

A Catalog of Lies

A guy named Fabian tells you you're beautiful. He says he hasn't dated for a while and wants to know all about you. You haven't dated for years either, but after the end of a long relationship, you've been trading messages with men through an online dating site. Fabian is handsome and eight years younger than you. He says he is from Poland but staying in Canada for a project but moving to Northern Virginia for his business. It's unclear what his "project" and "business" entail. It's unclear where he is in the moment. Something doesn't smell right. This has the telltale signs of a scam. It's a matter of time before he asks for money.

Your father taught you all about scams. He co-founded the National Association of Bunco Investigators (NABI, pronounced *nabby*) in the late 1980's. Bunco, as in: con games; as in: to deprive by deceit. Your father kept mug shots of con artists and criminal gypsies hanging around his office like family photos. He practiced three-card monte with you and your brother when you were growing up. "Believe none of what you hear or read, and only half of what you see," he repeated often. That seemed extreme.

"But if you *see* it with your own eyes, then of course it's real," you protested as a teenager. This was before home computers, before Photoshop, before "fake news" and "deepfakes." This was back when you thought facts were unmalleable. Now, you wonder what happens when you can no longer trust the appearance of things.

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In college, in the late 1980's, you worked at a frame shop where Southwestern art hung on the walls. One evening before closing, a man came in to talk. His South American friend had

some Mayan artifacts he was willing to part with. “You could buy them to display or sell,” he said. Your boss, who’d just returned from Peru, was intrigued. The man had a small clay pot in his pocket as a sample. It looked old. He was persuasive. “This is how you know it’s authentic,” he said. It was a magic show: He pulled a quarter out of his pocket and rubbed it on the bottom of the pot. It made a mark. “Wow,” you and your boss said. In that moment, you were the mark. “We’re handling a pot that is thousands of years old,” he said, instructing us on how we should feel. He said the Mayan objects were priceless, but his friend might be willing to accept a couple thousand dollars for them. Your boss shook his hand and agreed to meet them the next day.

This was before it was easy to check your doubts on the internet. You called your father who confirmed it was a con, so you told your boss. When the man and his South American friend arrived the next day, they spoke Spanish with each other, pretending to negotiate a price on the rare artifacts. Your boss played along. Then she replied to them in Spanish. She spoke in long sentences you didn’t understand. The men exchanged glances. Rattled, but unwilling to let go of the ruse, they told her she was the wrong buyer after all; they weren’t going to “sell” their artifacts to her. They said it in a way that was accusatory, as if she were the one at fault. A week later, your boss saw the same small clay pots for sale at Pier One.

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According to NABI, there are lots of names for lying: Sweetheart Swindles. Texas Twists. Latin Lottos. Pidgeon Drops. Broken Bottle scams. Handkerchief Switches. Home Improvements frauds. Equity Skimming and Real Estate schemes. Bank Examiner scams. Imposter Burglaries. ATM Grabs.

Given all the ways to lie and cheat in the world, there are too many to list.

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There are notorious instances of people being conned, duped, gaslighted. The play and movie “M. Butterfly” is based on a sensational real-life case that involved spying and mistaken sexual identity. In 1964, a young French diplomat, Bernard Boursicot, fell in love with a Chinese opera singer, Shi Peipu, who was a man but told Mr. Boursicot he was a woman. Several months into their love affair, Mr. Shi—maintaining his role as a woman—said ‘she’ was pregnant with Mr. Boursicot’s child. Shortly after, Mr. Shi “gave birth to” a son, Shi Dudu.

Meanwhile, the Chinese secret service approached Mr. Boursicot demanding intelligence from the French Embassy or else Shi Peipu would be persecuted. So, the spying began. Fast-forward twenty years. Mr. Boursicot—back in Paris, no longer a diplomat, and no longer spying—was questioned by the French counterespionage service about his relationship to Mr. Shi and Shi Dudu. He confessed he’d given documents to the Chinese, and that’s when he was told that Shi Peipu was a man. Mr. Bouriscot had been completely fooled. “I was shattered to learn that he [Mr. Shi] is a man,” Mr. Boursicot said at his trial, “but my conviction remains unshakable that for me at the time he was really a woman and was the first love of my life. And then, there was the child that I saw, Shi Dudu. He looked like me.”

Maybe this hard to believe—how could he *not* know? When love is involved, we see what we want to see.

