

Excerpt from pages 142 to 148 of the novel *Aberrant Behavior*
(Ray Bonn and Lesa Landau's second appearance on the Larry King Live national TV show)



Larry turned to the camera. "Tonight, Ray Bonn, whose publishing success with *Aberrations of Relativity* is accelerating..." He broke mid-sentence here to clarify his perceived humor, "That's a relativity term in case you missed it..." He chuckled. "The second edition of this book is coming out this weekend. And guess what? The steamy signature that Ray put in Lesa's book, that's Doctor Lee Landau," Larry pointed at Lesa, "at a book signing here in New York City last Thursday will be printed in this edition. You have to have it. The book is a rare in-depth analysis of relativity accessible to the general public... well, intellectually endowed general public, anyway. Lesa here represents the physics community in trying to place this book in a proper perspective when it tells us where science has gone wrong."

"Last time pandemonium broke out with Lesa grabbing one of Ray's unpublished works out of his bag and the two of them fought for it. It seemed like Lesa won." A chuckling pause. "Today I find out that McGregor Publishing has just signed contracts with these two to publish a book revealing the secret of our 'no free lunch' universe that will derive from that very draft. It's not *exactly* a collaboration though as I understand it, but nearly. For the next hour here on Larry King Live we'll try to get some of this straight and hope pandemonium doesn't break out again. Hello Lesa, Ray."

"Hi, Larry. A renewed pleasure to be on your show," Lesa said.

"For me too," said Ray.

"Ray, did you two ever quit fighting long enough to make progress on ironing out whatever differences separate you and establishment?"

"Well, we had an eventful time with a few ups and downs as you might suspect."

Larry laughed indicating he had indeed suspected that. "Lesa, am I to understand that you have refused to sign as co-author of the upcoming book? That it will be authored by Ray, with you doing an extensive Foreword as well as collaborating (whatever that means). Why not full collaboration?"

"Here's why Larry. I've done a lot of study in thermodynamics. I wrote my dissertation on it."

Larry interrupted... "Exactly! *That's* a reason for you *not* to be down as an author? Lesa, that makes no sense at all."

"You're right, Larry." It was Ray butting in now. "It makes none whatsoever."

"Wait!" Lesa fairly yelled and both men laughed. "Even though I know a lot about thermodynamics, I couldn't *fix* thermodynamics. Ray did. He has fixed it, Larry. After a hundred and fifty years, he really did it. Now do you think I should write 'Lesa Landau' on that major discovery just because I grabbed that draft of his book out of his bag on your show Thursday? I don't think so. I have a little integrity, Larry. More than that, he deserves a Nobel Prize for his work, Larry. I don't."

"Well, Ray, what do you think?" Larry asked. "Should her name be on it or not?"

"Of course it should; she was on exactly the same path I took. We have all tried to convince her, but she's stubborn, Larry."

"You think?" Larry teased. Lesa just sat back peeved, squinted her eyes, and closed her lips tightly.

Sensing the situation and deciding on a little light diversion, Larry asked, "Did you two pick up a Yankees game while you were in town?"

Lesa was back. "No, we didn't," she said. "We went to the ballet, but do you know what I'd like to see, Larry?"

"No, what would you like to see, Lesa?"

"I'd like to see a baseball game with Ray at bat in Yankee stadium and the game on the line." Both men laughed, totally amazed at her.

"That would get even with him for wanting you down as co-author on his book, is that the idea, Lesa?" Larry teased.

"No! That's *not* the idea, Larry." She was clearly irritated, seeming to think they were making fun of her. "It's because he would win the game; isn't that what games are all about? Why else do people care about games?"

"He's not a baseball player, Lesa." He looked at Ray, "Are you?"

Ray shook his head from side to side in disbelief at what she was doing. He had just gotten so that he thought he could be comfortable without worrying about her in public and now this."

"He isn't a physicist either!" Ed Watson would be listening and like the sound of that comment both she and Ray separately thought.

"Well, close enough for practical purposes, don't you think?" Larry was actually looking at Ray as he addressed Lesa on this matter.

"Of course," she said. "But that's the point. He can win at anything he does without establishment authorization. It's because he's smart."

"He's smart?" Larry said looking at Ray.

Ray interjected, "It's time for the hook, Larry. Drag her out of here." They both laughed almost uncontrollably, wondering what was coming next.

And there was something coming up next: "You should see him play solitaire, Larry."

Ray gave out an audible "Oh, God," to which Larry spurted a laugh.

"No, I mean it. This is really important."

They were both still laughing, Ray with some embarrassment.

"Listen to me you two [bleep]s. I watched him play solitaire a few times and I realized that there was something very unique about him. That's why he's even on your show at all peddling relativity, let alone twice!"

"He's uniquely lonely maybe?" Larry still hadn't stopped laughing.

"No. For heaven sakes, Larry." Lesa oozed disdain now. "Listen! I downloaded this chronometrics program and got him to take the test without his knowing what it was."

"I knew what it was!" Ray interrupted loudly, totally disgusted.

"Okay, so you knew what it was, but you didn't notice that you had the two fastest reaction time scores on record for that test, did you?" Ray looked dubious and tired. This woman had noticed everything about him. Everything!

