

Life's Twists and Turns

By : Dream Seeker

Amanda is a young woman in her early twenties experiencing life's twists and turns on her own for the first time. The easy route is always an option; however, Amanda is determined to make a difference in the world....on her own. Choosing the difficult route, Amanda is often faced with eventful new challenges that can make or break her future success. Amanda must balance her busy life between having fun and doing responsible adult activities of working and going to college.



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Life's Twists and Turns : Chapter 1

CHAPTER 1

It was Friday evening and I was busy preparing for going to the club with my roommate and best friend, Lindsay. As I looked in the mirror at my hair and outfit, I contemplated making changes. My hair is long, straight, and brown. For tonight's occasion, I have my hair pulled up high with loose curls dangling down. After reviewing my outfit, I decided to wear my plain red halter top, white shorts and knee high shiny black boots. I have always been a sucker for the color red! I quickly put on my brown eye shadow & mascara which goes well with my bright blue eyes. It doesn't take me long at all to get ready.

I hope Lindsay is ready to go as it is nearing ten thirty. We on the east side of town and it will take at least thirty minutes to get there. "Lindsay are you ready yet?"

Lindsay replies, "I need a few more minutes."

I decide to grab a beer and check my bank account balance while I am waiting for her to finish. It is Lindsay's turn to drive tonight so why not get an early start. I am relieved to find that I have enough to pay the bills and can spare thirty dollars for tonight to cover my entrance fees and drinks. Lucky tonight is ladies night and we each can get five free drink tickets.

After about fifteen minutes, I hear Lindsay say she is ready to go. Lindsay has short brown hair and has not really done much with it other than put in some gel to give it more volume. She is wearing blue jeans and a blue spaghetti strapped shirt. The blue shirt really compliments her soft brown eyes. I wonder what took her so long to get ready tonight?

We hopped in her little green Geo Prism. The car runs well for being in six accidents (only two were her fault). The rest of the accidents were from either from her ex-boyfriend, Jeremy or another vehicle slamming into hers. She hasn't replaced her passenger side mirror which was destroyed after her last accident. It is amazing that all of the doors still open and the car hasn't been totaled yet!

When we arrived at the club, we are stopped at the entrance for an ID check. Luckily my other best friend, Sara is dating someone who works at the club. Tonight he is working the front entrance and we get in for free. Lindsay does not like Sara which makes it difficult for me to arrange time for both of them alongside of working and going to school full-time. Sara doesn't mind Lindsay though. We get our drink tickets and check in our coats, then head for the bar. Lindsay has changed a bit after we turned 21. She typically only likes to go to places that serve alcohol. Normally I only drink on the weekend evenings as my time is filled completely during the week.

Enough about work and school, I am out to have fun tonight, I thought. I slipped my ID and coat check ticket in my boots. After grabbing our drinks, we head to the dance floor and begin moving gracefully to the music. I have always thought of clubs as a "meat market". My friend Stacey had once called clubs this and it has stuck with me ever since. When you think about it, guys are scanning the room for chicks to dance with and try to get lucky with later on. I guess if you think of meat at a grocery store, people scan the shelves for the best looking piece to bring home for dinner.

In no time, two guys come over to us and begin bouncing behind us to the music. Lindsay and I have gestures we use to determine if we should move away from the guy behind us. I do not see a gesture from Lindsay; however, the guy dancing with her is straight U-G-L-Y. His pants are nearly dropping to the floor and the guy has nasty looking scars all over his face. He looks like he crawled out from under a rock right before he came

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to the club. She can do so much better than him. I nonchalantly nod my head to the left so that Lindsay can get the hint we need to move. Lindsay catches my signal and begins to follow me to the other side of the dance floor.

Before reaching the other side of the dance floor, we notice that it is time for another round of drinks. When we arrived at the bar, those two guys who were just dancing with us were up there as well. Lindsay sees what I was talking about right away. "Let's go to the other bar," Lindsay says.

When we get our drinks, Lindsay decides that I am not drinking fast enough. "Chug it and get another," Lindsay says. I can't object to that, I have had a long, hard week. Using my third drink ticket, I decide to switch my drink order to a Bahama Mama. Bahama Mama's are one of my favorite drinks.

As we are walking back to the dance floor, some guy takes a grab at my ass. I immediately turned around, shoved him and said "don't touch me" in such a warning tone that it caught a bouncers attention that was standing nearby. I guess he must have seen the whole incident because he grabbed the guy by his arm and drug him away, hopefully out of the club. Guys like that can ruin a good time real fast.

By the end of the night, I ended up using all of my tickets plus two of Lindsay's since she was driving. There was no need to dig into the thirty dollars that I decided earlier could be spent. It is nearly two thirty in the morning and the club is starting to clear out. By this time, I am feeling pretty buzzed. As we are heading to the coat check-out I realize I couldn't remember where I put my coat check ticket. I searched my pockets, not there. Maybe I put it in my bra? Nope, I would feel that. Finally, I remember that I had slipped the coat check ticket in my knee high boots. Sure enough it was there.