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When people learn that your father investigated con artists, criminal Gypsies, and Irish Travelers, they get interested. Everyone has a story about being cheated. Audiences love stories of deceit. In movies like *Oceans Eleven* and *Catch Me If You Can*, we root for the cons. Grifters are made into heroes, their lifestyles glorified.

“I would’ve been smart enough not to get conned,” you might think. But would you? No one escapes life without being lied to. We all know it doesn’t feel good. What’s worse, we look with disdain at people who are duped or abused, hoisting blame on the victims. We identify with the liars in the movies because we don’t want to feel stupid.

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Let’s talk about confidence: specifically, yours. You are a doubter and self-doubter. You’re not as clear-sighted and fool-proof as the episode with the faux Mayan artifacts might suggest. You were raised to be skeptical. Maybe that’s easier when dealing with strangers, but in dealing with people close to you, your nature is to trust completely. As a nine-year old, your nature was to believe your parents when they said your dog Max was taken to a Beagle farm where he could run free; your nature was to believe your favorite aunt who told you cows in the mountains have two short legs and two long ones to stand on hillsides without tipping. You can be duped when you trust someone, when they speak with assuredness and you are unsure.

It’s telling that the definitions of confidence are rooted in feelings—the feeling that you can rely on someone or something; the feeling of certainty about the truth; the feeling of self-assurance based on your own abilities. Confidence is not fixed and permanent. It’s malleable. Cons and frauds know this. Abusers know this, too. They play games with your perceptions and tell you how to feel. They gain your confidence—or rather, they *steal* it—so that you doubt yourself.

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Where does it start? Self-doubt doesn’t grow in isolation. Often, the seeds are not sown by thieves, but by people you trust.

There's a scene in the short story, "The Husband Stitch," by Carmen Maria Machado that depicts the start of doubt: The narrator of the story sees toes in the produce aisle. Potatoes, her mother corrects her. But the girl is certain she's seen bloody stumps among the tubers.

"One of them, the one that I had poked with the tip of my index finger, was cold as ice, and yielded beneath my touch the way a blister did. When I repeated this detail to my mother, the liquid of her eyes shifted quick as a startled cat."

Later, when the narrator's father comes home, he explains the impossibility of her experience to her.

"– Why would Mr. Barns sell toes? my father asked. Where would he get them? Being young, and having no understanding of graveyards or mortuaries, I could not answer.

– And even if he got them somewhere, my father continued, what would he have to gain by selling them among the potatoes?

They had been there. I had seen them with my own eyes. But beneath the sunbeams of my father's logic, I felt my doubt unfurling.

– Most importantly, my father said, arriving triumphantly at his final piece of evidence, why did no one notice the toes except for you?

As a grown woman, I would have said to my father that there are true things in this world only observed by a single set of eyes. As a girl, I consented to his account of the story, and laughed when he scooped me from the chair to kiss me and send me on my way."

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You know what it's like to swallow your truth in order to be scooped up and loved. This fiction is emotionally honest, though it doesn't constitute conning, gaslighting, or abuse. But what if you were taught to minimize your feelings when you were hurt? Maybe you were disregarded as a child while trying to express something important, your tender concerns made into a family joke. Maybe you inherited blame or possibly, there's no one to blame, yet you learned not to trust yourself anyway, your self-doubt like a seed nestled deep in the recesses of the unconscious. What if you sensed something was off kilter in your household and you felt the weight of the unspoken, the lies of omission, but were told nothing was wrong? If this happens regularly, it can be crazy-making. This is how self-doubt grows on an average day.

"You're too sensitive," they say. Too many days of this, and you—a highly sensitive child—learn to minimize your own feelings. That's how you eventually fall into a relationship with a man who is all wrong for you but seems right. You meet while doing something as genial as walking dogs. He is Buddhist and thoughtful and a good rescuer. He has a house and wants you to move in right away. And you do, tucking away in a corner of your mind the time he scolded you for not talking to him in the "right" tone the day your grandfather died. You apologize, which becomes your role in the relationship. You overlook his quarrels with the neighbors, his tendency to talk in directives. You're good at seeing the best in people. You're so good at appeasing and minimizing that you stay in the relationship for nine years. You don't know how to extract yourself from the Chinese finger trap in which his blame of you is your own self-blame. You should've known better, you tell yourself. Or some such bullshit.

What does this kind of lying look like? One evening you say, "Remind me to go to the mechanic in the morning," not expecting him to remember any better than you. He's distracted watching T.V.

