Lynn said, "No. I'm here for *Jeopardy!*. I

want to stay focused on that.” We fell asleep watching the motel weather channel.

Of course, by Sunday afternoon, we were stir crazy and anxious about the drive into Hollywood during rush hour on Tuesday morning. Getting there on time was the most important thing now. I bought a map, planned out the route, and on Monday, we took a test run down to the studio. Lynn felt better after that.

By the time we got to the studio on Tuesday, I was a nervous wreck—and I wasn’t going to be filming a T.V. show. Lynn was tense, anxious, and scared. I parked the car, and as we walked down Seward Avenue to Eleanor Avenue my hand began hurting again. I glanced behind us at the mountains. We don’t have mountains in Delaware. Delaware’s highest point is 448 feet above sea level. I stopped at what I saw and turned Lynn around so she could see too. There was the Hollywood sign on a hill off in the distance. Her grip tightened. We turned down Eleanor Avenue, not an avenue at all but a back alley behind the studio, and came to a gate and another sign. When Lynn saw **that** sign her hand suddenly relaxed. In that one instant, Lynn told me later, all the tension and nervousness melted away. She was now relaxed, confident, and ready to play *Jeopardy!*. Before I took a picture—she hated having her picture taken—we hugged, and she said, “I’m really here. I’m really on *Jeopardy!*?”



The Green Room
“I’m really here.”

4: Setting the Stage

Lynn and I met when we were still teenagers. Complicated circumstances meant we would never have children. It was just the two of us, sharing our lives, our dreams, our thoughts. We were rarely apart. When she traveled on business, she made sure I could tag along. She wanted me with her, so she could share the trip with me. We shared everything, our first kiss, her last breath.

Just before I took that picture of Lynn in what she jokingly called “the green room,” I was worried that she’d be anxious because I wasn’t going to be able to go in with her and share her experience. But by that time in our lives, we no longer needed words. I sensed that she wasn’t anxious at all, and in fact, needed those next few hours to be hers alone. At the same time, I could tell she felt badly for wanting those hours to herself. I kissed her and said, “Go have fun.” She knew I understood.

I took this next picture just before I was tossed into the back alley like I was some pushy game show fan trying to “catch a glimpse:” Actually, the tossing was done by a very kind Glenn-the-coordinator, who told me that I couldn’t follow them in this way but that I could go in through the audience entrance around the corner at 1:00 PM. “Just give them your name. We’ve got an area set up just for contestant family members. They’ll let you in early if you want to avoid the stampede.” (That’s Glenn on the left. Lynn is in the big sunglasses just behind him.)



Catching a glimpse

Just in case you didn’t know (I certainly didn’t), some people make the rounds from show to show, trying to win door prizes or get an autograph from a possible future champion or star that they could sell. They know all the schedules and studios, whether you need advanced tickets (the tickets are free), and where the important people come out after filming. It’s a steady job for them. It’s bizarre. Later, as I was

waiting to go into the studio, I overheard a fan saying to her friend, “Jeopardy’s cheap. They don’t give away anything: no door prizes, not even a filming schedule or a fact sheet. Nothin’. And then, they only let like 50 people in. We’ll go try ‘Wheel’ later. They have snacks and door prizes!”

So, I wandered around Hollywood for a few hours. I went over to Vine, turned left, and headed up to Hollywood Blvd. (you know, just so I could say I was at Hollywood and Vine), headed west to Cahuenga, and then back down to Romaine. “Walking in L.A.” by Missing Persons started playing in my head. Very depressing.

...Shopping cart pusher or maybe someone groovie
 One thing’s for sure, he isn’t starring in the movies.
 ‘Cause he’s walkin’ in L.A.
 Walkin’ in L.A., nobody walks in L.A.³

I did see some stars, although they were being trampled under the feet of modern times: Bette Davis, Gypsy Rose Lee, W.C. Fields, Joan Fontaine, Lionel Barrymore, Henry Fonda; there were many dozens; I only remember a few.

As I was walking and stargazing, I thought how ironic to be looking down at the stars instead of up. But is it really so strange? We’d just spent the last few days watching the local news in our motel room. Back home, in northern Delaware, the local news was like local news everywhere, focused on the industries and culture of the area. Where northern Delaware had the chemical industry, in Hollywood, the dominant industry was entertainment. And it **was** an industry, like any other. What better way to honor these giants from the entertainment industry than to use them as the very foundation of your town.

I had pictured Hollywood as a glamorous town filled with wealth and fame. I’m sure the wealth and fame are there, but just as you can’t see the wealth and fame at a chemical industrial park, neither can you see that glamour at a film studio. It’s an industrial park. I shouldn’t have been so surprised that it looked like one. That picture of “the green room” is typical of what you’ll find in the entertainment industry.

In 1992, Jeopardy filmed five episodes a day: a week’s worth of shows per day. Their workweek began on Monday and ended on Tuesday evening, which gave them two weeks of shows for each week of filming until the season “wrapped.” It also gave them a two-day workweek, with five days off in between. Lynn and I thought that was extraordinary until we witnessed the pressure under which everyone involved with the show worked. The closer to perfection, the greater the profit, and nothing is ever perfect.

Lynn had received information about the filming schedule about a month before we flew out to California. She was to be at the studio at 10:30 AM on Tuesday, August 11th, to prepare for filming, which began at 2:00 PM. Based on that, we could plan how we would afford to get out there and back without destroying our chances

³ “Walking in L.A.” from the 1982 album *Spring Session M* by Missing Persons: <https://youtu.be/eQF7FDeUePA> featuring the amazing former Frank Zappa drummer Terry Bozzio.

of getting our mortgage approved. We figured we'd get the cheapest flight we could and book the return flight home late in the evening on Tuesday after Lynn had completed filming. We didn't pay attention to the legalese buried within the information packet:

WE ALSO WISH TO REMIND YOU THAT THERE IS NO GUARANTEE OF AN APPEARANCE ON THE SHOW.

