



It Began in  
Brooklyn

Flor Tedesco

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**For every woman who has ever felt like  
they were not enough.**

# CHAPTER 1

## *VALERIE*

With a shaky grip on the mic, I signaled the DJ to lower the music. At least 200 people at this fancy five-star hotel garden turned to look at me. I took a deep breath, standing taller and sucking in my stomach even more than my dress was doing for me.

“Good evening, everybody. Thank you for coming.” The quiver in my voice was inevitable, and I was smiling so much it hurt. I found Lily at the front of the sea of people looking like a proud aunt cheering for me, and regained a little confidence. “If you don’t know me, I’m Valerie Becker, writer and producer of *Brooklyn*. I could not be happier that my little baby is finally becoming a reality due to an amazing team behind the cameras and this incredible cast.”

All the actors, Seaside Studios members, *Brooklyn*’s production team, and their guests clapped. I could even hear some cheers, probably from James, one of the main actors. I awkwardly waited for it to die down to introduce everyone involved.

Firstly, the Rowley brothers. They were the head producers at Seaside Studios, an up-and-coming media production company, who had trusted me enough to fund the 15-episode series with minor changes. *Brooklyn* was my passion project that took three years of sweat and tears to

write. I pitched it to everyone and their mothers, losing count of how many times I got rejected. Now here I was, introducing Tamara, the director, trying not to faint from the craziness of it all. I felt like I was watching a stranger on stage talking with my voice and still smiling way too much.

Lastly, the real stars the press wanted to see tonight. I introduced the actors, ending with the main characters of my story: Brooklyn and Jake, played by Lily Fontaine and Noah Hall. Everyone on stage clapped in my direction as a thanking gesture, while camera flashes kept blinding me.

Lily was the first one to come hug me when the speeches and formalities were over.

“Take that, Missouri. We made it to Hollywood,” Lily said. Her blonde hair was in a simple updo that let her earrings dangle with her excitement. I had never seen such a happy and proud grin on her.

“We’ve been ‘making’ it for years,” I laughed, trying to calm her down, though I knew that was useless. I didn’t want to dim down all of our efforts since moving here for college, but it was true that this job was bigger than anything we’d done. I was just trying to ignore the pressure of it all.

“You know this is different. Plus, I’ve got all night to make Noah notice this—” she showcased her long, red dress that fell flawlessly on her thin waist—“and I know Steve has to be around here.”

My stomach revolted at the thought of her finally introducing me to this writer she thought could be my soul mate. Lily was an all-or-nothing type of girl, and so far, my love life had been at zero for too long. I couldn’t deal with more expectations today.

“Please don’t push it,” I said, begging her to stop looking around for him.

“I won’t. I’ll be as casual as a—”

“Peacock,” I interrupted her.

“Yes. No!” she answered without listening and then corrected herself. “Don’t disappear; this is your party too.”

Lily mingled in the crowd while I lurked around the edge. One would think that as a producer I would love hanging out at parties, making connections, and talking to friends and colleagues, plotting my next big move with a fancy drink in my hand. But no. My anxious brain drained fast. I only wanted my ideas to come to life and keep everything organized.

Instead, I liked taking mental notes of people’s behaviors and using that information to my advantage. People tended to gather in circles, and you could tell a lot by the angle of their bodies and drinks. They usually either wanted to get out of that conversation or be left alone with that one person. The smiles spoke volumes as well. It was harder to notice when you are talking with someone, but without the context and the sounds, it was a constant game of I’m-laughing-because-I-want-something-from-you or I-actually-like-you.

Oh man, was this world full of fake smiles. Like Brent Rowley’s, talking with a man I didn’t know. Though I could be biased since I was sick of his strong temper. It had been a dreadful year of dealing with him, but I had to swallow my pride most of the time and be grateful my series was green lit.

Brent caught me looking and nodded. I wasn’t sure if it was for me, but there was no one else around me, so I dragged myself to meet two men in suits.

“I don’t believe you’ve met Robert,” Brent said, aiming his drink toward him. “He is one of our investors.”

“I haven’t,” I said, shaking his hand. “Pleasure to meet you.”

“Likewise. Nice strong shake there.” Robert eyed Brent with a smug smile. “Mind me asking how old you are?”

