



HOUSE OF HORRORS: NEW REVELATIONS

A FAMILY'S DARK SECRETS

In January, Louise Turpin was arrested for torturing and abusing 12 of her 13 children at her California home. Now her sister Elizabeth Flores reveals more shocking details of Louise's past *By* CHRISTINE PELISEK *and* STEVE HELLING



Turpin (left) and Flores (right) were close as girls (below) but have had a fractious relationship as adults.

In the early morning hours of Jan. 14 an emaciated 17-year-old girl escaped out of the window of the house at 160 Muir Woods Road in Perris, Calif., and told police about the unspeakable horror that was occurring inside: how she and her 12 siblings were held captive and subject to starvation and beatings at the hands of their parents, David and Louise Turpin. The case made international headlines as police charged David, 56, and Louise, 49, with 12 counts of torture, seven counts of abuse of a dependent adult, six counts of child abuse and 12 counts of false imprisonment. (Both have pleaded not guilty.) But more than 2,000 miles from the Muir Woods Road house, Louise Turpin's sister Elizabeth Flores saw the news and struggled to comprehend it. "I was in shock, pure shock," Flores says. "My whole world fell apart."

Now Flores is sharing dark secrets of her own, opening up about the troubled childhood she and Louise shared and what she later witnessed inside her sister and David Turpin's house of horrors. In her upcoming book *Sisters of Secrets*, due out May 8, Flores examines how the older sister who was so protective of her when they were growing up in Princeton, W.Va., could have become a monster capable of inflicting such misery on her own children. "It's just hard to fathom," Flores says. "You don't want to believe that your sister would torture anybody."

For most of their childhood, Flores says, Louise was "a good student" who was "loving, soft-spoken and sweet." But things changed when a then-15-year-old Louise began dating David, 22, whom she met at church. In 1985, posing as her father, David checked Louise out of high school, and the two ran away together. Her frantic parents called police, and the couple were apprehended in Texas. But after Louise and David insisted they would just run away again, her parents gave written permission for 16-year-old Louise to marry David. Soon afterward they started their family, and Louise began pulling away from her two younger sisters and her parents. Flores says Louise, who had grown up attending a Christian church, began practicing witchcraft after her marriage, amassing a trove of Satanic books and a Ouija board. Louise also began attending snake-charming festivals, telling her sister that handling and eating snakes gave her a feeling of power. "People have this misconception that David and Louise were raising their kids up in this Christian home and then all of a sudden they were torturing them," says Flores. "That's not true."



PAINFUL MEMORIES
Flores (above, with Louise and their grandfather in 1978) claims that after their parents divorced, her sister would try to protect her from sexual abuse at the hands of a relative. "She was like a mom to me," says Flores.



'THE KIDS ACTED SCARED TO TALK TO ME, BECAUSE THEY MIGHT GET IN TROUBLE'
—ELIZABETH FLORES



A VIEW INSIDE
In her book *Sisters of Secrets*, Elizabeth Flores reveals what she witnessed while living with her sister Louise and brother-in-law David Turpin.

During a summer break when Flores was 20, she lived with David and Louise and several of their young children in Fort Worth. She remembers being puzzled by some of her sister's rules—the children had to ask for permission to use the bathroom and weren't allowed to talk to Flores if their mother wasn't around—but didn't notice any obvious signs of abuse. "I would ask if I could play with them, and she would tell me no and shut them in their rooms," says Flores. "She said it was to protect them from me, that she didn't want 'my ways rubbing off on them.' I felt bad because I thought they were being held hostage because of me."

Flores says she was also not allowed to have friends while living with her sister. "Louise was a very private person," says Flores. "She didn't want me to have friends while I lived there, because she didn't allow her kids to have friends. I just thought they were very strict."

While not allowed to discuss the case pending against her sister and brother-in-law, Flores says she hopes sharing details of Louise's past will somehow shed light on what happened to the family. "Louise had been my protector," she says. "This is not the same Louise I knew, that I loved." Now a mother herself—she has seven children with husband Jonathan—Flores says she realizes in retrospect that the isolation and privacy David and Louise craved while she lived with them was anything but normal. Says Flores: "They obviously had something to hide." ●