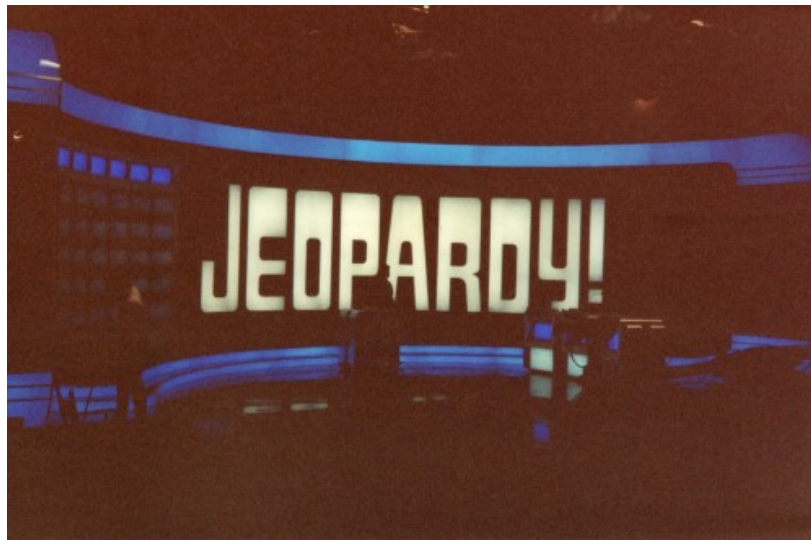
In 1992, if you won five consecutive games, you were sent home (with the lovely parting gifts) and invited back for the Tournament of Champions. Also, the most you could win was \$100,000, and the clue dollar amounts were half what they are today. Today, you play until you lose, with no limit on how much you can win. I watched them film three episodes that Tuesday, none of which included Lynn. With that Missing Persons earworm playing in my head, I counted on my fingers and figured out there were only two episodes left that day. I hadn't seen Lynn since 10:45 AM, and that all-caps notice was floating before my eyes.

5: A Near-sighted View

Lynn saw things most people wouldn't believe: an empty *Jeopardy!* set unlit on a freezing cold sound stage. She watched stage lights glitter in the dark off C-stands near the podiums of contestants. All those moments are lost in time, like tears in rain. (Apologies to “[Blade Runner](#)”⁴.)

I was there, but I was just an outside observer, a near-sighted witness to things only Lynn could know. Like Deckard, the Blade Runner, I could only watch and never fully understand her experiences, all those moments impossible for me to live but through her. Those moments and Lynn are gone now. I can only tell you what I saw while sitting in the studio audience or what she told me as time went on. Maybe Lynn told some of her online friends what she saw and heard and felt that day. Somehow though, I think she would have closely held most of those moments deeply inside, not selfishly, but because she was a private and, sadly, a very insecure person. Personal thoughts and feelings are kept safely inside if you've suffered childhood abuse.

Before I noticed the chill of the studio, I noticed “Jeopardy!” in huge lights curving along the back of the set. (I have no idea where that poorly scanned, illegal photo that you see came from because we weren't allowed to take pictures in the studio. Hmm...) For me, that sight compressed and focused every moment spent getting here into one instant: *Jeopardy!* It was like waking from a dream and finding it wasn't a dream after all. For Lynn, though, being on *Jeopardy!* was never really a dream: it was a destination.



In a bit, the stage crew and judges came out. No, the judges weren't solemn old guys in black robes, but more like a golf foursome you'd see ahead of you on a calm

⁴ "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain." Final words spoken by dying "replicant" Roy Batty, played by Rutger Hauer in the 1982 Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner*. <https://youtu.be/JdUq2opPY-Q>

sunny Sunday, deliberately moving around the green. They took their places below me, at a long table opposite Alex's podium. To their left was another table for various production people, including a blonde (probably?) stage assistant whom Lynn called "The Dress." The Dress's dress—I'm told, I didn't really notice of course—was white, full-length, and very tight, especially around, well—never mind. I think Lynn's nickname for her referred to the tightness of the dress and see-through nature of the fabric as it shimmered in the bright stage lights. I later tried to explain to Lynn that you couldn't really see through the dress—as long as she was wearing it. It's hard to describe the look I got. Anyway, this was Hollywood; I was just trying to be cool and nonchalant, you know, just trying to fit in. I should move on...

Speaking of a Hollywood cliché, but in a good, iconic way, Johnny Gilbert, the announcer, sits at a high, concierge-type podium way off stage left. That Tuesday, Johnny, who was probably only 127 years old then but didn't look a day over a badly made-up 80, was wearing a metallic silver windbreaker, high-waisted, dark trousers that matched his dark toupee, and white, wingtip shoes that matched The Dress (I guess 'cause, you know—I didn't really notice). Besides being the announcer, Johnny also hosts the audience. He explained the need for the air conditioning to be set to freezing to counter the hot stage lights. "Just wait till later this afternoon," he said. Also, we were to ignore him if he was sitting at his table. Otherwise, watch him for cues on when to clap or when to stop clapping. Also, "No cheering, no talking, no standing, no waving, no eating, no smoking, but have fun anyway!" He said he would typically tell some jokes and sing and dance, whatever it took to loosen us up, but today they were already running late, and he said he could see we were a model audience.

Then Alex Trebek came out, at first to no applause because Johnny was sitting and we were such a good studio audience, don't you know, being quiet and all, just like we were told, but when Johnny jumped up and raised his hands in the air, we all started clapping. Alex motioned for us to settle down, shaking his head and smiling over at Johnny as if to say, "You do that on purpose!" Alex welcomed us and explained that they film the shows in real-time, meaning that they start the tape at the beginning of each episode and never stop the tape while filming—well, mostly. That meant that when they went to commercial, the delay in the studio was just as long as the commercials would run. It had something to do with making it easier in post-production. Anyway, he said we should make sure we pay attention to Johnny during the commercials; things happen faster than you imagine. And with that, he apologized for running late and headed backstage as the house lights dimmed.

The audience seating, gently rising from stage level like stadium seats behind home plate, had three sections: the center section was for the general audience and was the largest, although much smaller than I would have imagined. To the left, separated by an aisle of movie theater-like steps, was a smaller "contestant family and friends" section. The contestants were in a small, dark, roped-off area at stage level to the far right. Several conspicuous people in dark suits, a few wearing dark glasses in the dark, surrounded this area. Some were facing the audience, while others were

facing the contestants. It was then I noticed that each section had several of these dark-garbed wanderers. Since none were selling hot dogs or beer, I guessed they were security, watching over their herd for wolves and strays, for anyone trying to signal the contestants in any way. I later found out they were from ABC Standards and Practices, a lingering, far-sighted reaction to the game show scandals of the Fifties.

