

LOVE ON LOCATION

by
Lisa Girolami



2008

CHAPTER ONE

Those evil scumbags.” Hannah clutched Kate Nyland’s arm as they made their way past the camera flashes and constant shouts of “Hannah! Look this way!”

“And you love them,” Kate said.

“You bet your ass.”

As she usually did, Hannah Corrant stopped halfway down the red carpet and turned to the left side of the crush of people, pulling Kate even closer.

“Over here, Hannah!”

“Hey, Hannah!”

More flashes erupted as the paparazzi zeroed in on the couple. Hannah smiled seductively and Kate tried not to squint into all the lights.

When they turned to the right side of the throng, Mitch Sibell from Channel Two News pushed a microphone toward them. “Hannah, it was rumored that you weren’t going to be here due to exhaustion.”

“It’s just that doing films back-to-back can take its toll.” Hannah beamed. “But I’m feeling better now.”

“Kate,” Mitch said, “I take it you’ve been taking care of Hannah?”

The flashes and shouts seemed to get more intense. “Sure have,” Kate said as Hannah pulled her away. “Thank you, we’re late.”

Kate opened the door to the Kodak Theater and they stepped in. A sea of Hollywood’s “industry people” filled the elegant lobby. Trusses with massive lights lit the space with moody colors, and the grand staircase created an atmosphere of magnificent opulence.

“Let me guess, your agent set that exhaustion thing up.” Kate had to speak up over the crowd.

“Yup.”

LISA GIROLAMI

“You know I hate to get pulled into that crap.”

“It’s harmless. And it keeps me in the spotlight, which means you get some airtime, too, Kate.”

“Let’s go home after this, okay? No after-parties.”

“What’s with you lately?” Hannah frowned. “Do you want to put on fuzzy slippers and sit on our asses watching reruns of *M*A*S*H*?”

“Actually, after being out every night for the last eight nights that sounds pretty good.”

“Shit, Kate, we’re at the peak of our careers. Hollywood is lying there at our feet. You can produce any movie you want and I can get any lead role now. Lately you’ve been a stick-in-the-mud.”

The mud Kate actually felt stuck in was right there in the middle of the Kodak Theater. Millions of dollars, actors and actresses, studio executives, and more diamonds than Liz Taylor could ever wish for, and Kate knew that Hannah was right. This was the place to be. What was she so unhappy about?

“You can be so frustrating,” Hannah went on, “It’s no fun anymore going out with you. These are your people, too, you know. It wouldn’t hurt to mingle and find the next great director for your films.”

Just then, Cliff Forman, the lead in the latest blockbuster superhero movie, walked past with his entourage. He stopped to peck Hannah and Kate on the cheek before moving on to others.

“I think we need a little ‘us’ time, Han.”

“This is ‘us’ time. Christ, are you PMS-ing or what?”

“I don’t want to fight again, but all we do is go to function after function. I don’t think the press will miss you for one night.”

Hannah glared at her. “Don’t ruin this for me.”

Typical, Kate thought. She just wasn’t up to taking a stand that would turn into another fight. She took Hannah’s hand, “Tell me why we’re here for a play?”

“Grant Howser directed it in between films. He’s going to Russia next fall to shoot *Catherine the Great*, and I’m on the short list to star. He needs to see me here.”

“Isn’t that what your agent’s for?”

“Hannah.” A voice cut through the noise and they turned to greet Bettina Constable with *Hollywood Voice* magazine.

As Hannah schmoozed with Bettina, Kate wandered off to get them drinks before curtain call.

CHAPTER TWO

The plane on which Kate had managed to appropriate the very last first-class seat peacefully made its way toward Orlando's International airport. The gentle clinking of ice cubes against the inside of her glass of ginger ale lulled her as she gazed at the flat terrain that rolled along outside the window. As she turned to swish the cubes around in her drink, a slender hand came into her peripheral vision. The flight attendant had leaned down to remove the glass. Kate smiled up at her and the woman smiled back. As the attendant straightened herself, the dainty point of her airline-issue scarf fell back gently against the base of her neck. This, Kate noticed, was a far cry from the bedraggled scarf of the Los Angeles attendant Kate had seen only five hours before.

The overcrowded gate back at the airport in Los Angeles had been a disorderly mass of yelling, arm waving, and mass chaos. One broken airplane and a severe storm somewhere over Missouri had caused a crowd of at least one hundred people to mob the already taxed gate agent. The travelers swarmed around her, clutching their carry-on luggage and laptops with the death grips of exhausted cliffhangers, and all of them chattered at once. Kate fixed her gaze on the ragged scarf of the agent in front of her as she stood there waiting for the determination of her fate. It looked like a noose that she kept in reserve just in case she found herself at the end of her wits.