“Why are you telling me this?” he barks. “You’re being passive aggressive. You want me to change your windshield wiper, but you won’t say it. You never ask for anything directly.”

You’re stunned. You *did* ask for help last week. “I don’t remember that,” he says, as if his memory is the only one that matters. He flips through the channels. “You never ask for help in the right way,” he continues. “You’re dishonest.” He doesn’t stop until you say the words he wants you to hear:

“I’m sorry.” Et cetera. You say it but you don’t mean it.

He picks up a screwdriver and goes outside in a huff. It’s ten-thirty at night. You stand beside him holding the flashlight. Within five minutes, he’s done.

“You don’t ask me for enough help,” he says, his tone softened. “All you need to do is ask me.” He walks back inside with an air of victory: The blamer, rescuer, and victim all in one.

There is no argument you can win. When you point out inconsistencies, he doubles down. You are wrong for not understanding him, he tells you. You are wrong for thinking so poorly of him. If only you had acted differently, he wouldn’t have lashed out at you.

“You’re too sensitive,” he says.

These episodes are intermittent, but you live with heightened anxiety, your defenses at the ready. As soon as he’s sweet again, you forget and blame yourself, your cognitive dissonance at work. It happens with things so inconsequential that you start to wonder if in fact you are misunderstanding him. He had a hard life as a child. “You need to forgive him,” other people tell you. If you squint hard enough, you might see the relationship you want.

And what’s the illusion here? The deceit? The confidence trick?

You participated in this farce by partially believing him and by going along with the lie to keep the peace. You lied, too. To yourself. “I can make this relationship work,” you said. And believed it.

After a while, doubt is the only thing you trust. You come to trust that you don’t know. Which, in itself, is a lie. Because you *do* know. You know.

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There are names for this kind of lying: Gaslighting. Blaming and reverse-blaming. Cover-ups. Denial. Disavowing. Faux confusion. Abusive forgetting. Joking. Minimizing. Partially confessing to distract and gain favor. Scapegoating. Refusing to take responsibility. Withholding. Playing the victim.

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Of course, *you* in all these scenarios is me. It helps at times to see myself with distance, to not believe the self-doubt that still wants to con me. But maybe it is also you? Maybe you have been lied to, too?

If you asked my ex, he’d say he was conned. “Never do the unnecessary for the ungrateful,” he said to a room full of people while I was there.

There was always a millimeter of truth to his accusations, enough sweetness in his temperament to confuse me. He was known as being generous in the Buddhist community. Yet, the way he talked to me was not the way he spoke to his kids, ex-wife, or even the neighbors. On the outside, we looked like we were in a healthy relationship. We threw large holiday parties.

Things are not as they appear.

My ex-boyfriend was not a con. The windshield wiper episode was not the worst that happened between us. However, when you’re in it, gaslighting looks like a misunderstanding.

Whether it's done purposefully or unconsciously, covert emotional abuse is easy to deny. Plus, it's on a spectrum. That's why identifying and confronting it is so difficult. It's destructive, causing profound self-doubt, harming your perceptions and sanity.

He didn't punch me or push me down the stairs. Also, I wasn't passive and weak. That stereotype is a way to blame women. The truth is, bullies and abusers often find women who are smart, accomplished or high-achieving in other ways.

Here's another important truth: My own unhealed wounds didn't cause covert abuse, but they certainly attracted it.

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That's my experience. But what about you? What happens when point of view changes your relationship to the story? What happens when you're told how to feel and what to think, what's true and what's not, whether you believe it or not? We each have our own unreliable narrator.

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There are others ways we are all being gaslighted. Whenever we turn on the T.V. or radio or start browsing the internet, these dishonesties snag us frequently.

Even though I know better, I recently succumbed to impulse purchase online. The \$8 I thought was spending turned out to be \$278 in a barely legal dark marketing scam, charging my credit card for a monthly "subscription."

The world of advertising is built on illusions. The cacophony of words and images designed to divert us, scratch the underbelly of our beliefs to get us to want what we don't even want. *Feeling bloated? Had enough? You deserve nothing but the best. You're worth it. Buy now, before it's too late.* The illusion is this: people will *love* you, you will feel better, your life

will be easier if you start each day with your new deodorant. Or travel to Iceland. Or vote for a persuasively commanding candidate.

If we're buying what they're selling, we're participants in the farce. Who among us has not purchased something we later regretted? Not just the self-doubting get ensnared. This is the part of the confidence trick we're not so eager to talk about.