When we arrived back at our old farm house (We rent the house from Lindsay's Uncle for a reasonable rate of five-fifty per month), I was definitely spinning. My ears are buzzing from the loud music in the club and my legs sore from all the dancing we did. Being tired and low on energy, I climbed onto my pillow top mattress and was out in no time.

I woke up the next morning with a splitting headache. I knew I shouldn't have had as many drinks as I did. After eating a good breakfast and chugging some water, I began to feel better. It was one thirty in the afternoon and I only had a few hours before work would begin. I am the Assistant Manager at our local Pizza Mia Restaurant. My shift was due to start at five in the evening.

Usually on Saturday's I need to do my homework for college, but I just wasn't feeling up to it. I decide to take a shower and see if I feel any better afterwards. After what seemed like a twenty minute shower, I definitely felt even better than before. I decided I should at least begin writing my English informative essay that was due on Wednesday. I began to research Walt Disney Parks and write on their origins. Getting started is the hard part. Once I get going, I can finish pretty quickly. The essay needed to be ten pages double spaced. Getting an "A" or "B" on my assignments is really important to me. I know that one day a potential employer I am interviewing with may want to view my transcripts. Also, my father will reimburse half of my tuition if I get a good grade.

Around four-fifteen, I stopped writing my essay after getting through about three pages. It was time to get ready for work. I put on my blue collared work shirt, name tag, and khaki pants. I pulled my hair in a ponytail and put my hat on. Then I grabbed my keys, said bye to Lindsay and went out to my car. I drive a red '93 Pontiac Grand AM. The vehicle has had a lot of mechanical problems, but it still looked good. It has only been in one wreck which occurred when I was seventeen. For the mechanical problems, it seemed like I had replaced almost every major part on the car to keep it running. The engine went out after only having the car for one month. I also had recently changed out the transmission. Being young with good credit but no history makes it difficult to obtain a car loan. Although I make all of my bill payments on time, I still am getting

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denied for a car loan. Paying high tuition fees for even a community college makes it difficult to obtain a good savings amount to use as a down payment.

When I arrived at work, we were already getting very busy. The shift leader I was relieving briefed me on the morning activities and was out the door with the quickness. On my shift, I am particular about being the only one that handles the cash register so I went to find the person with the key. Pizza Mia does not have security cameras and money has been stolen out of the drawer on my shift. I do not want to be held accountable for any money missing so I hold the key at all times when I am managing. It makes it difficult because I need to go back and forth between making pizzas and handling the cash register. Who says I take the easy route? For some reason I always take the hard route. Nobody likes that I keep the key, but hey it is not their ass on the line if money is missing.

Being a manager is not always easy. I have to take complaint calls from customers. Tonight's call was from a lady who said we sent her the wrong pizza topping. I made the pizza myself and knew it was correct. Good customer service states that we should offer the opportunity to the customer to make the order right. Pizza Mia requires that the customer returns half of the pizza in order to have a new one made. The lady informed me that she ate almost all of the pizza already. I apologized and let her know we would not be able to remake her order. She got pissed, but there was nothing more I could do. This sort of complaint happens all the time. It is hard sometimes to decipher if the customer wants to just get free food or if they have a legitimate complaint.

The rest of the evening went smooth. We slowed down around ten and I let most of the crew go home for the night. I went to the office to look over the inspection check list the General Manager left for me. It is normally their job to ensure the restaurant is ready for inspection. Unfortunately for me I was always in charge of this process. The last inspection we had was given five stars and I wanted to do the same. I believe the General Manager took credit for our five star inspection result because I didn't receive any sort of a "good job" from the owner, Bob.

Bob also has two other Pizza Mia Restaurants on the east side of town. Rumors frequently fly about him having an affair on his wife with one of the female delivery drivers. Also, people say he is a drug dealer. I try to stay out of the senseless rumors as much as possible, although I have my suspicions. Bob lets his General Manager at one of his other stores borrow money from the drawer and visit the bar next door on her shift. Sometimes people have paychecks bounce, but so far, I have not had this problem.

I have worked at each one of his stores as an assistant manager, delivery driver, and crew member for the past year. The current store I am working for is the closest to my home which is only about a ten minute drive. There are times that I need to go to other stores to pick-up food supplies that we run out of. Our General Manager is not very good about ordering food. We have run out of pizza dough in the middle of a Saturday night rush before. That is the worse time for that to happen. We have to tell the customers, "I am sorry, but we cannot make original crust pizzas for about forty-five minutes". Most hang up and call another Pizza place.

This is one of the reasons I am going to college. I do not want to toss pizzas the rest of my life. This doesn't mean that I am going to slack off and have a poor performance, attendance, or attitude on the job. I want to learn as much as possible from this workplace so that I can use my experience to help the next company I work for. My hope is to find a job that I can enjoy going to every day and learn new things all the time.

Around one in the morning, I began my closing job duties. I have to put all the food in the walk-in, locking the doors, and finish the nightly finances. This includes counting all of the money and making sure it matches the computer system. I hope that everything matches perfectly because I would like to get home and relax for a bit. Luckily tonight, all the numbers did match. After making the night deposit, I went home to find Lindsay up crying.