*I do mind at the moment, sir.* “Twenty-five,” I answered. I almost asked him about his age to even things. He looked well in his 50s, but I chickened out when he chuckled.

“We are getting old,” Robert said to Brent, grabbing him by the shoulder like old pals. Brent still had that disturbing smile. I had stepped in the middle of a power talk and I was his pawn.

“Just you,” Brent laughed his way out of Robert’s grip. “Valerie is a promising producer, very persuasive.”

“Is she?” Robert asked, raising his eyebrows. Was that choice of words and tone necessary? I was starting to get uncomfortable.

“Thank you.” I was sure I had the same smile I was judging seconds ago. You couldn’t escape from it. “My work will speak for itself. If you’ll excuse me, I was looking for someone.”

I walked straight out of that conversation. I had had enough for one night, so I dedicated myself to amicably smile at everyone as in saying, “Hey, I’m glad you are here, but I’m so busy, let’s talk later.”

I wandered by the couches area outside where some of the cast members were hanging out. James Fletcher and Harper Miller sat opposite of each other, trying to talk over the music. They had genuine smiles, which made me glad because their characters, Finn and Erika, were a couple in *Brooklyn*.

Then there was Amy Lee, who coincidentally shared the same first name with her character, talking with Lily and Noah. It looked more like the girls were talking and Noah wanted to get out of there, because he was the only one that looked up and acknowledged me in the distance with a



smirk. I smiled back, raising my eyebrows in sympathy.

Lily's dress had long cuts on the sides, which meant that when she was sitting, most of her long legs were exposed. Her body language was screaming for Noah's attention, taking any excuse to laugh his way or touch his leg. But he was lying back on the couch, relaxed with his hands in his pockets and, in that moment, smiling at me. I felt a little self-conscious that I was staring, so I kept walking.

We only had the budget for one A-list celebrity to make people talk about *Brooklyn*. When Noah Hall walked into the casting room months ago, I was a bit hesitant. He screamed money and problems at the same time. He had been the heartthrob everyone talked about since his famous movie *Suddenly Sophia* came out. It was based on the books every teenager, even I, had read and loved. Lily had had a massive crush on him since high school, and her scream when she found out he could play her romantic interest was still resonating in my ear. I had trouble detaching him from all that, but his audition won all of us over and his passion for the project kept surprising me.

The reporters were long gone and everyone was free to continue drinking and eating under the stars, with the company of good music. However, when I went to fetch a drink to cool down my body in this typical Los Angeles night, I found something else to sweat about: we had run out of ice.

I wasn't even in charge of these details, but I couldn't help it, I felt responsible. I did get a kick out of resolving problems. I typically didn't want to stand out, but when I was the boss, you could bet I was going to be heard.

After yelling at some people for making the wrong order, I ended up calling a nearby gas station I found online and sent someone to get the damn ice. It was a good excuse

to feel useful in this scenario with which I was so out of sync. But then the familiar tiredness of the stress got the best of me, and I needed to avoid any humans for a bit.

I went to the bathroom and stared at my reflection in the mirror. I could hear the muffled music from the party. I wanted to throw cold water on my face, as the heat was unbearable, but I didn't want to screw up my makeup.

"Valerie Becker?" asked a short lady as soon as she walked in and saw me.

"Yes," I replied, startled. *So much for being alone.*

"What a pleasure. I'm Camilla, a friend of Tamara's." She stretched her hand for me to shake, so I did. "She has been praising you so much for your commitment to equality in the industry. I wanted to thank you. I hope this project gets all the attention it deserves."

"Oh, no, thank you." I smiled, baffled.

The woman disappeared in a stall. I looked at myself in the mirror again with sudden confidence. I wasn't doing something revolutionary when I hired Tamara as the director and at least half the crew to be women, as in not just the assistant of the assistant. Of course payments didn't care about gender either. For me it was logical, but the fact that it had been a request said a lot about what "normal" is in this industry.

Still I felt I had to prove everything I did was right when people like Robert found it cute that I knew how to shake a hand. Not for me, but also for every person I was giving a job to and every woman like Camilla who saw me as someone that had the power to change something.

Just as that confident smile had shown up, an irrational fear I had been ignoring for months replaced it. I took a few breaths in and out. I knew I could do this, but right now I didn't have the energy to even be at this party anymore.