I learned this truth when I worked for an ad agency. The agency's long, bright orange hallway connected the account reps to the creative team. I walked back and forth across the gray carpet with wavy squares and angles that bent in on themselves, maze after maze all the way down the hall, a pattern of confusion woven into the very fabric of the place.

Advertising is not communication. Its goal is to manipulate, to convince us of a need. Even a benign article about the benefits of massage (a case study I read when I was hired) was not an article, but an *advertorial* commissioned by a massage therapists association, placed on news sites across the country. Ads don't look like ads. They look like entertainment, information, or Google searches and tweets. Sometimes they're labeled "promoted" or "sponsored," in font small enough to be overlooked. This brand of disinformation is called *native advertising*, meaning, the ads are purposely disguised to look like editorial content. They trick us into consuming content without realizing we are being sold.

This kind of lying—"the engineering of consent"—was introduced to us in the 1920s and 30s by Edward Bernays, the father of public relations. Building on the work of his famous uncle, Sigmund Freud, Bernays suggested leaders could "control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it" by tapping into the unconscious. He was not above using fear to sell products. Bernays, himself, had a telling list of clients including General

Electric, American Tobacco, CBS, and even politicians. Calvin Coolidge won his 1924 presidential bid because Bernays made him seem relatable.

It's fitting that advertisers used to refer to themselves as *propagandists*. After World War I, the word took on darker connotations, so Bernays encouraged the term "public relations" instead.

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This kind of lying is still called public relations. As well as Promotion! Publicity! Persuasion! See also: Marketing: The Backbone of Capitalism! This kind of lying is deemed acceptable. People pay to have it done. Others go to school to learn it. They call themselves spin doctors, spinmeisters, flacks, and truth-twisters. They're paid to "spin stories," "shape truth," "redefine reality."

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What happens when you redefine reality on purpose?

In 2015, hundreds of Twitter accounts documented an explosion at a chemical plant in Centerville, Louisiana. There were eyewitnesses, photographs, videos and surveillance footage that captured the explosion. People were in a panic. The only thing real about it, however, was that it had been deliberately staged. As *The New York Times* writes,

"The Columbian Chemicals hoax was not some simple prank by a bored sadist. It was a highly coordinated disinformation campaign, involving dozens of fake accounts that posted hundreds of tweets for hours, targeting a list of figures precisely chosen to generate maximum attention. The perpetrators didn't just doctor screenshots from CNN; they also created fully functional clones of the websites of Louisiana TV stations and newspapers. The YouTube video of the

man watching TV had been tailor-made for the project. A Wikipedia page was even created for the Columbian Chemicals disaster, which cited the fake YouTube video. As the virtual assault unfolded, it was complemented by text messages to actual residents in St. Mary Parish. It must have taken a team of programmers and content producers to pull off.”

I suspect it was a test to find out how readily we’d believe a lie; how long it would take us to uncover the truth; how willing we’d become to distrust the news and eventually each other.

Professional trolls have become so skilled at their craft that their fake accounts are hard to spot, their posts and tweets disguised as heartwarming viral messages. The trolls have studied us, and like good marketers, they know how to manipulate emotions. They know they’ll catch more flies with honey. What do we do? We like and share and retweet things we agree with. It’s not only people retweeting conspiracy theories who fall for it. As a Rolling Stone article put it, many of the troll-farm tweets appeal to “...educated, urban, left-wing Americans harboring a touch of self-righteousness.” We’re not as smart as we think.

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You can’t talk about cons, gaslighting, covert abuse, and propaganda without also talking about Big Lies. Volumes have already been written about a certain former president, narcissistic and blind to his own pathology, who makes up “facts” to suit his own ends; abuses us with lies; sows confusion in the midst of a pandemic; injects doubt into the populace; undermines our elections; thrives in chaos; and craves adoration. I don’t need to explain it to you—we all lived through it. We’re still recovering. And it’s not over yet.

Slanting opinion and renaming bad ideas have always been part of our political process. Notice how often politicians say things like, “I don’t recall,” when you suspect they’re lying. It’s

dismissive, condescending, and when it happens in personal relationships, it's called abusive forgetting. They obfuscate to control the narrative. Yellow journalism manufactures misinformation as way to blur the narrative— a con that's propagated by politicians and disreputable media to destabilize the notion of objectivity.