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"Lindsay, what is the matter?"

"Oh, it's really nothing." She said.

"Come on Lindsay, really. Tell me. You never cry like this."

"It's just that I really miss Jeremy." Lindsay said.

Hmm, Jeremy, he was a real jerk. Jeremy was the reason she dropped down to 100lbs. He would insist that she arrived at his house by a certain time or he would break up with her. He never hit her, but being rude and commanding was enough for me to determine what a jerk he was. If Lindsay so much as glanced at another guy (not looking to get with them, but just like observing someone as they passed by) he would get really angry with her. Jeremy even wrecked her car and didn't pay Lindsay for the damages. "You two split up six months ago, are you having second thoughts about breaking up with him?" Everything about him just makes my blood boil. I hate how he treated Lindsay.

"Yes and No" she said.

"Well, what do you mean by that?" I asked.

"Amanda, you know that Jeremy and I were together for three years. It's hard to just forget about that." Lindsay said.

I thought carefully for a minute. I could see she was in a very fragile moment. "I know you had a lot of good times together. It will be hard to get past that. You have to consider the bad times as well. Is it worth going back to those times? He probably will never change."

"I know, Amanda. That is what I always tell myself."

"Well it is up to you. Lindsay, you know how I feel about Jeremy. I did not like one bit how he treated you. You deserve so much better!"

"I know, Amanda. It's going to take more time I think for me to get over him. I really do not want to go back to him but I can't help to think about him sometimes. Maybe I just need to meet someone else to take my mind off of him."

Rebound idea, huh. I am not so sure that is a good idea, but I am up for anything if it keeps her from going back to that jerk. "Possibly, have you considered enjoying single life for a while longer? Isn't it nice to not have someone hovering over your shoulder always telling you what the fuck to do?" I hope she doesn't read into that comment too much and go back to the Jeremy idea.

"Yes it really is. I suppose you are right. Hey, do you want to have a field party next weekend if the weather is decent?" Lindsay asked in a pleading tone.

Hmm, that is not a bad idea at all. This may be just what Lindsay needs to get her mind off of Jeremy. Our land on the farm house has a large field where we have had many parties. We have not had a field party since last fall. The field is large enough to build a large bonfire and pitch up numerous tents. We usually get a Keg from the local liquor store and charge \$5.00 at the entrance to recover the costs. Then I usually make jello shots which go over well. "Let's check the weather and if it is not going to be rainy or too cold we can get one together. It is April and the weather could still be too cool for an outdoor party. I also need to check my work schedule. Are you going to be off next weekend?"

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"I think that I work on Friday night and Sunday morning. I am looking at the weather and they say that Saturday will be clear with a high of 70 and low of 59" Lindsay replied.

"As long as I do not have to work on Saturday night we can have the party on that night." I said.

"Great, can you check your schedule tomorrow and let me know?" Lindsay asked.

"Sure, I will call you after I look at my schedule." I hope that I will not have a heavy load of homework that weekend. It will make it difficult to fit in working, the party, and time to do my homework.

"Amanda, you are such a great friend, thanks for listening. I am really tired though and I am going to bed. Good night."

"Good night, Lindsay." On that note, I went to my bedroom to change into my night clothes. It has been a really long day and I was looking forward to lying down in my comfortable bed. As usual, I was out quickly.

Chapter 2: Life's Twists and Turns Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2

I woke up the next morning around eleven feeling refreshed. I thought about checking on Lindsay, but then I remembered that she had to be at the Pizza Mia at eleven to deliver pizzas. Lindsay works at the location where the General Manager will leave on her shift to go to the bar, not mine. For her it is nice because I can pick-up shifts for her if need be, however, she cannot manage the store so it doesn't work both ways. My stomach begins loudly rumbling as I venture into the kitchen to look for something to eat. It's strange but some days I just do not feel like eating breakfast. I decide to go with a turkey sandwich and some chips. As I am eating my breakfast I remembered my Walt Disney report, which the thought of it makes me groan. I wish that I had more time to watch TV and relax like Lindsay is able to do. Lindsay does not go to college. She says she will go one day when she is ready. I don't know if anyone can exactly be ready for college. I guess for most people it is not as hard. Many students get full rides to college either in scholarships, grants, or parents funding. For me, I could get a full ride from my parents if I live at home for the duration of my college. I have contemplated that idea and every time I choose the hard route of living on my own and working while attending school. I enjoy not following curfews and not having to report to my parents on my every whereabouts like I am a sixteen year old teenager. Even in my early twenties, if I lived at home, these would be the rules.

After about two hours of working on the report, it is time to go to work. My restaurant location does not open until three pm on Sundays. I finished four pages and only need three more before Wednesday night. As I am getting ready for work, I receive a phone call from Bob, the owner of the Pizza Mia. "Amanda I need you to get into work as soon as possible, I need to talk to you about last night."

I simply said "yes, sir" and we hung up. Hmm, I wonder what he could want to talk to me about. All my paperwork was correct. I think I did short the cash register drawer by \$50 on accident but the money was deposited in the bank. Maybe that is what he wants to talk to me about.