I headed to the reception of the hotel to get distracted. How many people came in and out of a hotel at 2 a.m. on a Thursday night? They had to have some stories to tell, and I was all about those.

As I approached a sitting area, my heel got stuck in the carpet and I twisted my ankle. I lost my balance, but I managed to grab onto the sofa I was aiming for. I bit my tongue so I wouldn't scream proportionate to how badly it hurt. I struggled a bit until I sat down and let a huge breath out, letting my phone bounce on the couch.

"Are you okay?" a familiar voice startled me from behind. I turned around and Noah was making his way to me. "I saw that." He tried to conceal his chuckle.

"Oh, shit." I covered my face, feeling it burning up. "This is embarrassing. I'm not drunk."

Noah laughed and sat on the armchair to my side. "You're fine. I couldn't take two steps in those shoes."

I reached down to touch my ankle. It was warm, but not swollen.

"Let me see," he said as he got down on his knees and grabbed a cushion.

I removed my heels and moved my foot up a bit, grimacing from the pain. He gently took it and placed it on the cushion over his knee.

"This is like Cinderella goes wrong." I cackled at my own "joke" because that's what I did when I felt uncomfortable. He chuckled for real this time. Why the hell did I just make this weird? I had the man kneeling in front of me with my foot on his hand, for God's sake.

"Who were you running away from?" he asked as he examined my foot. I smiled in relief because he didn't make it about him. Overthinking was second nature to me.

"Everyone," I said, no point in hiding. He was too gentle

for my foot to hurt, but I did flinch when I stretched it.

Noah snorted. "I'm gonna get you some ice."

"There is no ice!" I shouted as an instant reflex. "I've spent the last half hour arguing with everyone at this hotel on why they had run out of ice in a moment like this. I finally found someone to bring more, but they aren't here yet. There's some employee I screamed at that should be laughing at me now." The words came out fast and I regretted them as soon as I finished. I had made it clear I was sober, right?

Noah stared at me in confusion, scratching his forehead with a grin. "I'm sure they have some kind of ice pack for these things. I'll be right back," he said, ignoring my pointless rant. He stood up and safely placed down my leg on the cushion. "Don't try to run away now; it's way past midnight and you still look gorgeous," he added nonchalantly.

I raised my eyebrows in surprise by his compliment, but he was already gone to see my reaction or to expect a response. I looked down at my dress. It was a quite fancy black gown that showed off my curves. I had been in the hands of professional makeup artists and hairdressers, which was a first. I did feel fabulous. But I was also tired and sprawled on this couch, with a foot on a cushion. I self-consciously straightened my back and fixed my dress.

I reached for my phone out of habit. I had a couple of texts from Lily. Obviously.

**1:50 a.m. Lily:** Where are you?!

**1:51 a.m. Lily:** I'm with Steve \*wink wink\*

**1:59 a.m. Lily:** Vaaaaa!!!!

**2:06 a.m. Lily:** Should I be worried?

Just reading that made me exhausted. I stalled on how to answer. Why ruin the party for her when she was having fun?

**2:18 a.m. Valerie:** I'm working on the ice situation.

It wasn't a lie. I left my phone on my side and focused on my foot. I stretched it and moved it to test how much it hurt. It wasn't bad enough to be broken or sprained, but I could not get back in those heels.

"Told ya," Noah said triumphantly, waving an ice pack at me.

He hesitated on how to proceed until I moved my feet to the side so he could sit at the ends of my legs. He took the pillow on his lap and I placed my feet over it, setting the ice on the bad one. I twitched a little when the cold hit my skin, but it helped.

"Thank you, Noah. You really don't have to do any of this," I said. "It is pretty weird." I didn't know I'd be the interesting scene to look at in this fancy hotel lobby. The injured mess hanging out with the handsome celebrity.

"No worries. I was getting a bit tired of the party anyway."

I raised a suspicious eyebrow at him. "Is that why you followed me?" I asked, my mouth acting faster than my brain. I hadn't meant to be so obvious about how aware I was of him, but there was no going back.

He nervously chuckled and fixed his black jacket. Under it, he was wearing a black and white shirt with an abstract design that made him look fashionable and edgy. It was a high contrast to his usual simpler style he wore to meetings.