The agent's head was down, scanning the flight monitor with a frown that would scare off Mussolini. "Ticket, please," she said, not looking at Kate.

It was only when Kate handed over her platinum frequent flyer card along with her e-ticket that the agent looked up.

"Oh," she said taking the platinum card, "You're one of our elite frequent flyers, Ms..." she glanced at the card, "Ms. Nyland."

Kate smiled politely even though a large, rather smelly businessman

LISA GIROLAMI

was pushed up against her, along with many others, clamoring for a seat on the flight.

Kate stretched her five-foot-nine frame, already feeling the restriction of her surroundings. She shifted the weight from her right leg to her left. The agent smiled at her. “Kate Nyland. The movie producer, right?”

“Yes.” *Please say there’s a seat left.* Kate was praying inwardly.

“I saw *Last Night in Rome*. It was really great.”

“Thank you. Really.”

“I saw you in *US Magazine* last week.” She paused, then quickly offered, “At the opening of *Last Night in Rome*.” She smiled again. “Must be exciting.”

Kate wasn’t sure whether the agent was referring to the Hollywood life or the thrill of work well-done. Either way, Kate thought her very sweet. A simple, “Yes,” seemed the most proper response.

Flicking Kate’s platinum frequent flyer card with her finger, the agent said, “You’re one of the very few lucky ones today, Ms. Nyland.” With the swiftness of an experienced professional, the agent stamped a boarding pass and handed it to Kate. “First class, seat 3A.” She then returned her card and added, “Five hundred and eighty-seven thousand miles means a lot to us at National Skyways. Have a great flight.”

Normally, the notion of a few hundred thousand miles accumulated in her frequent flyer account did little more than ruefully remind her that work seemed to rule her life. But on such a trying afternoon, that little flash of platinum made the fortunate difference between the last first class seat remaining and sitting some countless hours longer in the City of Angels and smog.

Kate sipped on her ginger ale as the airplane made its way toward the southeast. The takeoff had been flawless and she put her head back to relax into her thoughts. She went through her mental notes about her latest film, *The Glass Cross*. They were four weeks from the commencement of principal photography, and the production crew was working diligently and efficiently. Most of the locations had been secured by the location manager; the casting was complete, except for a few bit parts, and the actors were in daily rehearsals. Everything was going fairly well, except for the one part of preproduction that necessitated the trip she was currently making. She then thought of Hannah, the

woman she had been dating for almost a year. She felt secretly guilty at the comfort she enjoyed being away from her. Kate sighed. What a mixed bag of emotions she felt when it came to that woman.

Hannah Corrant, pronounced Kor-ONT, as the press liked to remind their readers, was a stunning actress with golden blond hair and the kind of shapely legs that one of her previous co-stars had described as “the kind that could wrap around you twice.” A string of wildly successful movies had raised her to “it-girl” status, and she quickly moved over to the top entertainment agency in Los Angeles. Hannah was on the hot ticket chart with a bullet.

She had started her career as an out-lesbian, and the press ate up all the audacious photo opportunities, as well as some of the best sound-bites Hollywood was offering up recently.

The night that Kate and Hannah first met, they had attended a fund-raiser for the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. Dubbed “Women’s Fantasy Night”, the luxuriously decorated party was held at the Luxe Hotel on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Its primary purpose was to raise money for the Center’s community outreach programs. Its secondary purpose was to give the well-established women of Los Angeles a playground to meet, socialize, and be seen. All for a good cause, a few hundred women would enjoy a spectacular evening of cocktails, entertainment, dinner, and a silent auction.

The Beverly Hills Luxe Hotel was no newcomer to swank parties. Its opulent ballrooms and elegant décor set the stage for the evening. The theme changed each year. That year’s theme was “Fantasy.” The women could expect that the silent auction items had a suggestive imagination behind them, if not a blatantly wild bent.

Kate had gone solo, meeting up with five of her closest friends who were also from the entertainment industry. She had been the one to sponsor a table. With a last minute option to purchase the rights to a very interesting novel, she was almost a no-show that night. The table was paid for, and lord knew, her friends were not wall flowers, but they nevertheless showed up at her office and dragged her away from the script. The work was left unfinished, and Kate was enjoying an Amaretto sour and perusing the silent auction items.