When I arrive at work, I find three police cars out front. Shit, I thought, what happened here last night? My heart is pounding profusely as I walk into the restaurant, unsure of what I would find once I walked in. I scan the restaurant to try and figure out what happened. There were four police men that I could see so far. Two were fingerprinting the table where we toss the dough. The other two were talking to Bob in the manager's office. I notice that the safe is missing. Wow, I wonder how the crooks got the safe out. It was very heavy and I thought bolted to the ground.

After Bob finished talking to the police, he called me over. "Amanda, since you were the last manager in the store last night, I need you to answer a few questions from the police."

I swallow nervously. I hope they don't think that I did this. Surely not, there is no way I could lift the safe and besides I have never stolen anything. "No problem, what questions do you have for me" I asked looking at the two policemen directly in their stern eyes.

"Mam, can you tell me what time you locked up and if you saw anything suspicious last night?" Asked the tall blonde policeman.

"Sir, I locked up around two-thirty am. I did not see anything upfront; however, I did not look in the back lot." I responded calmly, although inside I was tied up in knots to think some criminal may have been hiding in the back lot just waiting for us to leave for the night.

"How much money was in the safe? We need to know anything missing so that we can update the theft report" Asked the shorter, heavier police man.

"For some reason, I shorted our cash register drawer last night. There was \$200 instead of \$250 in the drawer. The \$50 I shorted in the drawer and the nightly income is in the bank night deposit." I responded with clarity. Bob raises his eyebrows for a moment and my heart skipped a beat. I was worried about his response as to why I had shorted the drawer. Will I be in trouble? I know he will be happy that he lost \$50 less than what he was first figuring. Oh, say something. I don't like to be in trouble so let's get this over with. "Amanda, I am not sure why you shorted the drawer, but I am glad you did it last night. Please try not to make it a habit, especially on Sunday because the bank is not open. What other workers closed with you last night?"

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"Yes, sir I will not short the drawer again. Ben and David were the delivery drivers and Danielle worked inside with me." I responded.

"We will need to speak with everyone who was here at closing last night." Said the short police man.

"Amanda, please find their phone numbers for me. Then you can take the rest of the night off. I need to close the restaurant tonight so we can finish the investigation. We can reopen in the morning." Bob said.

Great, a night off! Maybe I can actually relax. Sorry it took your restaurant to be robbed, though. I quietly thought. I located each employee's phone number, scribbled them on a piece of paper I got from the printer, and handed them to Bob. While I was in the office, I also checked my schedule. I worked Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday morning. I worked Saturday and Sunday night. I am scheduled off on Wednesday and Friday. Shit, I thought. I am going to have to try and trade with the General Manager. He always wants Saturday nights off. What was I thinking when I said we would try to have the party on Saturday? I am lucky he gave me Friday night off again because normally I have to work both days.

I decide before I leave to scan the store once more to try and put together what happened. I found a trash can knocked off the cart and bashed in pretty bad. The cart was severely dented so it is possible the thieves put the safe on it to get it out the back door. The back door board was slit and the lock was taken out. There was a hole in the location where the lock originally was. I guess the criminals sawed through the door to remove the lock. After my scan, I determined that there was no additional damage I could see so I headed home.

On my way home, I opened my cell phone to call the General Manager, Scott. "Amanda, how is it going tonight up at the restaurant? Is everything ok?"

Oh, he doesn't know. I wonder why Bob didn't call him first. I guess it is because I was the manager on duty last night and there was no need to bother Scott with the news at the time. I thought about waiting for Bob to tell Scott, but I then again, I cannot lie to answer his question. Scott is my boss. "The restaurant was robbed last night." I relayed my observations to Scott who seemed unmoved by the occurrence. Scott has two jobs and I believe that most of the time he thinks of the Pizza Mia as his second job by his actions. For instance, the fact that he does not manage the restaurant inspections on his own and entrusts them entirely to me, his assistant. Also, on the nights I am scheduled to work with Scott he is often in the office busily working on paperwork which does not look like Pizza Mia documents. I usually run the shifts when we work together. "Scott, I know you normally schedule me to work on Saturday nights, is it possible that I could switch you? I could take you Friday night shift. I need this Saturday off if you could work it out." I waited patiently for his response.

After what seemed like an eternity, Scott firmly responds with "I really need my Saturdays off, Amanda."

"I know, Scott. It's just one Saturday. I work almost every Saturday and hardly ever ask you to switch schedules." I respond, hopefully.

Scott is silent for a minute. He is thinking about it! "Amanda, I guess we can switch schedules this weekend, but don't make it a habit."

"No problem Scott and thanks" Then I thought about food for the party. I better wait and ask him another time about receiving a discount on food for the party. I mean he did just let me have Saturday off. We hang up. When I return home, Lindsay is in the kitchen watching television. "Hey Linds, how was your day? Did you make lots in tips this afternoon?"

"No, not really Amanda it was pretty slow this afternoon." Lindsay replies. "Sunday afternoons during non-football times are dull, you know this."

Unable to wait any longer to tell Lindsay, "I have Saturday off work so we can have the field party."

