



*Alexandria Thompson, daughter of a famous actor, is living in LA. She wants to escape her last name and moves to the Jersey Shore. No one knows she is the daughter of the famous actor. How will it turn out when people find out who she really is?*

## **Sunsets & Margaritas**

By Christine Lynn Lourenco

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# *Sunsets & Margaritas*



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*For the Love of the Ocean and Commuter Bob*

*Christine Lynn Lourenco*

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# Chapter 1

## The Event Biz

The music vibrated the windows outside the nightclub where the red carpet was lined up with photographers whose flashes blinded me. A lot of young Hollywood talent was here including a mix of reality stars, and single actors and actresses from television and movies. I was supposed to be here to work this event, or so I thought. Instead though, I was walking the red carpet, and everyone was taking my picture. Blending in was not something that I could ever do in this town, but that was all I wanted to do. When I finally made it past the sea of media, I entered the club to the sounds of cocktails being poured, loud music and dancing. It was the grand opening of the trendiest club in Los Angeles. The club was absolutely stunning and in the hippest, coolest part of Los Angeles but I felt so done with this scene. They shelled out big bucks to get the popular stars here and make it at least seem like this was **the** place to be. We had set up a VIP room inside for celebrities who had come to mingle away from the masses. My employer hadn't even really assigned me to do anything at the event except to go to the VIP room and talk to celebrities and make them feel welcome. I really think that having me work here for them, actually was simply good publicity for them. I wanted to do more. I was here to learn, and do something to make a difference but was never given the opportunity. I was so frustrated in this job. It felt meaningless.

After graduating college, I got this job in event planning and was actually excited to do something on my own instead of doing what was expected

from Hollywood – following in my father’s footsteps. As you can imagine, living in California in the Los Angeles area, there are tons of opportunities to run events. There isn’t a night of the week something isn’t happening around here. It could be a movie premiere, a new boutique opening, a nightclub celebrating a reality star’s birthday, or a group of bloggers hosting vendors for a feature. Los Angeles was a mecca for events. My social calendar could be permanently booked, and I could make a living just showing up at parties and being paid to be there if I wanted to. After all, this is celebrity central and I should know. I grew up in this Hollywood lifestyle and was the daughter of the most famous actor in the world. I didn’t even really have to interview, and I would get a job. Anyone would die to hire Alexandria Thompson. I have never done one bit of acting, yet I often found myself in magazines and gossip columns. I never even really went out socially and kept to myself. I studied hard when I was young, stayed out of trouble and got a college education. I graduated magna cum laude and started working as a Manager of Event Planning. The problem is that everywhere I go in this town, everyone knows who I am for the most part. So, even once I graduated and now had this job, everyone at work made it seem like I could do no wrong just because of my name. I knew it wasn’t authentic. I could not show up at work for two weeks if I felt like it and still have my job (but of course I didn’t do that). There are so many people with bad intentions, and I never knew who really liked me for me.

This latest event that my company was handling was a new exclusive nightclub opening and we had invited celebrity guests to help kick off the opening night and give the club the image of exclusivity it desired. While the event was fun, it further yielded the celebrity existence that I didn’t want to be a part of. Plus it didn’t help that I was putting myself out in the public more and more each time I participated in these events. Photographers took my photos just as much as any celebrity endorsing an event. I was just as famous. This job was exactly what I didn’t want

and although I should have never took it, I don't think I would've realized it until I experienced it. It didn't take long before I woke up one day and recognized that I couldn't do this anymore. I knew that there was so much more I could offer to a company but more importantly, I needed to stop selling myself short. I could contribute to society in a much better way than this. I called out sick the next day to give myself a long weekend. I just needed to focus on some self-discovery. And, the latest issue of People Magazine showcasing images of myself mingling with the rich and famous, was the icing on the cake of giving me a stomach ache. The images suggested these were my friends and my lifestyle, yet most of these pictures are situations I was forced into because of my job and not where I really wanted to be. It was all a show, a façade and a circus wrapped into one.

What did I really want? For one thing, I didn't want to be running events that cushioned the already fat wallets of the rich and famous. What purpose did I even serve? My whole life I was soul searching. I had everything people would die to have but there was always something missing. People always look at the rich and famous as not being human. We were considered privileged and untouchable but in reality, we are simply flesh and bones and the same as anyone else. I knew one thing for sure, and that was that I wanted to give back. My whole life I had been given so much and there were so many families who had so little. I wanted to make a difference and taking this job was not something that made me feel pride in myself. It just drove me further and further into the self-indulgent lifestyle of this world. I would be headed down the same path and have the same ego as my father. My father didn't ever have to lift a finger. He had staff to do everything for him. Sometimes I would even have to go through one of his assistants just to reach him on the phone.