“The Dress” walked out center stage and used a clapboard to start the episode. (Yes, they really use clapboards! The crew calls them “slates.”) The music came up, Johnny did his intro, and then announced the contestants.

Game one that day featured returning two-day champion Leslie Miller, but not Lynn. Game two featured returning three-day champion Leslie Miller, but again, not Lynn. Game three, well — you get the idea. Thankfully, that was Leslie’s fifth win, so she wasn’t going to be returning. Maybe now Lynn would get a chance. At least she wouldn’t have to compete against Leslie—a five-game champion. I tried to see who was up next in the contestant area, but I couldn’t see anything from this dark distance. A bell rang. “Stop tape! Time for lunch!” It was just after 4:00 PM.

Lunch was twenty minutes. I stayed in my seat. I was too nervous to eat, and it was over 100° outside. When the crew came back out, and as the house lights were dimming, I glanced over to see Lynn standing second in line in the contestant area. At least, I think it was Lynn. I squinted in the sudden darkness and tried to make her out, but I just couldn’t see well enough to be sure.

I’d been so near-sighted. What if she didn’t get to go on? “The Dress” clapped episode 1864, the music came up, and Johnny went to work.

6: Walking in L.A.

This.... Is.... *Jeopardy!*

Now entering the studio are today's contestants. An animator from Encino, California, Phil Cummings. A records evaluator from New Ark, Delaware, Lynn Loper. And a marketing director originally from Cambridge, Massachusetts, Johanna Defenderfer.

And now, here is the host of *Jeopardy!* Alex....Trebek!



Lynn's first moments on *Jeopardy!*

Here—sit beside me and we'll watch Lynn play Jeopardy!. I know, right? They're even smaller than the seats in a movie theater. Did you hear the way Johnny said Newark? Lynn hates it when people say "Neurk," you know—like Neurk, NJ. Shhhhh. We're not supposed to talk, or see that guy in the sunglasses? No, he's not the hot dog guy! He's from Standards and Practices. He'll throw us out...

Watching *Jeopardy!* being filmed live is very much like watching at home on T.V.; you just have to imagine a wider camera angle. It's a little like watching a dress rehearsal of a play: you can see stagehands in the shadows of the stage lights and a hovering director, things that are unseen during the actual performance of a play. *Jeopardy!* on T.V. is like watching the actual play; *Jeopardy!* live is like watching the play's dress rehearsal.

That's Lynn in the middle: beige dress, great big glasses. I can't believe she finally got on! I knew it: they're making her stand on a box. No, she's 5'4". It's 'cause Johanna's so tall. They don't like the camera bobbing up and down as they pan from player to player. Makes people seasick. Oh, sorry sir. I'll keep quiet. You don't have hot dogs, do you? Never mind. Yikes...



Still frame, *Jeopardy!* Episode 1864

Things went fine during the Jeopardy round. At the first commercial break, Lynn had \$1,400, Phil had \$1,500, and Johanna had \$200. Then, Lynn got the Daily Double and bet \$1,000 for the lead. The category was “The Body Human:”

“The carpus is the collective term for the 8 bones that make up this joint.”⁵

Easy, right? But I could see she didn’t know, even through my near-sightedness. That left the score Lynn \$800; Johanna \$500; Phil \$2,000. Not so good, but still lots of time left.

Wow. Do you see that? No, stop looking at The Dress! During the commercial, Alex rereads the clues he wasn’t happy with the first time. They must just plug them in during post-production. I never thought of it until now, but you never see Alex read the clues when you’re watching at home. They only have to redo the audio if he messes up or isn’t happy with how he pronounced something. They can do it without stopping the tape and his voice will sound the same as in the rest of the episode. Cool.

At the end of the first round, Lynn had \$2,400, Johanna had \$1,300, and Phil had \$3,300: a good game.

In the Double Jeopardy round, Phil found the first Daily Double and got it right, boosting his score to \$6,500, with Lynn at \$2,600. Shortly after that, Lynn missed a \$500 clue, which Phil then answered correctly. Now the score was Lynn \$1,600, and Phil \$8,200. A bit later, Johanna got the other Daily Double right, which brought her to within \$100 of Lynn, although Phil was still ahead with \$9,800: maybe not such a good game.

*I feel bad for Lynn. I know she’s disappointed that she’s not doing better. At least she doesn’t have to worry about any more Daily Doubles. You’re right—she **does** look like she’s*

⁵ Category The Body Human: “The carpus is the collective term for the 8 bones that make up this joint.” Correct response: “What is the wrist?”

having fun! No, I meant Lynn. Will you stop looking at The Dress!

Towards the end of Double Jeopardy, Lynn was in third place with \$4,600, down by \$8,800, with just 3 clues left and less than a minute to go. To have any chance of winning, Lynn had to have at least half of Phil's score going into Final Jeopardy. Then, she could bet everything in Final Jeopardy and hope that Phil got it wrong. That meant that Lynn had to be fast enough to signal in first AND answer all three of the remaining clues correctly in *less than a minute*, or she'd lose. She answered two of those last clues correctly, giving her a score of \$6,500. Phil had \$13,400. There was one \$500 clue left. It looked hopeless. The category was "Notorious." With 3 seconds to go, Alex read the last clue:

"Warden Lewis E. Lawes wrote about infamous inmates in his memoir *20,000 Years in this New York Prison*."⁶

I could see the other two contestants trying to signal in, but Lynn got in first and gave the right question, making the score before final Jeopardy, Phil: \$13,400; Lynn: \$7,000; Johanna: \$5,100. (While shaking hands after the game, Phil told Alex he knew the answer, but he'd locked himself out by ringing in too early.)



Going into Final Jeopardy, way behind

I wanted to hug Lynn, tell her she did great, and try to console her. But as I watched her during the break, I could see she was just as confident as when the game started. She didn't need consoling: she was having fun! She was playing *Jeopardy!*, and that's all she really wanted out of all this. Of course, my mind's eye is apparently near-sighted too, because years later, she told me that once she started to play, she wanted to win, even though she'd insisted that all she ever wanted was just to pass the audition test.