"That's great, Amanda. I will get out the tractor on Friday afternoon before work to cut the grass and gather some wood." We have a farm tractor which is much needed because the house is on ten acres. As I mentioned before, there is plenty of room for tents and to have a large bonfire. We just need to cut the grass because it is extremely long. We did not cut it before this past winter. When the grass gets as long as it is now, I like to call it our miniature jungle.

I thought about other items that needed preparing for our field party. "I guess I can pick-up the keg, ice, cups, and jello shot ingredients on Saturday morning. Then I will make the jello shots and prepare our MP3 CD's." Lindsay looks as excited as I am. We are eager to get on the invite list. "Lindsay, can I invite Sara? I know you two don't get along, but I was hoping that you would try for just one night."

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"Amanda, I guess I can try but it doesn't mean that I am going to like it. She is just not my type of friend. I do not know how to explain it."

"Thanks, Lindsay! I have about fifty people I want to invite. How about you, Lindsay?"

Lindsay thinks for a moment then responds, "I don't know maybe fifty as well. Want to say it starts at seven pm?"

"Seven sounds great! Well, I need to send out the invites and finish my homework." I quickly leave the room before she can try and talk me out of my plan. Sometimes Lindsay tries to get me to push my homework back. I am sure she is getting ready to go to the bar. With my busy schedule, I like to finish my work early to reduce stress. Besides, I am not too big on the bars. Occasionally is fine, but the drinks are too expensive there and you always have to worry about getting a ride home.

After several emails, text messages, and phone calls it was about eight thirty in the evening. I figure I need about two to three hours to finish my homework. Lindsay had left for the bar and the house was disconcertingly quiet. It couldn't be a more perfect time to finish my work because I shouldn't have to worry about interruptions. Around midnight, I finalized my informative essay on the Walt Disney Parks, as well as the little bit of math homework I had.

Finally, time to relax! I scan the television for something to watch. After not finding anything, I decide to go to bed early. Besides, tomorrow starts my long week. I have classes Monday through Thursday in the evenings from six to nine-thirty. According to my work schedule for next week, I work in the mornings, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday ten am to four-thirty pm. A few hours extra sleep will be nice and relaxing in itself.

Chapter 3

I wake up late Monday morning; it is 9:30am. *I wonder why my alarm clock did not go off?* With no time to shower or eat breakfast, I hurry around the house gathering my work uniform and tossing my hair up. Hmm, I hate it when I am running late; it always puts me in a foul mood. Besides, I am not particularly happy about the long day I have in front of me. Preparing for inspections are not my favorite job duties. There is an exceptionally large list and today I only have one driver to help in-between deliveries. If only I was completely in charge of the store, things would be handled quite differently. First of all, I truly believe that many of these items on the checklist should be completed on a routine basis. For instance, mopping the walk-in. Wouldn't that be a health violation to not mop a walk-in at least once per week?

When I arrive at work, my mood hasn't changed much. Even though I am in a poor mood this morning, I still cheerfully greet the driver, Larry. After unlocking the doors, I stop to think a moment about what happened yesterday with the break-in and police investigating. I was really lucky that the robber came after I had left for the day. I have heard of burglars locking workers in the walk-in where there is no cell phone reception. A shiver runs down the entire length of my spine just thinking about how lucky I was. I wonder if Bob will have a new safe delivered today (but I doubt that, he probably will drag his feet). Hopefully the cash register has change available.

After I had set out all of the containers of food on the ice line, I went straight to the office. There is still another thirty minutes before we open. Not looking forward to the inspection list, I decide to work on the following week's schedule. I create the weekly schedule for everyone but Scott and myself. For the most part, the schedule is the same every week, I just need to change the hours and work around a few request offs. After I completed the schedule, I reluctantly picked up the dreaded inspection guideline.

1. Scrub all floors
2. Organize walk-in and mop floors
3. Dust and Windex front lobby
4. Take out menu boards and clean entirely
5. Check all exit signs are working properly
6. Check that menu boards are properly working (lit up)
7. Clean and sanitize all equipment
8. Clean and sanitize entire ice line, inside and out
9. Clean and sanitize all shelves and counters
10. Clean and sanitize pop cooler
11. Ensure all food product is properly dated
12. Ensure no food product is stacked on the floor
13. Clean and sanitize all trash cans
14. Ensure all pizza boxes are not lying directly on the floors
15. Clean all light fixtures

Again, many of these should be done on a regular basis for health code reasons. Well, no sense in sulking over this list, time to divide and complete. Before I can begin dividing the items between Larry and me, the phone rings.

Answering the phone, I say "Thank you for calling "Pizza Mia, this is Amanda, how may I help you?" I feel like a receptionist sometimes when I answer the phone. The local school has requested 20 pizzas, 10 1-toppings, and 10 specialties to be delivered at 12:30pm. Looking at the clock, I only have an hour to make the pizzas and provide driving time for Larry.