"Can you tell us what that means in terms we can all understand, Lesa?" Larry played along.

"Chronometric test scores correlate as closely with the best IQ test scores as good IQ tests correlate with each other."

"Let me guess: you can measure someone's intelligence without asking any questions?"

"Yes, exactly. It's culture-free, in fact. It measures the swiftness with which one can learn rather than just what one happens to know at the time."

"So that means Ray is as smart as they get even though he wasn't the youngest to ever get a Ph.D. in physics from Harvard like you? What's he got, a one hundred eighty IQ or something? What do you propose George Steinbrenner should do with that information, Lesa?" Larry asked, obviously tickled with the direction this was taking much to Lesa's apparent chagrin.

"IQ is archaic, Larry. Percentiles are what are relevant. Anyway, I think instead of us just going to 'see' the Yankees, Ray ought to go and suit up for a game to match hits for salary with Alturis Romero. How much money does Alturis make every time he gets a hit? A lot. I understand he makes a quarter of a billion dollars for having fast reaction times at the plate. Ray's are faster. That's what I'm saying."

"You have to be powerfully built too to hit home runs, Lesa, and Alto wears a mitt," Larry said, still laughing.

"Ray's buff. Look at him."

Ray was just plain mortified in front of a national audience... again. He couldn't keep doing this; he couldn't do this anymore. He had to get home.

"What about the designated hitter, Larry? Ray could do that," Lesa pounded away.

"You ever play ball, Ray?" Larry asked, smiling dubiously.

"*Everybody* has 'played' ball, Larry. Not many are ball players."

"Did you play in high school?"

"Sure."

"You hit any home runs?"

"Yeah. A few."

"See," Lesa said taking heart.

Larry gave a jaded look at the camera and said. "Wow! You better not go 'way. Who knows what'll happen when we come back. Maybe we'll get back to relativity - but who knows," the eye roll. Then they played the video of Larry reading the "Dear Lesa" signature note that was now being featured in the second edition of Ray's book, *Aberrations of Relativity*. It didn't seem to mesh with what was happening tonight.

Oh, God. Ray was coming to hate that "Dear Lesa" note. He should have squelched it on the second edition. Maybe they'll have a baseball tattooed on the cover of the next edition, if there ever is another edition, or even another sale of a single book, after this debacle. But then it gonged through his head, Oh, God! His book *already* had a baseball on it! He had put it there. Lesa must have rolled that fact up into some formula with chronometric test scores, discounting the strength of his eyeglasses, and state of conditioning, to conclude that he could hit a baseball. Is that what she concluded from his having placed a baseball on the cover of his book just to suggest three-dimensional angles of rotation? No. That was too big a leap even for her, wasn't it?

Larry didn't leave his seat. Coffees appeared for each of them. Ray noticed that his was not steaming, so he had some and kept a hold on his cup when he sat it on the table, so Lesa couldn't steal it in preference to her own. Evidently someone had remembered he liked it lukewarm and poured it early for him. Lesa sipped hers now too; they got it all correctly. Larry's assistant really was an Edna Robinson, although probably with a somewhat better personality.

"What are we doing here?" Larry asked leaning way over the table and looking from Ray to Lesa.

Ray stared crossly right at Lesa without changing his gaze.

"I take it you're ad libbing here, Lesa," Larry said as understatement at which a few in the penumbra of the table saw fit to laugh. "Are we going to hear about *Aberrations of Relativity* tonight or not... do you think?" He was smiling, but no little bit exasperated.

"Yeah, okay," she said peevishly, "but that wasn't what you introduced. You were insisting that, because I have credentials, I should be the one who hits home runs in physics. That's what everyone thinks. I will, just like Alturis does. Well, neural reaction time matters. Credentials only matter if there is no other performance to go on. I'm not saying that I don't have good performance in my field, I do have. I believe that before I died, I would have figured out what Ray has figured out already, because I'm smart too. I have the work behind me that goes into the right credentials just like Alturis does in baseball. But I think there's an important issue here that you're all missing." She was on a rant. "You said I was going to tell all these lovely American people what is right or wrong about Ray's book or where physics is going wrong. What's right is *Ray*! I've figured that out. Haven't you?"

Ray broke in softly and said, "Lesa, will you please forget about me being some kind of slugger and discuss the doohickey you had made for this occasion." Lesa looked the little hang dog child that Ray had also met and reached into her bag.

"Doohickey?" Larry asked. "What's this doohickey thing, Lesa?"

She smiled, the unobsessed Lesa having reappeared. She was now extracting the weird looking bundle of metal sticks from the bag. Bob had constructed the contraption somewhat differently than she had originally designed it, so that it would fold up completely into a neat bundle for carrying in the cloth bag he had also provided for it.

Larry looked at Ray for confirmation and Ray gave it; apparently now he would be required to approve Lesa's escapades. That was as it should be, Ray thought.

Lesa snapped the y and z axes into place with the y' and z' axes now free to slide up and down on the common x axis.

Larry's assistant came over to whisper in his ear; she seemed obviously tickled about something. Larry laughed loudly. "Sure!" he said.