The Final Jeopardy category was "Animals:"

⁶ Category Notorious: "Warden Lewis E. Lawes wrote about infamous inmates in his memoir *20,000 Years in this New York Prison*." Correct response: "What is Sing Sing?"

“Legend says this dog is descended from ones shipwrecked on the coast of Maryland in 1807.”⁷

Assuming that Phil bet correctly, three things had to happen for Lynn to win: she had to bet everything, she had to give the correct response, and Phil had to get it wrong. If even one of those things didn’t happen, Lynn would lose. When I saw the clue, I knew Phil would get it right ‘cause even I knew the answer.

Johanna had written down “What is a Maryland Spaniel,” to which Alex said, “No, that’s incorrect.” Then, turning to Johnny, he said, “I don’t think there is a Maryland Spaniel,” but then quickly added, “But there is now because you saw it on *Jeopardy!*” Johanna had bet everything, so she was left with \$0.

Lynn answered correctly, and she’d bet everything as well, leaving her with \$14,000. There was only one thing left.

I saw Phil glance up at the studio audience before his answer was revealed, but I was too far away and too nearsighted to read his expression. Phil answered, “What is a beagle?” The audience gasped. It didn’t matter what he’d bet (it turns out he **had** bet correctly: \$601, meaning he would have won by \$1 had he given the correct answer); Lynn was the new *Jeopardy* champion! Lynn said when they were chatting with Alex on stage after the game, Phil explained, “I’m from Encino — what do I know about Maryland?! All I could think of was the HMS Beagle, Darwin’s ship.”

I don’t care what the hotdog man says; I’m standing up and clapping! \$1,400, that’s pretty good, right? At least that pays for the trip out here. What? It’s \$14,000? \$14,000!

The crowd was applauding, the music came up, and as Johnny was telling everyone what they’d won—something they don’t do anymore, so no more year’s supply of Dentu-Grip for you!—the contestants came down to talk with Alex. I was on my feet wildly waving my arms to try and get Lynn to see me. Alex turned to Lynn and asked, “Is that your husband spazzing out up there?” Alex and the contestants all looked up at me as Lynn laughed.

⁷ Category Animals: “Legend says this dog is descended from ones shipwrecked on the coast of Maryland in 1807.” Correct response: “What is the Chesapeake Bay retriever?”



Staring at “The Spazz”

Then, the music suddenly stopped, the house lights came up, Alex went backstage the way he’d entered at the start of the show, and the contestants disappeared the way they came in with the contestant coordinators. Fifteen minutes later, it all started again. Except this time, Lynn was the returning *Jeopardy!* champion. Lynn was a *Jeopardy!* champion!

The contestants in the second game were Lynn, Diana, and Bill. Lynn led almost all the way through the game, finishing with \$12,200 going into Final Jeopardy. Bill was in second place with \$7,200; Diana had \$1,500. Lynn still had to get Final Jeopardy right to win if Bill answered correctly. The category was “U.S. Geography:”

“This Southern lake ranks second in size to Lake Michigan among freshwater lakes entirely within the U.S.”⁸

Diana answered, “What is Ochefenochee [sic],” and had bet \$1,400, leaving her with \$100. She told Lynn after the show that she was so nervous, she just froze up during the game. She was so disappointed in herself. Diana said she knew the answer to Final Jeopardy but just got the spelling all mixed up. Lynn gave her a hug and said, “But you’re just like me — we were both on *Jeopardy!* How many people can say that?”

Diana was such a nice lady. I met her after she came out of the studio with Lynn after filming. She and Lynn had sat together and chatted while waiting to go on. They both brought needlepoint. By contrast, Bill—twenty-something, short blond hair, with a very rigid, business-like demeanor—sat by himself reading an almanac. Lynn called him “Kleiner Mensch.” Diana smiled at that and said to Lynn out of the corner of her mouth, “If he doesn’t know it by now...” and they both gave a quiet little laugh.

⁸ Category U.S. Geography: “This Southern lake ranks second in size to Lake Michigan among freshwater lakes entirely within the U.S.” Correct response: “What is Lake Okeechobee?”

Ein Kleiner Mensch Bill got it right and had bet \$7,150, giving him the lead with \$14,350. Lynn had to get it right to win. I was sitting just behind his brother and a friend in the audience. Throughout the game, they were saying, “What’s wrong with him? He’s not like this. He’s always so cool, relaxed, and funny. He looks like a little Nazi, for chrissake!” They were on the edge of their seats as they watched for Lynn’s answer.

I wasn’t. I knew Lynn had gotten it, ‘cause she started writing right away and finished before the other two. She had this. She won, with \$15,200, bringing her two-day total to \$29,200!



But believe it or not, there was a problem. We were excited and too naive when we planned our trip out to Hollywood to film *Jeopardy!*. For some reason, we thought that Lynn would be on the first episode they filmed on Tuesday and, if she kept winning, would be done filming that same day even if she won all five games. It never occurred to us that she wouldn’t start filming until the fourth episode on Tuesday. That’s why we’d booked the flight home for Tuesday night, so we could leave right from the studio.

Now it was 7:00 PM on Tuesday and filming was over. The next show wouldn’t be filmed until the following Monday: 6 days away. We’d checked out of our motel, so we had nowhere to stay, and our flight back home left in less than two hours. Even though Lynn had just won over \$29,000, we wouldn’t get the check until the middle of December. We couldn’t afford to stay until Monday, but we couldn’t afford to go back home and then fly back out either. So what you would have seen right then was Tom and Lynn standing dazed in a Hollywood parking lot, broke and homeless, with a flight home booked and paid for leaving at 10:00 PM, and driving a stolen Mustang if it wasn’t returned that night.

Walking in L.A.

7: Metaphors in Rain

Lynn was floating on her back in the warm ocean off Ocean City, New Jersey, eyes closed, completely relaxed under a clear blue summer sky. I remember how we struggled to get out past a heavy beach break, but Lynn was brave, and we were now gently drifting in the doldrums, where time stands still, between the shore break and the even larger waves out on the sandbar. It was deep there, nearly over her head.

“Tom?” she said in a lazy voice. “This is what it felt like.”

“What?” I asked.

“That moment, when Glenn first brought us into the studio.”

It was years since she’d been on *Jeopardy!*, but I immediately understood what she’d never been able to quite explain before. I gently pulled her towards me and gave her a hug. As I set her off floating again, she said, “It’s because you were there, like you are now.”