One of the Big Lies conned insurrectionists to storm the U.S, capitol on January 6th. Conned isn't the right word. They were brainwashed and encouraged in the same way authoritarian cults systematically and unconsciously change people. True believers are formed through behavior control, information control, thought control and emotion control. Perhaps it's no surprise that Bernays writings on "public relations" were tools used by the Third Reich.

Let's be clear: cult leaders are pathologically and clinically delusional; they become leaders because they're propped up by true believers, enablers, and Big Liars. Big Liars have been assaulting the truth for years, working to disorient, confuse, numb, and delegitimize political opponents and institutions. Big Liars know it will take months or years to unravel the truth in court, that lies are more compelling and provocative anyway, even to people who don't believe them. These Big Liars also know the more they repeat Big Lies, the more money they raise, so they keep lying.

Enter dark marketing. The way I was conned into buying a monthly "subscription" to cosmetics is a version of how other people were duped into making recurring political donations—weekly and monthly—to a struggling presidential campaign.

Big Lies are growing, threatening our democracy. Democracy is a word that sounds large and looming, but is actually very personal. In the face of being abusively lied to, I get angry, then depressed. My life, my liberty, my pursuit of happiness are threatened when I feel held hostage by the Big Liars of the world.

The United States is in a complicated, unhealthy long-term relationship with an abusive boyfriend. The boyfriend in this case is more than just one person. More than just one ex-president. His political and media enablers still have power, his supporters are cult-like true believers. Maybe you disagree. Maybe you're unconsciously in the throes of a sweetheart swindle, in love with a narcissist who is lying to you; or maybe you've conned yourself into believing that this kind of abuse is acceptable as long as it's not happening to you. You're smart. You know better.

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This kind of lying, spoken by traitors, leads to autocracy, ultranationalism, authoritarianism, dictatorship, fascism, and forcible suppression.

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If I compare my ex-boyfriend to our ex-president, I can't. They aren't even close. Lies and abuse are on a spectrum from benign to malignant. Someone can be narcissistic without being diagnosed with narcissism; there can be misunderstandings and blame in any relationship, but there can also be intentional misunderstandings, intentional forgetting, intentional blame, intentional lies. This is where I have to put aside my doubt and trust what I know to be true.

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Once, a man called me a dumb bitch because I wouldn't go along with his phone scam. "You're going to regret this," he said, as if he could still bully me. Cons and abusers yell and blame rather than admit when they're wrong.

Notice the men who yell in your life when they don't get what they want. They know they're defending something that's wrong, so they distract us with their volume. Politicians do it regularly. So do some media commentators. They make themselves into victims. They

deliberately attempt to wear us down and worse, make us doubt ourselves. As soon as they start yelling, you can be sure they're hiding something. What are they abusing? Their power and our trust.

For every Narcissus, there is an Echo. "Can you believe this?" we say to each other and to ourselves. There's no way to make sense out of nonsense, so we spend our time and energy being outraged. We're diverted by the sleight of hand even as we see it. How can we break-up with an abusive boyfriend while we're so focused on his lunacy, his outrageous lies? There is something very comforting about being able to blame someone else. I know. Blame is addictive. We blame the blamers, hate the haters.

There is another lie we've been telling ourselves: Getting rid of this boyfriend will change everything.

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Con artists believe people deserve to be cheated if they're stupid enough to fall for the trick.

Abusers believe they're the real victims. They hurt others with their lack of empathy and sense of entitlement.

Marketers acknowledge marketing can be used for ill intent. They say just because you can market something, doesn't mean you should; it's not marketing's fault that dark marketing happens.

Politicians lie for the money and power but tell themselves they're spinning the truth "for the good of the people."

Even domestic terrorists see themselves as heroes. Everyone, from their own perspective, feels justified.

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And what about the rest of us? Some of us gaslight ourselves by having outsized self-doubt. Others are duped into believing conspiracy theories about COVID-19, vaccination implants, and 5G mind control. True believers may be susceptible to belief because of unmet psychological needs, as recent studies suggest. Untreated anxiety, depression, and fear of the unknown may drive some people to dissociate and suppress their sense of reason in favor of phobias and delusions. The fallibility of the human mind is that it sees what it wants to see. Having self-doubt, succumbing to false beliefs, and trusting the wrong people are part of the human condition. Denial is comfortable.

