

Poor sport â€¦ so it goes

by Jason_Love

I have spit, yes spit, on my forehead, and would you know why?

My wife Yahaira lost a game of gin rummy.

Itâ€™s hard to blame her. She has a congenital illness. I found out during â€œboard game nightâ€• at her uncleâ€™s house, when all the tenderhearted people I used to know balkanized into Pictionary factions. Relatives drew like their lives depended on it, the others squawking at every erasure.

An argument erupted over what constitutes gesturing. If one moved oneâ€™s pencil in a pantomime-like manner, is that gesturing? What if one developed an Elvis-like spasm and Elvis happened to be the answer? The elders were called in from the porch, a child ran crying to her bedroom, and I sat in the corner wondering what the hell happened to my family-in-law.

Oh, the spit.

Yahaira is a precious playmate. We dance in the bathroom and play catch with make-believe balls and give each other piggy-back rides (willfully and otherwise); but when she puts on her game face, run for the hills.

No one told me this in the beginning. So when friends came over to play games, I made the mistake of pairing up with a guest and the even graver mistake of winning with said guest. By night's end Yahaira was referring to me as Trader Joe, as in, "Talk to the fist, Trader Joe."

The problem is that she's addicted. Yahaira takes Trivial Pursuit on the road and poses questions while I drive. We play cards during meals, even inside the restaurant. Uno, Spades, poker—anything that involves shuffling (I think it helps her digestion). And every time Yahaira wins, oh, the jubilation. Her victory dance goes to these words:

"What's uuuup? What's uuuup? Who's the winner? What's uuuup?"

At least one person thinks that Yahaira uses telepathy to win, and that person is Yahaira. She spends half the game with her eyes closed trying to vibe me. Gimme the five of clubs—FIVE OF CLUBS. Then I hand over the five of clubs, and the victory dance starts all over. Maybe she is reaching my brain. The other night I woke up screaming because five men were beating me with clubs. So it goes.

Yahaira chronicles our scores, too, because something so important should be kept for posterity. Games are classified by who won, when it happened, and how the loser felt afterward. Scorecards are filed in a master ledger and will be left to our children in case they ever question how crazy we were.

If St. Peter judges by rummy record, Yahaira will get a special place in heaven. If, however, he judges by whether we spit on our opponentsâ€™

I had played my final card and caught Yahaira with a fan of negative points. I made a wincing expression that I myself did not notice. Yahaira mistook the expression for mock sympathy and, half laughing and half yearning to strangle the life sweetly from my neck, she pinned me to the carpet.

Now, I have come to consider beatings as part of the process. If rummy takes 10 minutes, then I allow 15 in case I win. One night Yahaira was too tired to jump me, so she left a reminder by the bed: Beat Jasonâ€™s ass for Crazy 8â€™s. Two nights later, she made good while I was sleeping.

Back to the story (you keep digressing).

Restraining me with her knees, Yahaira reached into her bag of evil and found the Ancient Chinese Drip Torture. That is when a bully tortures her victim by dangling a â€™œloogieâ€™ over the victimâ€™s head. At the last second, she sucks it back in with a slurping sound that is torture in itself.

I played the victim, saying “ooh” and “gross,” hoping she would dismount. Yahaira continued to laugh and slurp, an accident waiting to happen. So in one of those moments that you want back the second it happens, I signed the L-shape on my forehead: uh-LOSE-er.

Yahaira turned O.J.-red and dropped The Bomb Not Meant To Be. It was like the President nuking Mexico for calling him names. The loogie fell in slow motion, frame by frame, and I, pinned as I were, felt the splash on my forehead over and over. It is splashing even now.

Yahaira’s eyes grew big, knowing not what they’d done. An awkward silence followed. It must have lasted thirty, forty days. Then I, too dignified to vomit, said, “If you’ll excuse me.”

So I write you with something worse than egg on my face. I am familiar with the Chinese proverb, “If revenge is what you seek, you’d better build two graves.” But those are the same nincompoops who invented the Drip Torture! The only thing that prevented immediate payback was the size of our deductible. My precious playmate thinks that I’ve turned the other cheek, but someday, when she is sleeping, there will be dues. I’m not sure what, but fluids will definitely be involved.