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Making twenty pizzas by yourself is time consuming. Larry is fairly new and does not know how to make pizzas. I grab the dough and start slapping out twenty large pizzas. After the dough comes the sauce and cheese. After topping the pizzas, I slide them into the oven which runs each pizza on a conveyor belt. At the other end of the oven, Larry is ready to catch the pizzas and cut them. The person catching the pizza has to be quick. Bob took off the guard shortly after I started because some workers were moving too slowly at the pizza cutting table. When this happens, the pizza gets backed up in the oven and some burn. It is quite frustrating now if the person at the pizza cutting table works too slow because the pizzas just splat on the ground need cleaned up, and then re-made. It doesn't take long for someone to realize they need to move quicker at this station now.

Before I am finished making the twenty pizzas, the phone rings again. It is Bob asking if I need some change brought to the store. Oh, shit; I forgot to check the cash register. I was thinking about that when I walked in the door, but already forgot. Quickly, I reach over to the cash register (luckily the phone reaches) to check. It's still empty. I inform Bob that I need him to bring some change and politely ask permission to hang up so I can finish the School's pizza order.

Larry asks, "what was that about?"

Since Larry was not on the shift, I am not sure if Bob wants him to know about what happened. "I am not sure, Bob is coming by though."

"Oh, ok." Larry responded. I can tell he seems nervous about Bob coming by. This tends to happen with new people until they hear about the rumors through the grape vine. Then after hearing the rumors, it seems like people begin to relax some, almost like some respect for the owner has been lost.

After the pizzas are finished, I decide to knock off some quick items on the list before Bob arrives. He has at least a thirty minute drive that is if he is coming from his home. I begin with checking the exit signs and Dusting the front lobby, including the red light fixtures hanging over the front counter. One exit sign is burnt out, so I called Bob to ask him if he could bring a replacement bulb on his way in.

The phone rings again, this time it is Lindsay. "Amanda, I was just in a car accident." What a shock!

"Lindsay, are you ok? What happened?"

"I am fine, but my car is not. I was backing out of the parking lot at work and hit another car."

"Is the other driver ok? What happened with your car?"

"The other driver is fine and I have some large scratches on my back bumper now."

"Oh, I am sorry to hear that. I will take a look at it tonight; maybe we can buff it out. Right now though, I really cannot talk, I have a lot to do. Can we talk about this after school tonight?"

"Sure thing, Amanda it is no problem. I will let you go, see you after you get home from school."

Can anything else go wrong today? Another thing added to the "to do" list. She really needs to be more careful! Lindsay is probably hung over from the bar last night.

Bob arrives about fifteen minutes later and hands me the change for the cash register. Also, to my surprise, he changes the burnt out Exit sign himself. I am glad he didn't ask me to change it as I really do not like ladders. Well heights at least, even on a short distance up the ladder.

Life's Twists and Turns

"Amanda, I can see you have been working on the inspection list. Did Scott finish the inspection checklist schedule?"

Shit, I do not want to tell on my boss, but then again, I am not going to lie to my boss' boss. "Bob, Scott left the inspection list up to me to complete."

"Do you know what you are doing? Are you confident we will pass?"

Fuck, I knew he was going to ask that question. Did he really have to ask that? My suspicions are now confirmed, Scott must have took full credit for the last inspection that we received a five star (which is the max). "Yes, of course I know what I am doing and I am confident we will pass." I really want to call Scott now and ask him why he didn't give me credit for the last inspection but I refrain. No need to stir up shit over the past. At least now I will have the chance to prove to Bob what I can do and Scott will not be able to take the credit this time.

"Everything is looking really good so far. Be sure you take the boxes out of the front counter and wipe down the shelf."

"No problem, Bob, it is on the list of things to do. Do you know when the inspector is coming? "

"The inspector will come sometime next week, unannounced."

"I will be ready, no need to worry." I wish I could bring myself to tell you that it was me that got the five stars last time, but I just can't do it. I respect my boss; even after all of the extra job duties (that are listed as his job description) were added. My stomach at that moment growled loudly and I could feel my cheeks flush rosy red.

"Get you something to eat on the house and keep up the good work! I need to go visit the other store, it seems your roommate got into an accident with one of our customers." With that comment Bob leaves.

Oh no, I hope he is not going to fire or suspend Lindsay. We have not encountered a driver that had an accident before on the job. Well I take that back, let's say this is the first "collision" accident we have come across. Last winter, we had a bad snow storm. I was managing that night and we had two drivers. Both drivers called me within 15 minutes apart saying they slid off the road. One was walking back because his car was stuck on SR138 (which is the same road as Pizza Mia). The other driver was stuck in an apartment complex about 20 minutes away. He ran off the road and was unable to drive back so at that point, I did not have a delivery driver and I had to close the store so I could go pick-up the drivers. What was worse about the whole situation was that I had asked Bob about two hours prior to close delivery for the night due to the road conditions. He said absolutely not and that we were to keep delivery open. I decided on my own to close sections of our delivery that had roads deemed as too dangerous for the delivery drivers (ie: large hills, sharp curves, huge ditches, and cliffs). Our delivery area definitely has a lot of dangerous roads, even without snow. After picking up the drivers that night, I called Bob once more and stood my ground. The roads were too dangerous and it is not worth risking people's lives to deliver a pizza. I informed him that I do not have any delivery drivers and if he wanted to keep delivery open I would need his help. Of course Bob did not want to deliver that night (he owns a truck). So he said I could close the restaurant early.

