

Falling for Flatulina

by Angela Hart

FLATULINA TALKS ABOUT FISH, FAMILY AND WHAT MAKES HER FABULOUS

Upon meeting Flatulina I was immediately awestruck by her bushy mane of silky white hair. I thought back to the assorted rumors regarding her tresses: albino family, part fish, a modern day mermaid, etc. Flatulina seemed at ease, even charmed, by my obvious ogling. She smiled hello, greeting me with this opening: "I got my hair from my mother; she just loved being an albino. It saved her a lot of time and money in clowning since she never had to wear the clown white makeup. I mean, she didn't have the pink eyes; I think that would have been different."

The greeting, strangely enough, seemed to work. I nodded an "uh huh" as if we were talking about moms, kids and the convenience of mini-vans.

Inviting me inside, The Fabulous One continued to reminisce; "My mom actually took some time off from her clowning to pursue her acting career. She was fortunate to get the part of Vera Peterson, wife of Norm Peterson on Cheers, for the entire run of the show. She wasn't in all the scripts," she pauses, reflects; "Now that I think back, she hardly made any money. It was something about never being on camera or having any lines. I don't know."

I'm still nodding and muttering sounds, not words, while following her down the grand hallway. I'm with a super diva who's taught fish to sing and she's telling me back story like it's a puzzle she's just now solving. Formal introductions are highly overrated, I think to myself.

As we mosey into the living room I stop. I gasp. Her house is flawlessly decorated with opulent bright textiles strewn about walls, windows, large, comfy cushions and dramatic artwork. Each linen has a large, but subtle, cursive affirmation written on it. At first glance I spot: I Wish Upon a Fish, Celebrate Your Gifts, Be Fabulous, Love the Unlovely, and Be Kind Please Rewind. Her Oscar statue is modestly placed on a book shelf with a little red feather boa wrapped around its base. Candles are burning, emoting smells of herbs and wildflowers. Flatulina walks me to the couch and offers me some apricot nectar.

In lieu of the familiar chenille or quilted cotton throw blanket, draped over her espresso-brown leather armchair appears to be a clown outfit. I am intrigued; I ask, nonchalantly, about its purpose. She casually responds; "My mom always said that you should hang onto your clown outfits because you just never know..." Her hands gently caress the rick-rack lined white ruffles. She takes a private moment to reflect. In Flatulina's world, normal and bizarre intermingle like rock stars and politicians joining campaign forces. Somehow, it just makes sense.

I ask her about her father and the pressures of being kin to a rock and roll legend. "He's not someone that I would necessarily hang out with if we weren't related, but I do think his music is brilliant. I like having a dad that's a rock star. It's definitely shaped who I am today."

I notice a shrine to Karen Carpenter in one corner of the living room. I inquire. "I have always admired Karen Carpenter's music. Not so much for the singing, but the way she played that drum kit slays me. I'm not a drummer, but I have an ear for that sort of thing." As a side note she adds, "And also I do love Alanis Morissette. Again, not so much for the singing or even the songwriting but, I mean, her harmonica AND flute are just like no

one else out there who is doing that professionally. If you want to talk vocals, then I would have to say hands down, Milli Vanilli." I wonder out loud if there will be little altars for these artists as well. "You just never know," she says, winking.

Flatulina is charming. Her positive aura is captivating. I suddenly like Richard Simmons and repent for every fish I've ever eaten. Overriding her exaggerated sense of style and self is her sincerity; she truly believes everything she stands for, unaffected by the oddity of it all.

I inquire about her rumored medical condition, chronic hypergastrosplasia, of which there are only 23 documented cases. She takes a deep breath and I hear

a squeak from the couch. I stare deadpan, afraid to react or comment on any curious tooting sounds. It is a well known fact that The Fabulous One considers "the 'f' word" to be "fart". She has been known to immediately banish people from the room upon their first utterance of that one syllable. I didn't want to take my chances.

"Everyone has different physical attributes," she begins, "I have just chosen to turn what some would consider to be a curse into a blessing." I look at the "Turn Your Scars into Stars" quip in calligraphy on the wall. I get it. "Has it affected me socially?" she muses; "It's made me more empathetic and kind to the outcasts. If a person can't learn to see beyond another's idiosyncrasies, then it's their loss of a potential great friend.

"I have a friend named Hortense. I call her 'H'. She's got this lazy eye and a speech impediment, but she is strong as an ox, brilliant and very business savvy. She's got an incredible sense of smell and has made a fortune as a perfumer. She also has a heart of gold. She has traveled to many of the poorer countries and done extensive mission work. But some people judge her because of her appearance. Bless her heart, she's got this condition where her

In Flatulina's world, normal and bizarre intermingle like rock stars and politicians joining campaign forces. Somehow, it just makes sense.

hair follicles are so oversensitive that she can't stand to brush her hair or tweeze any unwanted facial hair. So she has to live her life as a frizzy haired, moustache wearing, lazy eyed, unibrow who can't speak clearly. But on the inside she is the most beautiful person I know. Truly."

We continue to talk. Flatulina sheds opinions on friends, dating, diets, family and fashion. I am captivated by her curious perspective on things. Flatulina is on a mission to persuade people of their inner fabulousness and its working. Single handedly, she's penetrated a cynical and suspicious zeitgeist with her message of positivism. She personifies the mantra's we strive to live by. I am refreshed by her candor and even her zaniness seems to cast shadows on the normal most of us have yielded to. Outcasts seem more beautiful than models; wall quotes seem more functional than art; fish bubbles seem more harmonious than, well, music. Mission accomplished.