When we first met, before we were married, she asked me if I would take her to the beach in Atlantic City, the place where she and her grandmother would go when Lynn was little. Atlantic City was a very special and emotional place for Lynn. Her grandmother, Elma, basically raised Lynn while Lynn’s divorced mom worked long hours as a legal secretary for a federal judge in Wilmington. Elma—they loved each other dearly—was politically active, and loved traveling to the Democratic National Conventions, taking little Lynn with her in 1964 and 1968. (Chicago 1968 is another story for another time.)



In 1964, the DNC was in Atlantic City. At 9 years old, Lynn, witnessed what was probably the most significant, and certainly the most emotional political speech of the 20th century by the Attorney General of the United States. A watery-eyed Bobby Kennedy gave, after a twelve minute ovation, what has now come to be called [the “Stars” speech](#)⁹ less than a year after the assassination of his beloved brother, John. Lynn was precocious, empathetic, and reading on a college level. That speech, that man, had a most profound impact on her. She sensed that Bobby was making a plea to look to the future, acknowledging that the past, through our common effort, makes that future possible. The world’s future was forever shattered 4 years later, plunging us into jeopardy forever. But again, that’s another story.

So we drove the two hours to Atlantic City dressed in our bathing suits. This

⁹ “When he shall die, / Take him and cut him out in little stars, / And he will make the face of heaven so fine, / That all the world will be in love with night / And pay no worship to the garish sun.” ~ Robert Kennedy quoting “Romeo and Juliet”, DNC speech in Atlantic City, 1964. <https://youtu.be/o2rdKbOmPKs> The short speech begins at 10:45 from the start of the clip.

was before the casinos, when frozen French Canadians would travel south in the summer to this “poor man’s Bahamas” paradise, thaw under the hot sun, and buy “Crème glace!!! Crème glace!!!” from beach vendors who knew their market.

“Let’s just walk along the beach,” she said.

“But look at those waves!” I said. “They’re great!” (I love to bodysurf.)

“I’m scared of the ocean, Tom. I can’t swim. I never really go in. I’m sorry. You go ahead though — I’ll watch from shore.”

“It’s okay. I understand. Come down to the water’s edge: we’ll just stick our feet in and see how cold it is, watch the people.”

We stood ankle-deep in the warm water and talked. I pointed out the people standing just beyond the beach break and that it wasn’t very deep there. “See how people are standing and chatting and bobbing in the swells? The waves never break there, see? So it’s a safe place to enjoy everything.” I showed her how the waves came in sets and weren’t as bad between sets.

“I won’t let anything happen to you; you don’t have to be scared as long as you stay with me. You don’t have to be afraid of the ocean, but you have to respect it. It’s so big, and we’re so small that it doesn’t even know we’re here. It doesn’t want to hurt anybody, and it won’t, as long as you’re aware, and never forget where you are, as long as you respect it.”

She looked up at me, eyes wide open. “Get me out there!” I waited for the pause between the sets of waves, and, holding her tightly, we waded out beyond the beach break and relaxed where it was safe.

8: Signs**SURVEILLANCE CHICKENS!**

Please do not disturb!

These chickens are used for surveillance against encephalitis-carrying mosquitoes that have been confirmed in this area.



We were floating in the doldrums between the crashing waves of changing our flight, extending our car rental, and checking back into the motel, and the distant waves on the sand bar: the upcoming filming of game 3 in six days. But, as the sign above showed, we were in an unfamiliar, surrealistic sea.

That sign next to the two caged chickens at the entrance to the walking tour at the La Brea Tar Pits, hilarious and at the same time deadly serious, told me that we should watch for mosquitoes as we walked. To Lynn, it was a sign exactly like the one from the Wizard of Oz: “HAUNTED FOREST! Witch’s castle 1 mile. I’d turn back if I were you.” So, instead of taking the tour, I followed Lynn the Lion (she hadn’t seen the Wizard yet) to the air-conditioned gift shop. It wasn’t that Lynn wasn’t brave; it was more that it was sweltering, Lynn knew my best friend’s teenaged sister had died of encephalitis from a mosquito bite, and she had read about the Tar Pits. She didn’t need visual, mosquito-infested proof that “hic sunt dinosaurum ossium!”¹⁰

There were many strange signs in those last 6 days in California. Some, like the warning sign above, and like so many signs in our lives, give us a binary choice: go on and take the risk or turn back to safety. Other signs are so subtle that we don’t even become aware of them until much later. Like when we were in the gift shop at La Brea Tar Pits: Lynn fell in love with a pair of amber earrings, but they were \$85. Even though she’d just won \$29,200, she didn’t buy them, and she wouldn’t let me buy them for her because, at some point in her life, there’d been a stark sign that said you

¹⁰ Loosely “Here be dinosaur bones!”

don't deserve expensive, frivolous things. She regretted not buying those earrings for the rest of her life. It was a sign I had trouble reading because it was partially hidden by the choking vines of her past.

When we got back to the motel (our old room had been booked but luckily they had another room available), it was after 10:00 PM. Since it was only 7:00 PM back East, we called our families, bosses, and realtor. Our families were thrilled; our bosses cheered Lynn on, telling us there's no problem taking the extra time off; our realtor assured us she'd call the mortgage people in the morning and that we shouldn't worry. Everything would be fine if we needed to take a little from the savings to cover expenses. It was a good sign, but we didn't pay enough attention. Lynn hadn't mentally prepared for this. It was hot and unfamiliar, and we were spending too much money. She was just getting comfortable after winning two games; now she had to wait and worry, for 6 days and feel her edge slowly slip away.

We went to the Tar Pits on Wednesday. On Thursday, we went to a mall, Westfield Fashion Square, over in Sherman Oaks because the one dress Lynn had brought to wear on the third show had a print that was too busy and created a moire pattern on camera. "Fashion Square. Beyond compare!" said the sign. She bought a couple of blouses, and on the way out, a friendly lady carrying a clipboard approached us. "Would you like to take a quick marketing survey? Only takes a minute? A ten-dollar voucher at the Garden Cafes?" (Everyone out here puts a question mark at the end of each sentence?) Lynn loved taking any kind of survey, so she said sure (read shore, NOT shur) and explained we were from Delaware — did that matter? "Delaware? Oh, that's fine. The Delaware that's in Pennsylvania? Or maybe Virginia?" Definitely a sign we were far from home! But, we had free burgers at Jack's Classic Burgers in a Sherman Oaks mall.