After that night, we were more careful to close roads as soon as they became bad. Bob still doesn't let us close delivery for bad snow storms, but at least he allows us to cut out the dangerous roads. People who want delivery on those dangerous roads are not happy, but they definitely understand.

Life's Twists and Turns

The phone rings, and my whole body jolts back to reality. Larry grabs the phone and this time it is Scott. "Amanda, Scott would like to talk to you."

Shit, here we go, Bob must have told him about our conversation earlier. "Afternoon, Scott, how are you doing?"

"I'm good. Why did you tell Bob that you are handling the inspection process? I just had my ass reamed by Bob."

"Well, my boss' boss asked me a question and I felt like I couldn't lie to him."

"Amanda, you know I delegated the task to you but I do not want Bob knowing that."

"Well, I am sorry, I didn't know. And besides, I really do not want to lie to Bob. Why didn't you tell him that it was me that got the five stars the last time?" Before I could stop, it was already out. That is not like me to not think through my words!

There was a long pause and then a sigh. "Amanda, I have been under a lot of stress at my other job. As my assistant, I expect you to help me with some responsibilities. You did great for the last inspection and I told you that before. Let's leave it at that, no need to let Bob know who actually got the five stars. We are a team. Listen, I am going to be late coming in tonight. I need you to stay until seven."

"Scott, I can't. My class starts at 6pm and I need to leave by 5 at the latest." I am not skipping class for some Pizza company.

"I really do not have a choice in this matter, Amanda. I will be in late. If you cannot cover me, can you find a shift leader who can?"

"Sure, I will check with them to see who can cover our gap in shifts. Anything else?"

"No, that's everything. Thanks for your help!"

After we hang up, another thought enters my mind. What a day! I guess he is delegating his responsibility to cover his shift start time as well. After checking with all of our shift leaders, no one can cover the gap in time tonight. Hmm, I guess if I want to keep my job I have to skip the first hour and half of class. I really do not want to walk in late. That will be so embarrassing. Guess I better call my teacher to notify him in advance of my planned tardy for tonight.

We picked up shortly afterwards and before I knew the time had slipped to 7:30 and no Scott. I treaded off to the office to call him. He is meddling with my future now with his tardiness.

"I know I am late, Amanda, and I am sorry. I had a really important meeting for my other job. I am on my way now and will be there in thirty minutes."

"Scott, by the time I get to school, there will only be an hour and a half remaining. College is really important to me, just like your other job is to you. I can't be skipping class like this if I expect to pass and graduate. Your other job may be your future and I will do everything I can to help you. Please respect my future as well. I have worked hard to get where I am now and there is no way I am going to let ANYONE mess that up for me."

"I know Amanda, and this is the first time I have asked you to cover. I will be there shortly."

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Hmm, seems like he only cares about his future. This is so frustrating. I do not think I am going to go for the last hour. This teacher normally lets class out early anyways. I will just have to call him tomorrow to explain what a prick my boss can be.

When Scott arrived, I grabbed my stuff and left without even saying "hi". That is not like me, but he took advantage of me tonight. I am not going to skip school again for him or anyone else. I pay too much for my classes. I do not want to be slinging pizzas the rest of my life and I definitely do not want to have to work two jobs after college to make ends meet.

Chapter 4

When I arrive home, Lindsay is not home. She probably went to the bar again tonight. I guess I will have to look at the damage on her car tomorrow. I decide to grab a bite to eat and set my feet up. I am just exhausted and hungry. After working on my feet all day I am looking forward to a nice hot bath. As I am running the bath water, the phone rings.

"Hi, Lindsay, I can barely hear you. Are you at the bar?"

"Yes, and you would not believe it. I met this guy tonight. His name is Logan and he is so hot! I can't wait to tell you about him when I get home tonight. Will you be up late?"

Geez, she is practically yelling in the phone over the music. They must have a local band there tonight. "That's great that you met a guy! I can't wait to hear about him. No, I think I am going to take a long bath and then watch some TV for about an hour and turn in." Finally, someone to replace the whole in Lindsay's heart that Jeremy left. I am so happy for her.

"I probably will not be home until after bar close time. Guess I will catch up with you tomorrow. Did you work late tonight? Normally you come in to change before school."

"Yeah, Scott didn't get to work until after 8. I missed my class tonight." Please don't ask anymore, I really do not want to be reminded of the bad day I had today. Besides, I really don't want to bring in my bad day on Lindsay after she seems so happy about meeting Logan.

"What a prick, did you tell him you had class?"

"Yes, but I don't think he cared. Scott had a big meeting today at his other job. It won't happen again, believe me." I try so hard to be responsible and work all my scheduled shifts plus go to my classes. Not to mention completing my homework because my future is important to me. After I have graduated, I will be able to get a decent job doing something I like to do and the pay will be much better. It just seems so far away right now.

"That was definitely a dick move on his part. Well I have to run; Logan is back with my drink. Love you Amanda!"