I shut the door of my bedroom after calling out sick on a hot Friday at the end of July, pulled out my laptop and started exploring other jobs across the country. I have always been so conservative but for the first time, I think in my heart I knew I had to do something risky and extreme to change my circumstances. Before I started my job search, I couldn't help but see the news that was trending on my computer's home page. There was the nightclub opening from the other night, and although the nightclub grand opening has nothing to do with me, the local news covering it uses my photo when talking about it. Most people I guess would be happy to have this coverage, but I didn't want the attention. Fame was not something I wanted to explore as I had seen what it did to people firsthand. The foremost thing I needed to do was to get out of this town. I needed to go somewhere where I could just be myself, where hopefully I wasn't recognized, and I could be treated as an equal. I didn't need to be on the pedestal that so many people placed me on. I just wanted a job where I could have fun, do something I love and make a difference. And most importantly, I wanted people to get to know the real me without knowing my background.

But where would I go? I didn't want to go to New York City or Miami because I knew people would still recognize me, although not as much as Los Angeles. But, I also knew I would need to live and work somewhere at least near a major city so that events and event companies were more abundant. I thought about New Jersey quite a bit. My mind kept going back there even after searching other places like Portland, Chicago and Dallas. New Jersey seemed right for some reason. It was located next to New York City but more low-key. Growing up, we stayed there often. My father had owned several homes through the years on the famous Jersey Shore. I had always been an avid surfer and most of our homes were on the coast. I knew New Jersey well and if I could help it, I wanted to live by the ocean. New Jersey was actually pretty similar to California except for the weather. There were beaches and mountains,

farms and vineyards. I felt comfortable there, and I wanted to finally be on my own and feel what it would be like to stand on my own two feet and not in the shadow of fame. We still had property there, but I wanted something of my own. I wanted a fresh start.

I started researching non-profits but wasn't having much success and most event companies were in New York City. Finally I found one company that was event based but all of their events and activities had a charitable focus or gave proceeds back to the community. This was EXACTLY what I was looking for. Working somewhere doing something I love but being able to give back to others. I was tired of egos and self-indulgence. I would rather boost the confidence of an amazing person making a difference or help out a family that is struggling. There is so much more to life than money. Helping others, living your life with kindness and being passionate about following your dreams is what described me. This company seemed like the perfect fit. It was near the coast, not too far from New York City, and had the type of event management I was looking for. I anxiously looked on their career tab of their web site and noticed straightaway they had a position open. I immediately submitted my resume and crossed my fingers. I used my father's New Jersey address on my resume so that it wouldn't discourage them from looking at me. I didn't want them to know I lived in California, at least not until they saw me in person for an interview. My current company did events mainly in Los Angeles but we had things in New York and Miami too that we covered so for all they knew, I lived locally managing those events closer to this market. Plus, they were a small firm and probably didn't have the budget to relocate someone for this role. All I could do is hope they would call! I looked up the company on LinkedIn as well and tried sending some notes to network with individuals who already worked there so that I wouldn't get looked over.



This was only my first step to making a change but already I felt different. Instead of doing what was easy and expected, I was doing something I really wanted even if the road to get there wasn't so easy. I didn't want to be handed this job like I had been handed everything in life. It would be meaningful to me if I got this on my own just for my background and skills, and not my last name. I needed to figure out what was important to me and who I was as a person. Deep down, I knew that I wanted to give back to less fortunate people. For some reason, it was just who I was. I was ready to make that dream a reality and this small company in New Jersey could be just the ticket to get me there. I just had to hope and pray they would call me. This wasn't Los Angeles, and I could just tell an acquaintance that I like this brand, and they would offer me a job. But, if I got this role, it was because "I" got the role, not Alexandria Thompson, daughter of Alexander Thompson – the famous actor.

It was a Friday, so it was a good day to have called out sick with no events this weekend for once. The house was quiet and my father was away so there were no helicopters or drones flying over trying to get that golden picture. It was about 3:00 p.m. when I headed down my driveway, and the guard opened the gate and I got out of the house to get out for a bit. I was in a good mood and excited by the secret adventure to a new me. Plus, my drive would bring me to see one of my closest and true friends. I was going to meet up with my friend Claire, who I had met in college, for drinks and appetizers. We had been wanting to catch up on life and I had a lot to tell her, even it was still all just a dream. We were meeting at a place in LA called the Broken Shaker. It was a hip bar located by a rooftop pool so the vibe was fun and relaxed, but we loved this place because it had the coolest, hand-crafted cocktails we had found in LA. As I pulled up to valet my car, my cell phone rang and I figured it was Claire making sure I was here. She hated waiting at these places by herself. But to my surprise, I didn't recognize the number and when I

answered, it was about my resume...already! I tried to contain my excitement and keep my composure. I immediately had chills running down my spine, and my hands felt clammy and nervous grasping the phone.