The rest of the time, we stayed in the room. It was just too hot and expensive to go out. Every morning, I'd walk across the street to the donut shop and bring "breakfast" back to eat in the room. Every morning, the night shift of the <Tom tries to decide on the best euphemism> ladies who worked in the evening along Vanowen Street (it was long and straight, which of course is the sign of a pun) would also be in the shop, although as Lynn pointed out, to them, it was dinner. Their clothes were a sign that what I had imagined Hollywood to be wasn't the reality I found.

Lynn was bored, hot, and anxious when Monday finally arrived—probably just like the chickens. We followed the same routine at the studio, although this time, as Lynn told me later, she was separated from the newcomers and waited in the lunchroom/dressing room until their studio tour was over. I wandered around Hollywood again for a few hours in the 100°, 20% humidity; hatless, clearly a sign that I was not on Jeopardy. In my quest for something cool to drink, I turned a corner and was surprised to see that the area just two blocks from the studio was residential. I walked a few blocks more before turning north, still looking for that soda. Los Angeles was like that: unseen doors. First, you're in Hollywood, and then you've walked through an unseen door into someone's yard. Or you're in a donut shop, and people are mainly wearing blue, and you walk a few blocks through an unseen door

into a sea of red. You've gone from Crips to Blood without noticing, and you'd better be wearing the right colors. The desk clerk at the motel warned us earlier in the week to watch what colors we wore while walking around.

Things that are unseen can be crucial to gaining a complete understanding of something. More on that later.

I finally found the door that led to the soda and was soon going through the door into the studio to watch Lynn film her third game.

Lynn played well in the Jeopardy round in game three. John Harris and (The Evil) Brett Geer were her opponents. During the Double Jeopardy round, Lynn got the first Daily Double early on. She was leading by \$1,000 at that point. She bet \$1,000 and got this clue in the category "Authors":

"It's the middle name of the "Fool For Love" playwright born Samuel Rogers."¹¹

She had no idea and answered (incorrectly), "What is John?"

It was a sign, though no one noticed it but me. Lynn was unprepared for the "not knowing." I could hear it in her voice and see it in her body language from that point on, and it was just enough to keep her from signaling in before Brett.

The second Daily Double in the round was the last clue on the board, and it went to Brett. He had \$12,500; Lynn had \$8,100; John had \$1,100. Brett wagered \$4,000. The category was "Famous Scientists:"

"In 1890 he became professor of physiology at the Imperial Medical Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia."¹²

I had no idea. Brett remained silent for a long time. I was sure he didn't know. If Brett got it wrong, Lynn would have a chance to win the game. (Lynn later told me she knew the correct question.) Brett, The Evil One, got it right.

By the end of the Double Jeopardy round, the score was Lynn \$8,100, John \$1,100, and Brett \$16,500. The only way Lynn could win would be if Brett bet incorrectly and got Final Jeopardy wrong. Lynn told me later that at the end of the game before Final Jeopardy, even if Brett didn't come up with the right question, she knew he would bet correctly and win, so she was determined to come in second and win the trip to Montreal.

The Final Jeopardy category was "Word Origins:"

"The name of this swift current between 2 of the Lofoten Islands off

¹¹ Category Authors: "It's the middle name of the "Fool For Love" playwright born Samuel Rogers." Correct response: "What is Shepard?"

¹² Category Famous Scientists: "In 1890 he became professor of physiology at the Imperial Medical Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia" Correct response: "Who is Pavlov?"

Norway has come to refer to any whirlpool.”¹³

Mr. Harris didn't know and bet everything, leaving him with \$0. Lynn knew and bet \$1,000, guaranteeing a second place finish with \$9,100, and winning that trip to Montreal—and lovely parting gifts. Brett, The Evil One, wrote down the wrong question. If he was greedy and reckless, maybe he wagered everything. He bet \$299, giving him the win with \$16,201. (He would have won by \$1 had Lynn bet everything.)

And it was over. An unseen curtain came down.

12/07/92

LYNN LOPER
64 S. FAWN DR.
NEWARK, DE 19711

MERV GRIFFIN
ENTERPRISES

DEAR JEOPARDY! WINNER:

AIR DATE	10/15/92	10/16/92	10/19/92
SHOW #	1864	1865	1866

THIS IS TO INFORM YOU OF THE AMOUNT OF CALIFORNIA STATE PERSONAL INCOME TAX THAT HAS BEEN WITHHELD FROM YOUR WINNINGS. THIS TAX IS APPLICABLE TO ALL NON-RESIDENTS OF CALIFORNIA WHO WIN \$1000 OR MORE IN CASH AND PRIZES ON GAME SHOWS.

CASH WINNINGS	\$ 29,200.00
PRIZES WON	\$ 1,375.00
TOTAL WINNINGS	\$ 30,575.00
LESS 7% CA TAX WITHHELD (DEDUCTED FROM CASH WINNINGS)	\$ 2,140.25
TOTAL CHECK AMOUNT	\$ 27,059.75

THE MONEY THAT HAS BEEN WITHHELD FROM YOUR CHECK WILL BE SUBMITTED BY QUADRA PRODUCTIONS, INC., TO THE CALIFORNIA STATE FRANCHISE TAX BOARD. ENCLOSED ARE YOUR COPIES OF FORM 581 TO BE FILED BY YOU WITH THE FRANCHISE TAX BOARD.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS.

SINCERELY,
Christina J. Gabag
CHRISTINA J. GABAG
PRODUCTION ACCOUNTING SUPERVISOR/MGE
JEOPARDY! PRIZE ACCOUNT
(818) 972-8337

A unit of Sony Pictures Entertainment, Inc.
3400 Riverside Drive, Burbank, CA 91505

As you read about Lynn on Jeopardy and [watch the video of the third show](#)¹⁴, what you're reading and seeing is a sign, maybe not as obvious as "SURVEILLANCE CHICKENS!" OR "HAUNTED FOREST!" but Lynn was giving us a sign.

