

Danger At the Beach

By Sandi Circle

Danger At the Beach (Beach Mystery's Series Book 1)

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Dedication

To my Mother, who always wanted to write a book.

You were the most generous, giving person I have ever known. You would help anyone in need and I strive to be more like you. I will miss you every day of my life, but I'm glad you are no longer suffering in pain. Thank you for teaching me to believe in God, right from wrong, and for always being proud of me.

I love you

Prologue

Sipping drinks on the beach under an umbrella is my happy place.

In times of stress and discomfort I dream of a spot on a deserted beach where I can disappear from life and reality. I can become someone exciting. Someone who doesn't have problems in the real world. Someone who doesn't have a failed marriage and three grown kids with problems of their own. Ahhhhh, it's all so wonderful at the beach....

Then reality would hit me right between the eyes. Bam! I was back.

Back to my ordinary life. Back to my monotonous existence. Back to working in a mind-numbing office, eating boring healthy food, and generally feeling uninspired with life. What am I going to do with the next thirty plus years?

Granted I am only 47 years old. But if God sees fit to give me another thirty or more years who am I to complain. Although I cannot even fathom what I will do with myself for that long.

I need a plan....

Chapter 1

Typing away at her computer, Sophia Grace Adams has a pencil between her teeth, a furrow in her brow and a look of determination on her face. She has been working many hours, as of late, to complete her latest assignment as a copy editor at The Daily Times in corporate USA. She takes her job very seriously and deadlines make her work even harder to complete her task. No one has ever called Sophia a slacker. Her bosses love her work ethic and she regularly gets praised for her desire to meet her goals.

Sophia is sneaking up on 50 years old, but is still quite appealing in her appearance. With her slight frame of five foot four she has light honey colored hair and crystal blue eyes. Although she has to cover up a few strands of gray hair, she is still very attractive for her age. She dresses conservatively, but professional and her figure is fit and toned. She likes to take care of herself and eat right, which shows. Although the years have been rough on her she has maintained her looks, with the help of as many over the counter products that she can afford. Call it vanity or the desire to hold on to at least one thing from her past. Or maybe it is to have power over one thing to keep it from spiraling out of control. Who knows? But it seems to be working.

“Hey Soph!” Ava called out to Sophia, who still had her head down working diligently. Sophia didn’t respond, so Ava threw a paperclip at her. “Hey!” responded Sophia with a smile when she finally looked up.

Ava was Sophia’s co-worker and cubicle mate. About the same age, they worked closely together on related stories and often shared breaks together to gossip or discuss office rumors. Ava had a juicy one today.

“Guess who just quit?” Ava leaned in and whispered.

“Who?” asked Sophia.

“Luke!” replied Ava as a gasp came from Sophia.

Luke Dalton was the CEO of the paper and very respected for his views on local politics and the community. Not to mention he was drop dead gorgeous and rich. At 52 years of age he stood about six two and had dark chestnut hair and eyes like chocolate. With a few graying strands at the temples and a few laugh lines around his eyes, he was very distinguished in his looks. Away from work he was an avid adventurer so his body was rock solid and ready for whatever came his way.

“No way!” said Sophia too shocked to come up with anything else to say.

Sophia had always had a slight crush on her boss, although it would be politically incorrect to ever mention that to anyone.

“What happened?” asked Sophia surprised.

“Looks like he and the big cheese had a heated difference of opinion, so he told them where to put this job,” stated Ava.

“You know he has always had a dream to relocate to a tropical location and start a business there,” said Ava. “I think he has relatives in the Bahamas.”

“Yes, I have heard him say that before,” said Sophia. “He wants to get back to helping real people instead of all this corporate political business.”

“Well, I personally wouldn’t mind jetting off to a deserted island with the fabulous Mr. Dalton!” whispered Ava. “What a hunk,” she added.

“Well you just might have to wait awhile for that, Ava,” said Sophia. “Isn’t he seeing that famous model now?”

“No, didn’t you see the papers last night? They broke up!” exclaimed Ava. “It’s all over the news that he’s an eligible bachelor now. Maybe I’ll even have a go at him,” laughed Ava. Clearly tickled by her own joke she was practically rolling on the floor giggling.

Noticing Sophia biting her lip, Ava straightened up and looked at her with a questioning look. "Hey, what's up with you? Did I say something wrong?"

"No, not really, I just don't think it's appropriate to laugh about someone else's misfortune," stated Sophia rather matter of factly.

"Since when!" exclaimed Ava. "We are always talking about people in this office and..... oh, wait a minute! You got the hots for Mr. Bossman, don't you?"

"NO I don't!" shouted Sophia. Making several people in the office look up and notice her standing over her computer glaring at Ava.

"Shhhhhh, sit down Sophia.... take a chill," smiled Ava. "Your reaction just convinced me of it. Wow! Who would have known, little old you... falling for that sexy creature. Not that I can blame you, he is quite the catch."

"I'm not falling for him, Ava," whispered Sophia after she had sat back down. "I'm just going to miss him around here, that's all."

"Mmhmmmm... that's all huh? OK, I'll let ya' slide this time," said Ava snickering as she logged onto her computer to get back to work. Smiling she looked back over to Sophia and for the first time noticed how upset she looked at him leaving. Wow, she really did have a thing for Luke, she thought. That gave her an idea...