*“Hi, is this Alexandria Thompson?”* asked a woman on the other end. *“Yes, this is Alexandria. Can I ask who is calling?”* I inquired. *“This is Jordie from Shore Events. We received your resume and would love to have you come in next week for an interview. Would you be available Monday or Tuesday at 8:30 a.m.?”* I tried to contain my eagerness as I responded *“Thank you so much Jordie. Monday at 8:30 a.m. works, and I am very excited to meet you and the team.”* The woman told me she would e-mail me the street address and interview details as we hung up the phone. I couldn’t believe it! My hands were shaking as the valet drove away with my car leaving me standing there. I felt nervous, happy and lucky just to have gotten this call, and couldn’t believe how quickly they had responded. Maybe this was really meant to be? Then it also hit me as I realized I was sitting in Los Angeles and had to make it over to New Jersey this weekend to be there for this interview on Monday, but I didn’t care. I didn’t have the job yet, but I couldn’t help but be enthusiastic. Now, I really did have something to share with Claire!

I took the elevator up to the rooftop feeling like I was floating in a dream and with a huge smile on my face while texting Claire that I was on my way. I was still smiling ear to ear as I hugged Claire and said hello. She could immediately tell that I was up to something and asked me if I had met someone special. I just laughed at her, and we ordered some guacamole and chips and two of the tastiest cocktails we could find on the menu. Claire was not involved in the celebrity world at all growing up, although she was of course surrounded by it living in this area and now had some celebrity clients in her line of work. Claire had grown up in San Francisco, California. Her dad worked in the technology sector

and her mom was a nurse. Claire went to college with me, and we had roomed together. My talented friend is now a fashion stylist and is working for a boutique at the Beverly Center. She was living over in Beverly Grove, a convenient community near the Beverly Center. What I had always loved about Claire is that she is down to earth and creative. She knew the real me too. I knew I could always trust her, and she had become one of my closest girlfriends. She knew about all of the contacts I could provide her but she never once asked me for help.

*“So, loop me in on the event world. I saw all of the pictures on social media of all the celebrities at your latest venture but I can’t help but feel there is more to your smile. Did you meet a guy?”* inquired Claire with a grin. I laughed as I sipped my cocktail and responded *“No, I did not meet a guy but yes, it’s been a whirlwind at my job but I am **not** loving it at all.”* I rolled my eyes and took a big sip of my cocktail and then continued. *“And, yes, I do have more going on that is contributing to my smile. You are not even going to believe this and maybe it won’t even go anywhere, but you know how I had always mentioned to you that I grew up going to soup kitchens, volunteering at dog shelters and doing anonymous acts of kindness and how much I enjoyed it?”* Claire knew me inside and out and her proud smile reminded me of that as she urged me to continue. *“Well, I found this company in New Jersey that is also in event management, but they have a charitable twist to each event. They give back to their communities or causes but the best part is they are interested in interviewing ME on Monday!”* Claire gave me a quick hug. She knew how important this was to me, despite the fact that I could very easily just not even work at all and lounge in a pool all day if I wanted to. *“That’s amazing Lex! I would hate to see you move across the country but I understand why it makes sense for someone like you. And, the company sounds right up your alley for sure.”* I couldn’t agree more.

Claire and I finished our cocktails while fending off the advances of annoying men and laughing about our crazy college adventures. Claire was someone I knew who liked me for simply being me. She knew the good, the bad and the ugly about my life. She never questioned anything and just accepted me. She also never asked me for anything. So many people have tried to get close to me in order to meet my father as a way into the acting world. I knew I had found a true friend in Claire, and I was lucky to have her. She knew me as the girl with no makeup, wearing my college sweatshirt and sleeping till noon when we didn't have class. We were just two girls experiencing college and being on our own for the first time. We had grown up from kids to adults together. I would miss her terribly, but I also knew I could come back and forth as often as I wanted. That was the one thing money could buy me – being in important people's lives no matter where I was.

I went home later that evening and booked a flight for the following day to Newark, New Jersey. I booked a rental car and then searched for hotels near the interview location finally settling on a boutique hotel in Asbury Park, New Jersey named appropriately, *The Asbury*. It looked like a chic hotel with a rooftop bar, and by the lobby, it had a cool lounge that even had pinball machines and board games according to the pictures on their website. This seemed like my kind of place, and most importantly, it was by the ocean and situated only a few minutes from the interview. As promised, Jordie had e-mailed me the details. I was meeting with Jordie first and then the Managing Director, Steve Fletcher. Steve, according to Jordie, was apparently the right hand man to the CEO, but the two of them traveled all the time and Steve was the only one available to meet with me. Jordie had indicated I shouldn't worry, and they have a very streamlined interview process and pride themselves on candidate experience and that they would only bring me in that one day, and then they will make decisions within the week. I was thankful for that because I would hate for them to call me to come back in and be a flight away to

have to get back there. I spent some time googling Steve and Jordie and learning as much as I could about the company to prepare before finally falling to sleep.