For me, and I think for many of us, competing on Jeopardy would be a

¹³ Category Word Origins: "The name of this swift current between 2 of the Lofoten Islands off Norway has come to refer to any whirlpool." Correct response: "What is Maelstrom?"

¹⁴ The only episode preserved online is the third episode on which Lynn appeared—the one she lost. It can be found here (case-sensitive, and note the period): https://youtu.be/d_6X5GhWeSw Thanks to Brett Geer, perhaps the Not-so-evil One.

significant accomplishment. I don't know about you, but passing the tests, then thinking clearly while standing on a box in front of television cameras, Alex Trebek, and a live audience would be impossible for me. For Lynn, the sign she was showing us was that it was as natural for her as breathing—literally, a matter of fact, or more accurately, facts. Her entire life was a struggle to overcome her past; on *Jeopardy!*, she was free, she was herself, without fear, with no need to be defensive or stifled. (My mind relates things to music: I'm thinking of a line from Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA": "till you spend half your life just covering up.") Being on *Jeopardy* for her wasn't so much an accomplishment, but a sign of who she really was, of who she could have been, a sign kept hidden from everyone.

So many signs. The death of Alex Trebek: of people lost forever, set adrift until they disappear on the vast ocean of time; Lynn's scholarship to Smith: of things that could have been, maybe should have been, but never were; her ambition when we first met to be a systems analyst at the Defense Department: of things tangled in the weeds of circumstance.

Jeopardy taught me what Lynn had known since the first time she opened a book and asked why: life is full of answers, but you have to ask the right questions.

A simple sign—*Jeopardy!*—says so much to me now.

But there are still things unseen.

9. Things Unseen

In the years following Lynn's appearance on *Jeopardy!*, she would occasionally tell me things she'd seen and experienced as a contestant, things that go unseen by the rest of us mere mortals. Usually, these moments of revelation came at the least expected times, like floating in a warm summer sea or, as you'll read below, cleaning an empty house.

Lynn had her reasons for keeping her experiences on *Jeopardy!* close to her. Abused children are survivors. They learn skills that stay with them and remain unseen by those of us who are lucky enough to grow up in non-abusive families. For a victim, things that are important to you, that become a part of you, need to be hidden from everyone. Memories are what you own, and they can be stolen away and used against you, just as everything else has been stolen away in your life until there is little left. To survive, a victim wraps the only thing they truly own—their memories—tightly around the core of their being. Like a well-trained soldier, survival techniques become second nature. She had survived an unseen war, and I knew better than to ask any soldier about their war experiences, because, by unseen fate, I have no frame of reference that would allow me to fully understand. The fact that Lynn told me about some of her *Jeopardy!* memories was an outward sign of her trust in me, of her love for me.

Knowing some of the things unseen gives us a different perspective.

At 10:30 AM on Tuesday, Glen, an assistant contestant coordinator, came out into the back alley of the Hollywood Center Studios, Stage 1, to welcome Lynn and the other 12 contestants to *Jeopardy!*. This wasn't at all like what Lynn had imagined. She imagined a hotel-like lobby area, where brave contestants are led to a presentation center for orientation, with movie theater carpet, comfortable seats, and hallways decorated with framed art and historic photos from the show. This was a back alley—a hot back alley outside the studio, with no chairs and a bright blue ceiling of infinite height.

Lynn told me that before they finally went into the studio, Glenn explained that from this moment on, they would need to be escorted by a contestant coordinator or someone from Standards and Practices until they left the studio that evening. “No wandering off to explore. You can talk with the other contestants, but no talking to the crew. It's important; you don't want to get disqualified after getting this far, right?” And with that, from far down the alley on the other side of the studio gate, I watched the jeopardy of contestants, like a single-file gaggle of goslings, follow Glenn through a tall gate with a turnstile of the sort you'd find at a sports stadium. I was so proud of Lynn; I could never have gotten a ticket to enter that arena.



A jeopardy of contestants

In 1994, we were moving into our second house in Wilmington, DE. We were anxious to move out of the college town where we'd lived for the past 15 years and into a community of fellow diurnal creatures. A few days before we moved into our still-empty house, we were cleaning upstairs. Lynn took a break from sweeping and watched as I struggled to disassemble an old tubular wardrobe rack that had been left behind by the previous owners. It was too big to get down the stairs fully assembled and it was proving to be hard to get apart. I guess that's why it was left for the new owners. "That's like the clothes rack they had at *Jeopardy!*," Lynn said.

There were no dressing rooms, Lynn told me, at least not for the contestants. Glen brought them into what was essentially a not-so-big break room. There was an empty wardrobe rack along one wall where they could all hang their clothes (three days' worth were required). One long Formica table was in the middle of the room with kitchen table chairs, complete with vinyl seat covers, scattered around the table and placed along the walls. Lynn said it reminded her of the break room in the Townsends, Inc. chicken processing plant in Sussex County, Delaware, that she'd once toured on a school trip. "I guess I know what happens to surveillance chickens when they retire."

That was funny, of course, and I immediately knew what she meant. But something will go unseen if we don't stop and think about Lynn's connections and what they mean. It was a happy moment, cleaning out our new house, getting it ready so we could move in. The wardrobe rack reminded Lynn of another happy time. As she was telling me about the *Jeopardy!* break room, she remembered the chicken processing plant, which led back to the surveillance chickens at the La Brea Tar Pits. Lynn's life had taught her that joy is often balanced by sadness, danger, or even tragedy. The surveillance chickens live a happy, well-fed life—unless they develop encephalitis. And even if they don't, the possibility of a chicken processing plant

looms in their future. For people and chickens, the future remains unseen. The difference is people know there **is** a future, whereas chickens live entirely within a moment in time. I think most people try to live their own lives that way, enjoying the moment, not always thinking about what's unseen in the next moment. I'm more like the chickens: happy to live out my life in ignorant bliss. Lynn had learned that every moment has consequences. Lynn needed to be prepared for those unknowns, even if that meant tempering the joy, for her life had taught her that blindly living in the moment is often dangerous.

As I struggled with the wardrobe rack, Lynn continued to tell me about *Jeopardy!*. First, Glen outlined the day's schedule. Filming starts at 2:00 PM. They film three shows, with a fifteen-minute break between shows for Alex and the returning champion to change clothes. Between games three and four, there's a short break for lunch which is set up on the sound stage next door. No one can leave the building until they're done filming all five episodes. Filming resumes at 5:00 PM with a new studio audience and continues until they have five shows "in the can," usually between 6:30 and 7:00 PM.