Chapter 2

Luke Stormed into his office after having a big blow up fight with the President of the Paper. He could not believe it had come to this. After all these years, and all he had given to this company, it has ended like this. He just could not believe it. He cooled down slightly while he sat down in his luxurious office chair and looked out the window. His office, his window, his view, now gone he thought, as he sat there looking depressed. He did have some good friends here.

He thought about his future while he threw his stuff in his laptop bag and cleared off his desk.

Thought number one – he didn't need the money. His father was the great Lawrence Dalton and had left him a sizable fortune when he passed away from cancer a few years back. Being a successful businessman, along with a substantial insurance policy, made Luke a wealthy man in anyone's eyes. He had always loved his Dad who was very loving and generous.

Thought number two – hadn't he always said that he yearned for a more fulfilling career closer to the people? Not so high in the ivory tower, but down amongst the people where life happens? Had he lost sight of that through the years working here with all the fame and glory that came with this position? Which brought him back to his Dad again. He would always take him to the islands to visit his Uncle Max where they would help out the island people in one way or another, always doing good.

Decision made... this was a good thing. He waited and pondered.

"Yes," he said to himself. "A good thing."

He got up, picked up his bag and started to exit his office just as he remembered someone he wanted to say good bye to. Sophia had always been

so helpful whenever he asked. Whether it was to proof an article or type something up for him quickly, she never minded, and she was good. He would miss her.

He walked back to his phone and called her extension. Half expecting her to be away from her desk and half expecting her to ignore the call... she picked up.

“Hello, this is Sophia,” she answered tentatively after seeing his number come up on her phone display. She wondered why Luke was calling her if he had just quit. Shouldn’t he be leaving the building?

“Hi Sophia, this is Luke,” he said.

“Hello Mr. Dalton, what can I do for you?” she answered curiously.

“Please call me Luke. We’ve worked together long enough that I think it’s ok,” he chuckled. “Would you mind coming into my office for a second? I’m on my way out and I’d like to chat for a moment if I could,” he asked.

“Sure Mr. Dalton, I mean Luke. I’ll be right there,” she responded shyly.

“OK, thanks,” he said before hanging up.

She looked up and Ava was staring right at her with an inquisitive look and a smirk on her face.

“What???” Sophia asked. “He probably just has something he wants me to finish up for him.”

“Well go!” Ava yelled. “Go find out!” pointing to his office and snapping her fingers. “Hurry!”

Sophia got up and hastily turned back and grabbed a pad and paper in case Luke wanted her to take some notes or something. She had no idea what he would want her for. She was driving herself crazy for the past half hour with the thought of him leaving. She shot Ava a questioning look and walked

demurely to Luke's office on the other side of the building. Her desk was in the maze of cubicles in the main office, but Luke had an office down the hall with actual doors and locks and furniture. She had only been in his office a few times. It was intimidating. She knocked on the door and slowly opened it waiting for a response.

"Hello, come in Sophia. Thanks for coming so quickly, I won't be here long". Luke said as he stood up to wave her in. He motioned for her to take a seat directly across from him in an overstuffed lounge chair as he sat on the sofa. She sat down and got comfortable.

"I suspect you have heard the news already Sophia," Luke said.

"Yes, I was hoping it wasn't true," Sophia blurted out without thinking. "I mean, it isn't true is it?"

"I'm afraid it is," Luke said. "John and I have had differing opinions for quite some time on how to run this paper and I guess today was the day it finally came to a head."

"I'm so sorry Mr.... Luke," she smiled. "I have really enjoyed working for you over the years."

"Thank you," Luke replied smiling back at her. "That is one reason that I wanted to ask you in here before I left. I wanted to say good-bye, but also to thank you for all of your help, and to tell you that I think you are a valuable employee. Please, if you ever need a reference don't hesitate to ask. You are proficient, dedicated, and hard working. I could not ask for a better employee." He looked at her directly and said "I would even hire you again if you ever decided to leave this company."

"Well thank you Luke that really means a lot to me," Sophia said blushing and looking at the floor. "I try hard to do my job correctly, and it doesn't hurt

to be a perfectionist," she said shyly. "Where will you be going that you could hire me?"

"Well I haven't quite figured that out yet, but when I do I will give you a call if that's ok," Luke responded.

Sophia just sat there looking at him in awe. She could not believe what she was hearing. He would really hire her at a new company. Could this be the start of her new life she has been so desperately seeking? A new beginning?

"Are you OK?" asked Luke quietly.

"Oh yes, sorry," she grinned. "To be completely honest I have been thinking of a change for a while now and you kind of surprised me. I don't know if it's a mid-life crisis or what, but I just need something different. I want to make a difference. I want to be needed and appreciated for something worthwhile and not just proofing words on a page if that makes sense," she continued. "I just need something more out of life, you know?"

Surprised by her words he said "I completely agree! I know exactly where you are coming from. I guess sometimes you just need that little push from the nest to get on with your life." He sat back content that he had come to that conclusion with her help. He smiled at her and said "If you don't mind could you write down your number for me on the pad of paper you have there? It might take me a few weeks to get situated, but I'm serious about having a job for you. How do you feel about the beach...?"

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