I didn't even bother to call my father to tell him of my plans. He wouldn't even notice I was missing since he was away on set. I got up at the crack of dawn to pack a suitcase, taking way too long to figure out what clothes to bring. At least it was summer and the weather was warm. I felt mischievous and sneaky as I dragged my suitcase into the elevator and down to our main living area. I had to remind myself that I was a young adult now and I could make decisions for myself. I took a quick look around and avoided any of my father's staff. I was forced to tell the security guard so he could let my Uber in the gate and just told him I had a last minute weekend trip and would be back early next week. Luckily, he didn't inquire further.

I flew out early on Saturday and the Uber successfully got me to LAX, the busiest airport in Los Angeles. I could have easily flew out of Van Nuys' private airport on my father's private jet but then I would have to let him know and I wanted to avoid that. I was on my way, with huge sunglasses to avoid recognition. I could feel the stares from people wondering if I may be important. I drifted off to sleep and had thoughts of a new life for myself. I only awoke when the captain announced we were approaching Newark International Airport in Newark, New Jersey. With the time zone difference, it was already mid-afternoon in New Jersey when I finally landed. I retrieved my luggage, got my rental car and hopped on the Garden State Parkway to find my way to Asbury Park. Asbury Park was about one hour from Newark and I couldn't contain my excitement as I pulled off the highway and onto the side streets that took me into the Jersey Shore towns. I pulled into this eclectic town and immediately noticed how the town was colorful, fun and had a vibe of artistry as I passed surfboard welcome signs and unique businesses. I

drove by trendy restaurants and shops and in a small park I could see there was a crowded craft vendor event set up and then finally I drove a little further and hit Ocean Avenue catching a glimpse of the ocean behind their extensive boardwalk. I pulled up to *The Asbury* to the valet parking and got out of my car. The hotel was absolutely stunning and friendly. As I checked in to start my two-night stay, it was already almost dinner time. The front desk told me they have a 4,300 square foot rooftop with magnificent views of the ocean and this evening was movie night. For only \$7.00 at sundown, you got free popcorn and a soda and could sit on bean bags or beach chairs and watch a movie under the stars. I couldn't help but think that if I got this job, I would have to have an event at *The Asbury*. I ordered some room service and settled into my room and then went up to the rooftop for movie night. I was always a little weary going to these types of things by myself so I felt nervous as I took the elevator to the rooftop. Their rooftop was transformed into a drive-in movie style outdoor theater complete with a concession stand. I took my free popcorn and drink and sat towards the back in a beach chair. They were playing a John Hughes movie, "*Pretty in Pink*", one of my favorites about two people that fall in love but are from different sides of the track. I could relate with the character "Blane" as he grew up privileged and so did I.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a group of guys there for movie night as well. You could tell they were locals and this was probably just the first stop for them before heading out to the nightclub scene or the infamous *Stone Pony* bar to see a concert. They chose some beers and popcorn from the concession stand and took seats on bean bag chairs around the side of the venue to be closer to the bar is my guess. One man, in particular, was tall and lean with blonde hair and blue eyes and was just genuinely handsome, and I couldn't help but notice him immediately. He looked like a Californian surfer and was exactly my type. It felt kind of lonely to be here by myself but it became so crowded

that no one could tell who was with each other as the movie began. I was looking forward to the fact that I had the whole day to explore tomorrow before the interview on Monday. I let the ocean air fill my lungs and got lost in the world of John Hughes and his romantic story. As the movie ended, I thought to myself that I could fit in here. No one looked twice at me wondering who I was. For the first time in my life, I blended in.

After a good night's sleep, I was up early on Sunday morning and took a drive along the coast to the beach towns south of Asbury Park. I wanted to explore and also remember a little from the time I spent here growing up with my father when we visited. He still had his house in Spring Lake, but I didn't even tell him I was coming here and didn't want the staff to report to him that I was in New Jersey. He was off on a movie set and wouldn't even know I was gone sadly. I drove through the next town over from Asbury Park called Ocean Grove. This town was also very artsy and the roads were lined with Victorian style homes and a unique little village called "Tent Village" where people literally lived in tents. But, it's not what you would think. The canvas-like structures had the front part of these homes made into an actual tent and then the back was a more solid structure. They had electricity and actually looked comfortable and adorable. I peeked in as much as I could to see bohemian style, full kitchens and bedrooms. It wouldn't be suitable to live all year round but it was summer and the perfect time to feel the ocean breeze in their home in a unique way. I could feel a great sense of community in this little village and I don't think they minded all of the curiosity seekers who drove or walked by their humble but beautiful homes. I was hoping if I got this job and moved here that I would eventually meet someone who lived in Tent Village because I was dying to see what it was like inside these little, unique homes. I grabbed breakfast at an outdoor café in town and sat down to watch the families riding their bicycles, met several friendly dogs on walks, and then headed back to my car to explore the next beach town.