Each auction item had the night’s fantasy theme in mind. Some were trips to exotic places, some were baskets of sexy goodies, while

LISA GIROLAMI

others were services like spa packages and limo rides—all with a sensual, whimsical, or adventurous fantasy built in. There were tables upon tables of auction items. Each was elaborately decorated, and a description sheet was placed next to the auction bid sheet. Each auction item started with an opening bid and a posted incremental bid amount. In order to start the bidding, all one had to do was sign their name on the first line and enter their bid amount. The next person would come along and raise the bid by signing their name on the line below the first bid and entering an amount that was at least as high as the incremental bid amount, and so on. Of course, the fun was in checking back on a bid sheet after signing it to see if someone had come along and outbid you. If they had, you were free to bid again. At the end of the evening, time would run out, the bid sheets would be collected, and the last name on the sheet, the one with the highest bid, would be announced.

“This one’s for a trip to the Bermuda Triangle. No lie.” Carrie, a film editor and one of Kate’s friends, had called the group over to see.

The bid was for six nights in Bermuda, plus a private jet to the approximate location where throughout history, a total of eight planes had vanished. It was called “The Bermuda Triangle Fantasy Challenge” package that dared the winner to “Take a chance on making history again!”

Kate and the other five women studied the offering.

“Sounds kind of romantic,” said Beth Samuels, Kate’s best friend, and owner of a motor home rental business. They’d known each other many years, both of them having cut their teeth in the film industry when they were barely out of their teens.

“Romantic?” Melanie, an independent producer, countered. “I guess, but I wonder who’d be liable if you actually disappeared?”

Sarah, Beth’s lover, was deadpan, “Not the giver, Mel, which is the reason this would be the perfect present for your ex-lover.”

Melanie nodded with interest.

Kate began laughing, not so much at Sarah’s crack, but at Melanie’s ardent consideration, and was unexpectedly bumped from behind. She turned around to find Hannah Corrant reaching out to her.

“I am so sorry. I didn’t mean to bump you,” she said as she placed a steadying hand on Kate’s arm.

“It’s quite all right,” Kate said.

Love On Location

Hannah's hand remained on Kate's arm for a moment. "The crowd is getting pretty tight in here." She smiled a devilish smile and then wandered off.

"Hannah Corrant. Wow."

Beth nodded in Hannah's direction. "Eagle Scout Productions rented five motor homes from me and one was for her. They were shooting *Call It Down* in Oxnard for six long weeks."

Sarah nodded. "Hannah played a vice cop in that one. You should have seen the flimsy dress she wore."

"Pretty incredible body," Carrie added.

"I saw it," Angie, a motion picture animal trainer, finally piped in. "So vice cops wear revealing clothes nowadays?"

With a shake of her head, Carrie grinned. "No, but vice cops have to unwind after work, now don't they?"

Angie snorted. "I don't know whether I should be thankful or not that I work more with animals than people like Hannah."

Sarah, Beth, and Carrie said simultaneously, "Thankful."

Melanie admonished her friends. "Come on, she can't be that bad."

"I believe they were talking about actresses in general," Kate said.

"Mostly true." Carrie sipped on her drink. "Though I have heard that Hannah's quite a pill."

"A pill?" Angie said.

Sarah nodded. "Hard to take."

A slow grin spread across Melanie's face as she looked in the general direction of where Hannah had gone. "Sometimes, it just might be worth it."

The fund-raiser guests began to make their way into the banquet room to find their assigned dinner tables. The master of ceremonies, a well-known lesbian comedienne, took the stage and welcomed everyone. Kate and her friends settled in at their table just as the lights dimmed.

"We have a great evening planned," the comedienne began as the crowd quieted, "and I would like to point out that it's been a long time since I witnessed this many lesbians shut up at once."

The crowd of about three hundred laughed and clapped as she

LISA GIROLAMI

went on. “And your being here tonight is most important. We’re here to raise money for the Los Angeles GLBTQ Mental Health Services community outreach program. Wow, what a worthy cause. There are thousands of men and women living in our area who can not afford their own medical care, mental health care, and so many of the other services the center offers. And you have so graciously given of your pocketbooks to keep these programs going.”

The crowd clapped again, and she took that opportunity to add, “And who knows, if the Republicans ever worm their way into Hollywood, then all of you out there may need these services as well.”

“Isn’t that the truth.” Melanie nodded grimly.

“Sadly, yes,” Sarah said.

“And let’s see, we’d add services like classes in, ‘The-world-doesn’t-revolve-around-me’... ‘The-get-a-real-job-for-a-living’ class... and of course the most widely attended class will be the ‘Get-used-to-not-having-your-own-private-dressing-room.’”

Beth groaned. “My motor home business would be sunk.”

Just as dessert was being served, the evening’s entertainment of singers and other acts was finishing up. The comedienne returned. “Thank you, everyone. You’ve been a great audience. I wanted to remind you that you have exactly twenty minutes to get your bids in at the silent auction. We’ve got over one hundred great items back there in the Governor’s Salon, and we want you to reach deep down into your hearts and purses and find more money to give. If that doesn’t work, then reach deep down into your girlfriend’s purse and find money *there*. Thank you.”