Next, Glen explains that they film live. They "start tape" at the beginning of each episode, and it rolls until the end. When they come to a commercial, the tape keeps rolling, and the break lasts precisely as long as the commercials, which are plugged in later in post-production. The only time they "stop tape" is before final *Jeopardy!*. The clue crew will come out with paper and a calculator so you can accurately figure out your wager. You can take as much time as you need for this, which is why they stop the taping. The crew will ask you if you're sure about your wager, and they'll tell you to write the beginning of the Final Jeopardy question: "What is..." or "Who is..." When everyone's ready, the "The Dress" claps them back in.

Glenn told them if Alex makes a mistake—but quickly added Alex doesn't make mistakes—the game doesn't stop. He said read the clue even if Alex doesn't finish reading it. Signal in when you see the lights around the board go on (see below), and answer just as if nothing went wrong. It's why they keep the tape rolling: Alex rereads the clues he's not happy with during the commercial break. They dub Alex's correction back in during post-production. And, if you dispute an answer, you're not supposed to say anything until the commercial break. Then, the judges will research your challenge and adjust the scores during the break if needed. They don't stop tape. If they have to stop tape, well, Lynn said Glenn told them, "It's complicated. People get grumpy. We don't stop tape!"

Then, Lynn said they all filed down to the floor of the ice-cold set. Each prospective contestant got to try out the signaling device and practice writing with the light pen. Lynn said it's tricky because there's a slight delay as you write: it takes half a second for the display to catch up to what you're writing. The crew also noted which vertically challenged players needed boxes to stand on when behind their podium. Apparently, the cameramen hate to bob the camera up and down as they pan from player to player, so they try to make everyone the same height. Lynn's box was black,

the top of which had been scuffed to the point of exposing bare wood.

Another unseen thing is lights around the edges of the main board of clues. The signaling device isn't activated until Alex is done reading the entire clue. The lights around the board, which aren't visible to the T.V. viewing audience, come on when the signaling devices become active. If you try to signal in before the lights come on, you get locked out from signaling in again for a tenth of a second. The lights are there so that if Alex messes up reading a clue, one of the judges will activate the lights so the contestants can signal in and the game can continue without having to stop tape. Alex is never on camera when he's reading the clue, so it's just a matter of dubbing in new audio.

In late October 1992, we were grocery shopping at the Acme in Newark. Lynn filmed the shows in August, but they weren't aired until mid-October. The checker recognized Lynn. "Hey! You're the *Jeopardy!* champion from Newark, aren't you?!" she said, a little loudly. "I seen ya on the news!" There was a sudden twenty-foot circle of silence around Lynn as everyone stopped to look, broken just as suddenly by people clapping. "Wow! What was Alex like?" the checker asked. That was the second most asked question Lynn would get when people found out she'd been on *Jeopardy!*, the first being, "How much did you win?" This was the first time Lynn had been recognized in public, and it caught her—and me—completely off guard. She was embarrassed but at the same time exhilarated. As people closed in to hear her, Lynn explained to the checker that the Alex you see on T.V. is as much of him as she sees. The only time you get to talk to him is when he's on stage, 'cause he knows all the answers. Then, answering distant queries, she added, "\$29,200...a trip to Montreal...a year's supply of Klondike Bars and Dentu-Grip." Thinking back now, I remember the expressions on peoples' faces. Because of Lynn, smiling people left the store with a story to tell, a happy story. "I met a *Jeopardy!* champion!"

Driving home, Lynn told me about seeing the president of the University of Delaware earlier in the day at work. She worked in the same building as the president; his office is in what the worker bees call "The Mahogany Corner." She often passed him in halls of the building, but she'd always been one of the unseen—until *Jeopardy!*. He and the Provost were taking a group of IT executives to lunch at the faculty dining hall. As the group approached Lynn, walking in the other direction to her lonely, frugal lunch at The Malt Shop downtown, he suddenly said, "And here's our *Jeopardy!* champion, Mrs. Loper. She's in admissions. You may have just seen her on TV. Good afternoon, Mrs. Loper; so nice to see you."

"It was weird," Lynn said, as we carried in the groceries. I mentioned the smiling faces that had gone unseen by her at the grocery store. "It just doesn't seem right. It's still just me in here."

Do things unseen change to become suddenly seen, or does something change in the observers so that they suddenly see differently?

10. Final Jeopardy

Some of you may say something like, “Lynn knows all the ‘whys’ now.” I appreciate those sentiments, and all the love and caring that they represent. I would love to think Lynn wove her threads into Heaven’s blanket. If you were one of Lynn’s online friends, then you know more about Lynn than you do about me, and so you know Lynn believed that. Lynn knew that I didn’t. She called me an atheist, but she knew I understood and respected the importance of beliefs and rituals, and that I saw the truths in the messages in religious texts. I just want to be honest. I would love to believe Lynn is flying around the universe with full knowledge of all things. All I can say is that for me, her eternal life depends on how I keep her in my thoughts, in my heart, in my soul. The light of all souls remains eternal within our own inner light. If I tell you about those lights, Lynn and the people in my life live on when I’m gone. We are many threads.

Watching Lynn in Hollywood filming *Jeopardy!* has been hard to describe. For Lynn, it was the most fun she ever had and, at the same time, not a big deal. “It’s just a game show,” she’d say. But I know she felt validated by the experience. It let her know she’d survived her past, that none of it was her fault. She could point to herself on *Jeopardy!* and say, “THIS is who I am.” It was proof in her own mind, not validation she ever sought from others.

For me, it was more than a once-in-a-lifetime experience, for it was an experience I couldn’t have had in a hundred lifetimes but for Lynn. It was exhilarating, at times almost dream-like. For both of us, it was the most joyous, exciting period in our lives.

But there are always things unseen. Most of the *Jeopardy!* money went into the savings; a trip to England was excitedly planned. Who could have foreseen the trip delayed for years and the money used instead for a down payment on the house in which Lynn would die?

This is the final *Jeopardy!* clue in the category “Metaphors:”

“This phrase may be a metaphor for *Jeopardy!* and is what lies ahead for us all.”

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“What is the future?”