When I arrived in Bradley Beach, I knew I had found my home. This cute little town was located right between Ocean Grove and another sweet town called Avon-by-the-Sea. If I got this job, Bradley Beach was where I wanted to live. It still had an element of art but it was more low-key. It was quiet and family oriented. Main Street in Bradley Beach was lined with restaurants, bakeries and interesting shops. There was a park at the center of town next to a train station that went into New York City. There was a schedule of events hosted in the park displayed including a weekly farmer's market, and last night they had a live band and local vendors set up to shop. The town had every kind of restaurant imaginable too. There was Chinese, Thai, Japanese, Italian, Mexicali, Greek, Jamaican and Mediterranean. There was a beautiful bakery with fresh breads and cannoli's lining the windows. I grinned from ear to ear when I saw the adorable pet grooming place which reminded me how badly I wanted a dog one day. As I took a turn down 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, I passed cute homes with wraparound porches and finally hit the ocean. It was much quieter here than Asbury Park. There was a boardwalk for jogging, bike-riding and walking to enjoy the ocean scenery, a children's playground on the beach complete with monkey bars and swings as well as a miniature golf business for families to enjoy. They had Bocce Ball too and I wondered how to play as I saw friends and families out there throwing balls and having a nice time. The beaches were crowded already and there was nowhere to park. I decided to drive back to Main Street and grabbed a brochure from a real estate office to see what was available in town when the realtor, Patrick, came over and introduced himself. I told him I am looking for a two to three bedroom condo or townhouse and he said he happened to be on his way to show one on Ocean Avenue if I wanted to follow and get a quick peek before his guests were to arrive in about 15 minutes. As we walked to our cars, he asked what my budget is and mentioned this one that we are going to see is going for \$950,000. He apologized if that was out of my range but I



didn't flinch. I told him I was "open", which he probably thought meant I am being nosy and couldn't afford it. Little did he know!

I followed Patrick back over to the crowded Ocean Avenue and pulled into an ocean-front complex of about twenty condominium units. What was nice is if you lived here, you still had a garage to pull your car into and a storage unit as well. The building had an elevator and a swimming pool for its residents. The best thing about it was the fact that it was ocean front, hence the price. Looking at this view though every day, would be worth it. The unit opened into a living area that I would describe as a great room with high ceilings and a fireplace and a deck in the front accessible through sliding doors that was set up with chairs and a table and small grill and I imagined this as a great place where you could have a glass of wine or a cup of coffee and look out at the amazing view. I closed my eyes for a moment and thought of myself sitting here with a coffee in the early morning listening to the seagulls and watching the bicyclists and joggers going by to the sounds of the waves crashing on the shore. I came out of my daydream and entered back inside. Adjacent to the living room was the kitchen. It had bright white cabinets with a few stained glass cabinet doors, granite grey counters and a light grey ceramic tiled floor. It felt open and airy as the sunlight hit the yellow and blues of the stained glass. There was a long kitchen table that sat between the great room and the kitchen that could host a nice dinner party even without the formal dining room. A laundry room and small bathroom were on this level and there was a spiral staircase all the way in the back that led to a private loft in the back that served as an office or guest room. The main set of stairs took you to another landing where you could again have another living room space if you wanted, and the hallway behind had two bedrooms each with their own on-suite bathrooms and walk in closets. The Master Bedroom also had a small deck off of it to sit out and see the ocean. The unit gave exclusive access as well to a rooftop lounge area with assigned section per owner with beach chairs and small

enclosed area to hang out in and keep things like a mini-fridge or alcohol. This place was absolute heaven. I felt like everything was aligning for me but didn't want to get too ahead of myself either.

I told Patrick I had a job interview tomorrow and if I got this job, I would pay cash by the end of the week. Patrick's eyes lit up with excitement as I took his business card and gave him my cell phone number before heading out just as the other couple had arrived to look at it. I just hoped they didn't beat me to taking this place. It was almost lunch time but I rode a little further up the busy and bustling Ocean Avenue, watching the surfers, sun bathers and families enjoying the day and I finally arrived at the gates of my father's home in Spring Lake. I could see people tending to the grounds, and the home looked immaculate. My father's home was ocean front. It had a huge outdoor area complete with tennis courts and volleyball nets as well as a swimming pool of course. It was by far one of the prettiest homes in all of Spring Lake and yet no one was there. It was always empty. I think the last time I was there was in high school for three weeks. And, during that time my father stayed maybe four nights total. I don't think he has been back since that time either. I could stay here for free and give the staff someone to worry about. But, you never have alone time when you have a staff and they know everything you do including when you come home at night and who you are with. It's not what I wanted when it was really privacy I desired right now but I did have an urge to want to go inside. I could see the large chandelier glistening in the sun and décor was so different from Los Angeles with a more laid back and relaxing feel. I still remembered my bedroom with the pale yellow walls, king size bed with a white down comforter that I would sleep soundly in after a long day at the beach surfing. I realized how spoiled I had always been and yet I still wasn't happy. Most people would be on top of the world. What was wrong with me?