Carrie folded her napkin and placed it on the table. “Come on, you all, I want to see how much the bid for the Bermuda Triangle Fantasy Challenge package is up to.”

Sarah chuckled. “Carrie, why don’t you bid on it?”

“I just might.”

“There’s a one night package for two to New York for dinner that I think I’ll bid on,” Kate said as she got up from the table.

Beth, Sarah, and Melanie got up as well.

“Just one night?” Sarah asked.

Kate nodded. “One night. It includes round trip air, a mystery dinner and drinks, and one night’s accommodations at the Essex.”

“That sounds great.” Mel said excitedly.

Love On Location

As they all walked toward the Governor's Salon, Beth asked, "Kate, who would you go with?"

"Don't know. I just thought it'd be a great getaway."

Melanie nudged Kate's arm. "Kate, you can pick any of a number of dates."

Beth corroborated Mel's comment. "True. Kate's never had any problem in the dating department."

Kate shrugged. "Just making one stick is the hard part."

Mel added, "Be careful who might stick. Your one night in New York could turn out to feel like an eternity in the Bermuda Triangle."

Carrie leaned close to Kate and said, "You just go on and bid your heart out. And then go have fun...with whomever."

Beth went off to bid on the Virgin Islands Fantasy Escape package for Sarah and herself, while Carrie decided to check out the Bermuda Triangle Challenge. Melanie and Sarah headed for the bar while Angie went in search of the African Safari that she'd overheard someone talking about.

Kate made her way through the crowd of women and back to the "One Unforgettable Night in New York Fantasy" package. The package described the trip as a private chartered jet for two from Los Angeles to New York. A limo would pick up the passengers and whisk them away to a specially arranged dinner at a mystery location. After dinner, the two fantasy travelers would be driven to another mystery location for their choice of champagne or wine, and then the last stop would be a VIP room at the Essex House overlooking Central Park. A morning breakfast would be served just before the limo ride back to the chartered jet bound for Los Angeles.

The bidding was already well underway, and with less than twenty minutes left in the bidding, Kate wrote her name down and filled in the next bid increment, which was an increase of \$300 over the previous. She stepped back and heard a voice right behind her. "I see I have some competition."

Kate turned and found herself face to face with Hannah Corrant again. Arguably the hottest actress in Hollywood, Kate had never met her, but there was no mistaking who she was.

"You're bidding on the New York trip?" Kate asked.

"Yes. Sounds great, doesn't it?" She stepped around Kate and wrote a higher bid down, canceling Kate's bid.

LISA GIROLAMI

Kate was going to let it go, but when Hannah turned to face her again she said to Kate, “Any other trips that you’ll bid on instead?” She had a smug look on her face.

Kate smiled and picked the pen back up, and wrote down another bid for New York.

Hannah smiled back. “I want this trip.”

The sense of entitlement in her tone made Kate cringe. She had dealt with more than a few of the “my-shit-doesn’t-stink” type of people in her life, and Hannah was an apt fit. Kate flipped the pen back and forth in her fingers. “I’m sure you do.”

“You see.” Hannah stepped so close to Kate that she could feel her peppermint-tinged breath tickling her nose. “I’ve been working non-stop for months now, and I need to get away. *Really.*” Hannah then glanced down at the bid sheet, making it obvious that she knew who Kate Nyland was. “*You*, Miss Nyland, of all people, would know that. You do understand what I mean, don’t you?”

Kate *did* know what Hannah meant. But it had nothing to do with needing a holiday. Winning the trip had just become the prize in a game Hannah had been playing with Kate. She no more needed this particular trip than she needed a tummy tuck. Hannah could call any number of people, her personal assistant, her manager, the president of the studio filming her most recent movie, and they would hastily drop everything to arrange a trip to New York via her choice of private jet, to her choice of hotels, and for her choice of days.

Kate took the pen from Hannah and again wrote in a higher bid. Turning to Hannah she said, “It’s all for a good cause, isn’t it?”

Hannah sighed heavily and held out her hand. Kate hesitated before finally offering the pen to her. Hannah delicately took it from Kate’s hand. With a bit of drama, she wrote on the bid sheet, turned back to Kate to smile at her, and walked away. With the pen.

Kate chuckled to herself, shaking her head. What a piece of work. Very gorgeous, but a piece of work nevertheless. She looked down at the bid sheet. Hannah had not only increased the bid by the incremental amount, she’d added ten thousand dollars to it.

“Congratulations on your win,” Kate said to no one.