"That sounds too creepy for the guy that actually found ice for your hurt ankle." He avoided the answer as he ran his hand through his brown hair. In this light it looked way

darker than it was. “I was looking for you to say goodbye.”

“Oh, and you got stuck playing doctor.” I felt guilty. I didn’t need him doing all of this, even though it was nice. “You can leave. I’m fine.”

“I can stick around for a little longer.” He shrugged and playfully added, “Different story if your feet smelled.”

“Glad I showered,” I said, once more regretting how silly that sounded. I realized this was the first time we had actually talked about something other than work. Or even been alone.

“How is the other foot?” he asked as he tickled it.

“No! I’m ticklish,” I protested, pulling my foot away.

Noah let out a hearty laugh, and I took the opportunity to mockingly hit his face with my good foot as I made sure not to flash my underwear.

“Got it, that one works.” He defended himself by grabbing my leg and placing it back down. His other hand kept the ice pack still on my ankle. “Is this helping?”

“I guess. I don’t know how I’m going to go back in there though. I can’t put on those shoes or go in bare feet.”

“Don’t go then.” He lay back and got comfortable on the couch as if he planned to stay there a long time.

“But I have to.”

“I can carry you around as you say goodbye.”

I snorted. “Oh, yes, that would be practical.”

“Any guy out there that would want to punch me in the face for that?”

Now that was a smooth way of asking if I was single. “No...but I know some girls that would be a bit jealous.”

He pretended to be shy about it, but we all knew of his charms. “Would you?”

I sarcastically laughed. He was a natural flirt. How dangerous. “Too busy for that.”

My phone buzzed; I had to check what was going on. Mainly to find a way to change the topic.

**2:30 a.m. Lily:** I saw ice arriving, where are you?

**2:30 a.m. Lily:** Btw, Noah left.

**2:30 a.m. Lily:** He said he was super tired and he had a cab waiting for him so he rushed out. UGH.

I looked up at Noah and felt odd about the whole situation. He had clearly gotten rid of Lily but didn't mind staying with me.

"The ice is here," I mumbled, pointing at my phone.

"Cool... See what I did there?" He had a smug smile that was adorable yet made me want to punch him.

"Hilarious," I said without even a hit of laughter, which ironically made me actually laugh. This time of the night made me delirious.

"What's your plan now then? I can give you a ride if Prince Charming isn't coming."

"I have my pumpkin, thanks." I brushed it off as if he hadn't just proposed something outrageous.

"All right." He got up and carefully placed my feet safe and sound over the pillow. He pointed at them. "Don't do anything crazy. See you on set."

## CHAPTER 2

### LILY'S VLOG 1 TRANSCRIPT

#### SCENE 1 - INT./EXT. - SET OF BROOKLYN - DAY 1

LILY (25) is in a TV-set trailer. She turns the camera on herself and speaks to the lens, showing her trailer behind her. The tiny room has a couch and personal bathroom.

#### LILY

Hello, YouTube! I have no idea of when I'll be able to post this, but I'm in my trailer for the very first day of shooting the soon-to-be hit TV series, *Brooklyn*! Our set is on the Seaside Studios lot, which is amazing.

Lily walks out of the trailer and starts walking around the set.

#### LILY

I'm about to get myself transformed into Brooklyn, of course. Oh, hey!

NOAH (24) walks past and waves at the camera.



**LILY**

Here we have my "romantic interest," wink wink, Jake. Come here!

Noah turns around and pops his head behind Lily. He rests his arm on her shoulder.

**NOAH**

What's this for?

**LILY**

My YouTube channel. I'll negotiate how much I can upload without having Val kill me.

**NOAH**

(laughing)

Good luck with that.

**LILY**

(to camera)

Today we have our first scene together as well.

(to Noah)

How excited are you?

**NOAH**

Ready for some romance.

Noah kisses Lily's cheek and walks away winking. Lily gets flustered and giggly.

**LILY**

You heard it here first!





## END OF SAMPLE

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### About the Author



Flor Tedesco (Buenos Aires, 1995) has a bachelor's degree in Direction and Production of Cinema, Radio, and TV. Her passion for storytelling doesn't stop in film, as she has been writing her whole life and is currently pursuing a career in musical theatre.

As an artist, YouTuber, and social media geek, she is used to being behind and in front of the camera—a messy world that she intended to represent in her debut novel, *It Began in Brooklyn*.

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