I headed back to Asbury Park and valet parked my car and headed back to my room. I ordered lunch in and started studying up on the company and their recent events so that I could talk intelligently in my interview tomorrow. I was really nervous. I realized that I REALLY wanted this. I wanted that condo, and I wanted this job. For the first time in my life, I felt like I could obtain my own life on my terms. I had to nail this interview. I texted Claire and filled her in on my adventures and then took a nap before heading to the lounge to grab a light meal and a drink. I walked through the lounge near the lobby and people-watched and then stopped in the gift shop before heading back to my room for the night. I had to get up early, check out and head over for the interview so I wanted to get a good night's sleep, although, I tossed and turned thinking of how invested I felt already in this new life. It felt so freeing to be here with no one bothering me. Deep down I knew this was meant to be for me. I needed to be on my own, standing on my own two feet. I needed to not take for granted the money I had at my fingertips and actually make a difference.

At 5:00 a.m., my alarm clock went off and I had no problem racing out of bed and into the shower. I had to look perfect. I wanted this job more than anything. And, getting this job was not only for myself but to make a difference. I put on a modest but beautiful black dress with a grey jacket and stiletto heels. I wore my long blonde hair clipped back and wore light, simple make-up. I was interview-ready as I packed up my suitcase and grabbed my personal belongings and headed to the lobby to check-out and retrieve my car. I stared out at the ocean and took a deep inhale to feel the Atlantic Ocean air in my lungs one more time before they pulled around with my rental car. I headed over to a Starbucks nearby to grab a coffee and breakfast before heading over to Shore Events. I didn't need to be there till 8:30 a.m. but here I was, forty-five minutes early, sitting in my car. The parking lot was somewhat empty but that was typical in this line of business. It wasn't a 9a-5p type of job. You had to

work some nights and weekends and while you were in the office, you were often running around too. It was one of the reasons I loved this field. I liked to move around and be in different places, seeing various people and not handcuffed to my desk.

I decided to go in about ten minutes early so that I could show I was motivated but not overly anxious (although I hoped no one saw me sitting in the car for the last half hour to forty-five minutes waiting with baited breath). I checked in with the receptionist and took a seat in the lobby next to a cute café and began staring at fashion magazines that had been sitting on the table to try and take my mind off the interview and calm my nerves. At about 8:35 a.m., a serious-looking woman comes over to greet me. She introduces herself to me as Jordie and brings me to her office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and this woman gets right down to business going over my resume and education. There was no small talk about weekends or finding the office easily. I could tell she was going to be hard to win over. She moved on from my resume and started asking me questions about events that I have hosted, and then drills me with scenarios of events gone wrong to see how I would handle. I don't think she even cracked a smile but I tried not to get discouraged. After the wrath of Jordie, I was brought up to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor to meet with Steve Fletcher, the Managing Director. Jordie excused herself and let his assistant know I was here. About fifteen minutes later, Steve's door opened and two employees walked out and I was finally invited in. Unlike Jordie, Steve was full of energy and very friendly. He talked incessantly about this company and what they stand for. His questions only focused on why I wanted to work here and he asked me how many times I had given back to the community. That was easy for me. Although I am sure that Jordie was wearing her "human resources" hat and asking me the basic 101 questions of being a good employee, showcasing dependability and experience in my craft, Steve was much easier to talk to and so was talking about giving back. I told the countless

stories of growing up in Los Angeles and all of the amazing things I did to support the community. I confided in Steve that working in Los Angeles was amazing but that this humanitarian focus is what drew me to Shore Events. I wanted to make a difference and I made it clear that I wanted to work here. I felt like Steve believed me and saw my value. I wasn't so sure about Jordie though and I could only hope I won her over. After I left Steve's office, I stopped back down to thank Jordie but she wasn't there. I left a handwritten note with her assistant asking if I should wait, but she told me Jordie had back to backs and I was welcome to go.

I could finally breathe again as I exited the building and walked to my car. My fate was in their hands now and all I could do is head back home and hope for the best. I had a few hours before I had to fly back out to California so I headed back over to the coast and stopped this time in the same town where Shore Events was located, West Long Branch, to an area called Pier Village. I ate lunch and walked around the shops. This cute beachside town had an arcade, gym, winery, cute trendy clothing stores, and an amazing looking ice cream store. I crossed the street real quick as well to see the ocean one last time before I would head to the airport. I wondered if this view would become one I would soon get used to, or if it was back to California and my father's home for now. If this didn't work, I would have to come up with Plan B but figured I may as well wait and see first before I put my brain into overload. Claire texted me to check in as did the realtor Patrick. I texted back Patrick and asked if the other people liked the home and he said it was a little too pricey for them so it's still available. I told him I would call him by the end of the week once I had heard about the job. I called Claire and filled her in as I headed back out onto the open road towards the airport. I could be a Jersey girl for sure if given a chance I thought and I smiled. For now though, I was headed back to La La Land.