Maybe people trust liars to feel less alone. There's nothing wrong with wanting a sense of community. Maybe conspiracy theorists aren't wrong to be skeptical. In the history of the world, we've all been lied to by governments and Big Business. Some people have been lied to by the medical community, tricked into being human experiments without their consent. Some have been lied to by their schools, churches, workplace, and families. There is good reason to doubt. Other times, we're willful and don't want to hear the truth. We tend to believe we are the ones who are clear-sighted. We disagree about who's doing the lying.

Big Liars don't care if we believe them or not. Their aim is to wear us down until we conclude that nothing is true. A recent New Yorker article about the propaganda driving the war in Ukraine asked, "Does truth exist?" It quoted a Russian editor as saying, "We live in an era of fakes. It's hard to identify true information. It's like believing in aliens, or in God. Everyone decides for themselves."

I think of my father often in this era of fake news and deepfakes. He was right. You can't believe everything you see. When an army of bots and trolls are designed to mislead us, when

media sensationalism earns billions in revenue, when lies travel faster than the speed of truth, it's difficult to parse fact from fiction in an instant. Facts may be hard to accept and assimilate at times, which is why some find "alternative facts" comforting.

The deeper perplexity is this: How do people who are smart in many ways allow themselves to be lied to? Or have their reality defined by someone else?

This is a question I ask myself about my former relationship—if I knew it was bad, why did I stay? We often ask this question of assault and con victims, too. Why wasn't she smart enough to get away? Why did he let himself be taken advantage of? If she knew she was in a potentially threatening situation, why didn't she leave? Or report it sooner? Why did she wait five years (or a decade, or thirty years) to say something?

In my case, I stayed because I didn't want to be alone.

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There is a great myth about how the only person to see Ferdinand Magellan's tall ships floating on the horizon was a Native American medicine man. As the story goes, the rest of his tribe had never seen ships, so they were blind to the Trinidad, Victoria and Conception. The medicine man had to point them out and warn his community. There's a lot to debunk in this myth, starting with the fact that the indigenous peoples of the Americas living close to water certainly would've fished and had their own watercraft. However, just as I can't find my car keys when they're on the counter next to me, it's possible that the tribe didn't see the ships. Or couldn't conceive of what they saw. Or didn't have a name for it. Or didn't want to see. It takes a lot of effort and energy to see clearly, which is why we're masters at manipulating our own perception. Our ability to self-deceive is a form of self-defense.

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Many years ago, a housemate and I disagreed about where to place a lamp in the house. I wanted it next to a chair where I could read, but my housemate insisted on illuminating a dark corner of the living room. We wanted to see different things, and we had our own ideas about what was important. I thought his arrangement unnecessary. He thought I should read somewhere else.

If my housemate and I couldn't agree in our own home, how can we expect that on a national and international stage, we should agree on where to place the lamp, which is to say, where to shine the light to see the truth? Point of view matters. We see things differently because we see things differently. Despite our difference of opinion, my housemate and I were in agreement that the lamp was a lamp. We weren't arguing about whether the lamp was actually the sun.

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"Here's a fun fact you should know about me," I told "Fabian" just before I reported him to the online dating site. "I'm a member of the National Association of Bunco Investigators."

I was telling the truth. I became an honorary member of NABI after my father's death. That's when I inherited pages of notes and books and tapes about cons. I did my homework. I used my rudimentary detective skills (Google's reverse image search) to determine that "Fabian," who also went by "Derrick," was catfishing with the Instagram photos of a guy named Steve.

But who am I kidding? I'm not really an investigator. I'm someone who knows what catfishing is and how to protect myself from it. I don't believe for an instant that I stopped "Fabian" from using Steve's photos somewhere else on the internet to scam a more self-doubting

woman, a woman who had not been raised by my father to be skeptical. Within a week, I spotted another catfisher, probably the same guy using a different name. I reported him again.

There's no way to get rid of all the liars in the world, but there's always a way to tell the truth. "The beginning of wisdom," so says a Chinese proverb, "is to call things by their right names." Before we had a name for catfishing we were vulnerable to it. The same is true for fake news and deep fakes, dark marketing, Big Lies, and all the scams and cons, lies and abuse we've come to identify. Once the lie is called out loud, we can see it more clearly. There are other lies we still don't see, like ships on the horizon. These lies have names waiting to be discovered. Fortunately, people are paying attention, shining lights, looking closely, doing the hard work of seeing, assigning words and texture and meaning to the shape of lies emerging. Clear-sighted people are everywhere. Maybe you are one of them.