He was amazing under pressure, Ray thought.

Then somebody said "Cameras!"

Lesa was fixing her contraption into its initial configuration as Ray watched. So far Ray's role had been minimal, and that was fine with him as long as everyone was happy with what was happening. That eventuality was in no way guaranteed at this point though.

Larry worked them back in from some video of Lesa and him fighting over Ray's thermodynamics book last Thursday. The general public must have had some strange view of what life would have been like for these two locked up in a suite together for four days and nights between Larry King Live shows in New York City. What kind of a woman must Lesa Landau really be? Ray knew that not one of them in the world would have been able to guess half of either extreme.

Larry came in from the video clip with some comment about having a surprise caller.

Ray panicked. "Oh, God."

Lesa placed her hand on Ray's arm calmly and smiled into the cameras.

How on earth could that woman stay calm when disaster was on the phone? Not Ed Watson now! Please God. And seemingly for the first time in his life God had mercy on his soul since Lesa had taken her ever-lovin' blues away without any foreseeable sun to touch his face *this* night.

"This call is for Lesa," Larry said.

With all the composure in the world, Lesa stared those beautiful blues out to illuminate the living rooms across this fair land, where the sun, if it hadn't already, was beginning to dip into the horizon. How many men out there were being mesmerized by those eyes as he had been, Ray wondered. Were they watching them expand until they were but one huge blue ocular hole as big as a double church door through which they could see across a flat landscape to the distant foothills of some Big Rock Candy Mountain of their dreams? They should beware of those dreams, Ray thought.

"Hi, Lesa. This is George Steinbrenner."

"Hi, George," Lesa said as calmly and with thoughts as collected as one could ever organize them, "How's business?" Everyone laughed flooding the airways with the pleasant white noise of genuine laughter and above it all, George Steinbrenner's.

"Doin' good Lesa. Whatta you think if we give that young man beside you there a job come Saturday?"

"I don't sell hot dogs," Ray said dourly above the general merriment.

"Oh no, Ray. But this is between me and your agent there, Lesa. I don't think you could get yourself as good a deal as she could," then George and everyone else laughed again.

"...Or in anywhere near as deep of crap!" Ray said, obviously, disgusted with the turn of events and terrified by the very concept of Lesa Landau as his agent.

"You there, Lesa?" She had turned to observe Ray disdainfully.

"I'm here, George," she said as she jerked back toward the cameras. "What kinda deal you got for us?"

Larry was obviously in his heaven now.

"Tell you what," George said. "I'll give your boy there a million bucks just for showin' up. If he'll step up to the plate as designated hitter one time, he gets one million smackers. That sound okay."

"Yes." Lesa said. "But how much more if he gets a hit? That's what it's all about, George." Ray had his head nearly to his knees beneath the wet bar now as his services were being auctioned.

"Well, I don't know Lesa. Look at 'im. He don't look like much of a slugger."

"He is!" she insisted loudly. "How much?"

"Well, I'll tell you what. We'll put that timid boy in the lineup batting ninth as designated hitter. He gets a million bucks for goin' to the plate and finishin' the at bat. You know what that means. If he gets a hit, I add another million. How's that?"

"Okay," Lesa was in her glory, "but what if he gets an RBI? That's what the game is about, isn't it? What then?"

"Another million - for *each* RBI. Okay? Do we have a deal?"

"Almost," Lesa continued bargaining, "What about a home run?"

"You mean outta here, that kinda thing? Okay, another million if the kid gets a home run. Does that work for you? Can we sign the kid to the biggest one-day contract in history and kinda take that monkey off Alto's back?"

"Let me get this straight, George. If the bases are loaded when the number nine hitter is due up, and Ray hits a home run. You then owe him at least eight million dollars. Right?"

"I need my calculator Lesa, I'm no physicist. Let me see. Yeah, well, I get seven million dollars. Deal?"

"If he doesn't go out during the at bat, then he comes up again with the same deal all over again, right?"

"Oh. Yes, okay. Right! That works," George Steinbrenner once again agreed.

"So that's a minimum of eight, right? Okay, we'll sign." Lesa exclaimed to everyone's joy... except Ray.

"No deal," said Ray.

"No deal?" everyone throughout the studio cried.

"Why on earth not?" George asked.

"I hate the Yankees!" Ray said, almost screaming.

Lesa was all over him. "Ray. It's just baseball. It's a million bucks!"

"Ray," it was George. "What team do you like?"

"I've been a Mariners fan for a long time, George."

"Do you boo Alto when he's in Seattle?"

"No, of course not. Helen and I like Alturis. He's the best in the game. He did what he had to do."

"Well, you know what, Ray? The Yankees play the Mariners on Saturday. You could take one of the Yankee sluggers out of the lineup for at least one at bat."

"That's right, Ray!" Lesa seconded enthusiastically.

"Thanks, George, but no. Period! It's been nice talking to you. Bye. Lesa, now show us your doohickey."

George was gone... opportunity lost.

[That's the end of the excerpt, but before the show was over George called in again having wheeled and dealt with Mariner management. Ray was "duct taped" to a contract to show up as a one time Mariner designated hitter.]