## Chapter 9

### ROLE OF A LIFETIME

I had let my daughter down and ruined her night. Alexander Thompson – you’ve done it again! But, the director told me to stop by and meet up with my potential love interest in this time travel movie for a cocktail around midnight and I didn’t want to tell him no. It was the only time she could do it because she was coming from another movie set and had zero time. Boy did that sound familiar to me. It was the story of my life as well. They had also moved my meeting with them to a brunch on Saturday morning instead of the Sunday we had committed to. This now meant I had to break my plans with my daughter. I didn’t even have the heart to tell her until I was forced to because she noticed we were heading into the Lincoln Tunnel and away from New York City on her own. Despite agreeing to meet up with my potential future co-star at midnight, I had taken a risk and put my daughter first too at least by going along for the ride and driving her home. I was going to be late to meet my potential co-star but Alexandria was more important and I had already crushed her by changing our plans.

I made it back into the City by 12:30 a.m. to meet up with the beautiful Veronica Chambers at a bar named Beautique on 58<sup>th</sup> Street in their lounge. I had been here once before and it was a premium cocktail lounge, and most importantly, it was very private. “*I know I am late Veronica but I have a good reason*” I started. Veronica and I had met multiple times before. The Hollywood elite was a small world and a tight

knit circle once you made it to our level. She was in many movies and we had acted together before although never as each other's love interest. I knew I could get her to understand or at least forgive me. *"I had made plans with my daughter. We had dinner tonight and she was supposed to stay over in the city and spend time with me tomorrow but as you know our meeting with the team for the table read got moved to tomorrow morning instead of Sunday."* Veronica challenged me and responded with *"I know I am annoyed they changed it to tomorrow too because I had made multiple plans that I had to then have canceled but that still doesn't explain why you are late Alexander."* I was honest for once and responded with the truth *"My daughter was upset with me. I haven't been in her life as much as I should through the years. All I do is work and I made these plans with her on my own for the first time and she was excited only for me to crush her once again and change them. But, I couldn't just leave after dinner and not spend any time with her so I drove with her in the car service to drop her off but it was an hour ride there and back to the City. The good thing is that there was not much traffic but the distance caused me to be about a half hour late to meet with you. I had already canceled the time tonight and tomorrow with her so I hope you can understand."*

I had won Veronica over. She was a mother and she worked just as much as me, so I know of all people she would understand. Veronica and I reviewed our storyline and discussed how to make our on-set chemistry convincing for tomorrow. I needed to nail this. I haven't had to actually read or try out for a part in a few years so it was one of those good "get your ego in check" moments. We parted ways to get at least a few hours of sleep and then met up with the crew for brunch at 11:00 a.m. the next morning. Morning arrived and I arrived at the brunch. After we ate, we had our scripts in hand to do our table read. The scene was when I had to break it to Veronica's character about my assignment and that by me doing this time travel, I was about to risk the possibility of losing her by



changing the future. This was the most intense scene in the movie so we had to nail it and have chemistry, or we weren't going to be the right actors for these roles. Although we already technically had the parts, they could decide still that we would be out if we didn't connect well together. Veronica was very easy to have chemistry with. Through the years, I had always thought she was beautiful. I admired her confidence too. She was a business woman, a terrific actress, a mother and a friend. But, she had been married for a long time so there was no chance of a pursuit. She divorced for the first time earlier this year and was finally single. Maybe spending time with her was perfect timing to explore something between us for the first time. We seemed to be very similar people.

We started the table read scene in front of the creative team, the director and investors in the movie. There have been many hired talent in this industry who had been let go after a table read. Maybe they challenged the material, or maybe they acted unprofessionally just reading and not acting the part, but I was going to give it my all and show them I was made for this part. My character was Adam and Veronica's character was Lily. We were a married couple starting our life together but living in a very difficult time where residents lived in fear.

*Scene.*

*Lily is alone in her kitchen drinking a coffee. She has her head leaning into her hands with a look of despair. She knows the world as she knows it may change but it's not the only thing she is worried about. She would most likely lose Adam. Adam is the only man she has ever loved. The bedroom door opens and Adam walks into the kitchen dressed and ready to leave on his trip. He runs over to Lily and hugs her.*

Adam

*You need to trust me Lily. If there is any way that I can help it, I will find a way to make sure that we are together.*

Lily

*Can't they send someone else? Why does it have to be you? I can't lose you Adam. Not now and not ever.*

Adam

*You know why it has to be me. I have to do this. I am the only one who has built the relationship with this regime. I am the only one who can stop this. I am risking everything important in my life to help save the rest of the millions of people who live under this horrible regime. As much as I want to say no, you know why I can't. I have to do this Lily. I don't want to lose you though. You know that. You know you are everything to me. I am sorry you are scared. So am I Lily. So am I.*