Silence again. The silence can be so peaceful. It's like the calm after a storm, so relaxing. Some people do not like any silence and always need a television or radio going in the background. Not me, I can definitely enjoy soaking up this peaceful bliss. Along with the warm water, I feel as if I am being naturally healed from my long and physical exhausting day. As I close my eyes, I flicker images of a warm, sunny, beach, my dream vacation spot. I love the sun and the ocean. There is nothing more peaceful than lying on a beach soaking some rays and listening to the wave's crash on the shore. If only I could finish college sooner, then maybe I can move to the beach so I can enjoy the sun and ocean on a daily basis.

My freshman year in college is nearing the end. There is less than two months before summer break. I wonder if I could take off a week from Pizza Mia to take a miniature vacation. My friend, Danielle from college is always going on vacation either to Cedar Creek Lake where her dad owns property or Florida where Danielle's mom lives. Danielle is able to get most of her college paid by grants since she has a child. The remaining portion she owes is taken out in loans. Danielle also still lives at home with her father. Danielle doesn't have any rules and her father lets her throw parties whenever she wants. Her child support covers all the baby's needs so she is lucky enough to not have to work alongside of going to college.

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My skin is starting to wrinkle so I decide it's time to get out of the tub. I wrap my hair in a towel and head to my bedroom. After choosing my most comfortable pair of pajamas, I decide to call Danielle. Besides, she may be able to tell me what I missed in class tonight.

"Danielle, hey, how are you?"

"Where were you tonight? That is not like you to miss class. I wish I would have known you were skipping, we could have went to the bar or a restaurant."

Why do all my friends like the bar so much? There is nothing more imprudent than going to a bar to spend \$50 or more to get wasted and then have to figure out how you are going to get home. No thanks I'd rather stay home and drink or go to a friend's house for the night. "No, skipping wasn't intentional tonight. My boss needed me to work late."

"Well, you didn't miss much. Professor Langston didn't even show up until 6:45 tonight. I left about 6:15 after Langston no showed, Virginia told me about it later. She said he showed up 45 minutes late and then dismissed class an hour later. There was nothing really important that we missed"

That definitely makes me feel better. What are the odds that the professor was late on the same day I skipped? I guess my luck is not so bad after all today. Virginia, I really should call her as well. We have not hung out in a while. I also need to invite her to the party. "Good, I am glad to hear. Hey, are you going to be able to come to the field party on Saturday?"

"Definitely, can I bring a few friends?"

"Sure, no problem, just remember no fighting." Our field parties are so much fun, as long as there is no fighting. The fights make the party seem more exciting, but we just want to have fun without anyone getting hurt. We had a fight break out last year between two of Lindsay's guy friends. Lindsay and I had to threaten calling the police to get those boys to leave.

"I will remind them of the rule."

"Hey, Danielle, where are you planning this year's vacation to?"

"Not sure yet, but I think I may spend the entire summer at the lake. You want to come down?"

An entire summer at the lake, wow, I have never had that long of a vacation before. I couldn't do that though, I have bills and college tuition to pay for. It would top my list for best summers though. "I will see if I can take a week or two off at Pizza Mia to come down to the lake, but I do not think I could spend an entire summer there, unlike some people who have it made!"

"Suits yourself, well listen I have to get going. The baby needs me and I have to work on my paper for English. I will see you on Wednesday in class."

"Ok, see you then. Give the baby a kiss for me!" I am so glad I do not have a kid right now. Don't get me wrong, they are cute and adorable but it is nice to give them back to mom when they cry or need a diaper change. I plan to finish college, get married, and have a house before I have a baby. Until then it's absence and stocking up on birth control.

I know my plans sound boring and traditional, but hey I haven't even met the guy of my dreams and besides I do not have the time now to even think about a relationship. Things would be different if I didn't have to work

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but there is no way I am going to live under my parents' roof again. I don't want to be one of those bum kids from the movie "Ready to Launch" that cannot move from mom and dad's roof. Besides, what fun is it if all of my friends live clear across town? To top it off, if I had a curfew then I couldn't go to the club with Lindsay on the weekend and I would have to quit the Pizza Mia due to the late hours I have to work. I tried to move back home at 19 after living on my own for a year, but it just didn't work out. After having the freedom to make choices on my own and no curfews it seemed like I was back in high school.

There is nothing good to watch on TV. I guess I will check my email and go to bed. I am pretty tired and I don't want a repeat of today, waking up and only having thirty minutes to sleep before work starts. I hope Lindsay is having a good time with new boy tonight. It would be nice to have find a guy to date but that is well down on my "to do" list at the moment. Besides, I am a true believer of not dating guys you meet in a club or bar. For Lindsay, she meets guys and then the relationships are based around drinking and hanging out at the bar. If I were to find someone to date, drinking would not be the core foundation of our relationship. I would like to find someone who is future oriented like me instead of always living in the here and now party stage. Need I add, one that is not just into the "sex" part of the relationship as most guys are. Don't get me wrong, sex is great, but it is not worth it if that is all the guy wants out of the relationship. Those type of guys seem rare and hard to find.

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