*Pause.*

*Lily grabs a letter she has written for Adam off of the kitchen island and places it in his pocket.*

Lily

*This is important Adam but I don't want you to read it until you are in the new dimension.*

Adam

*What is it? You are scaring me.*

*Lily places her finger over his lips to quiet Adam. She has news indeed but if he reads this letter now, he will never leave and she knew he was*

*indeed the only person to stop this regime. She knew she would probably lose him but she also knew he deserved to know what could've been.*

Lily

*It's not bad. It's good. Just promise me you will wait to read it.*

Adam

*I promise Lily.*

*Adam hugs Lily while Lily sobs in his arms. This may be the last time they will ever see each other but not if Adam can help it. A beep is heard outside.*

Adam

*I have to go. They are here to pick me up. I love you Lily. Until next time?*

Lily

*I love you Adam. Until next time.*

*Lily and Adam squeeze each other's hands and their fingers slowly part as Adam heads to the door to the men awaiting him. Lily looks from the window watching his car pull away. She wonders if she will even remember this moment once Adam travels back in time to change the future.*

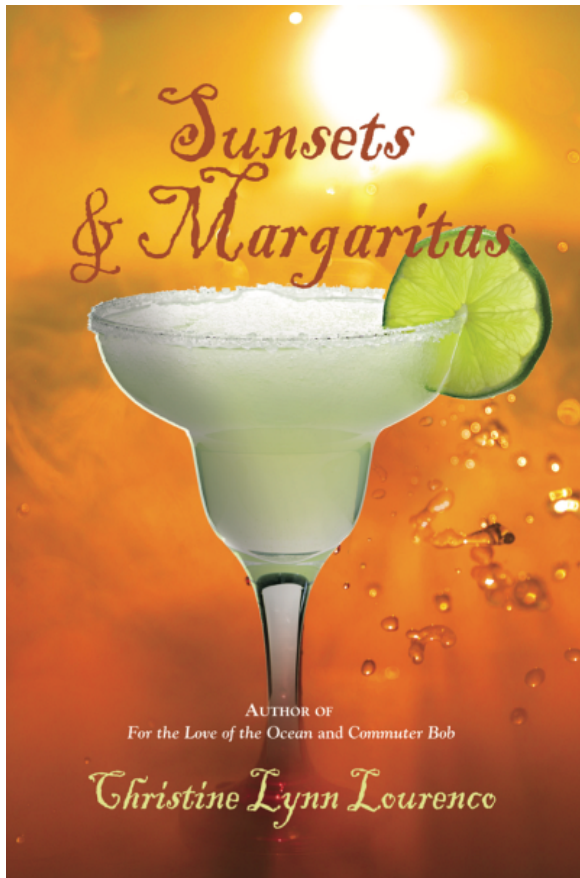
*End Scene.*

Veronica and I were so lost in the scene, we forgot we were even at a table read. We both had tears in our eyes and were lost in the moment. The creative team in the room started to clap and cheer. We had nailed it. Veronica and I were meant to be Adam and Lily. We more than nailed the part, it was a homerun and we were both hired officially on the spot.

I knew that Alexandria couldn't possibly realize how much this made me happy but I was excited to be over in the east coast by my little girl for a while. The only issue is some filming needed to start next week to get a few things filmed while New York was all decorated for the holidays. The good news is that my house in Spring Lake was going to have some guests soon, and I could be by Alexandria pretty quickly. The bad news is that I didn't get even a little break before jumping from one project right into the next.

When Alexandria called me to ask me about doing the Secret Celebrity Santa. I wanted to say yes on the spot. It was going to make a huge difference in so many lives and I would be supportive to my daughter in her role as well as for this young boy, Billy. But, I had just gotten this job and it was my very first week of work and I would already have a demand if I told them I had to leave for a few hours. It was early enough in the production that they could fire me if I wasn't careful as they had an out clause in my contract because of my prior on-set meltdown. But, I could hear how much this meant to her in her voice so I said yes. I would figure out a way to make myself available. It was about time that I gave back to the community too. I had been wanting to do something anyway and this was a great place to start, helping my daughter.

Despite all of these things happening in my life, I felt change coming. It was a good change though. I was finally coming into my own as I approached the age of fifty. Even though I still played the role of a thirty year old to help me recapture my youth and gave me the reminder of feeling young, the reality is that I am not thirty anymore. Being around Veronica felt good too. I could tell we have a connection and maybe for the first time, I can settle down again and focus on a relationship. Alexandria was going to see a new version of her father. The real version. The one that has been here all along and is finally revealing himself, and I couldn't wait to finally be the man I was always meant to be.



*Alexandria Thompson, daughter of a famous actor, is living in LA. She wants to escape her last name and moves to the Jersey Shore. No one knows she is the daughter of the famous actor. How will it turn out when people find out who she really is?*

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