

The Hollywood Hustle: Lisa's Big Break

by Corey Podell and Jamie Silberhartz

"You did what?!" Lois cried over the phone. Lisa could hear the disappointment in her mother's voice and it killed her.

"I needed a change," she replied, twirling the cord nervously between her fingers. "I actually think you'll really like it."

"Oh hunny, of course I'll like it. You could be bald and I would love it. But women on the soaps? They all have big hair."

This was true. Lisa had made a big mistake.

One week earlier, she auditioned for the hottest soap opera on television: *Days of Our Lives*. Every actress off the bus was brought in to read for the role of Billie, and only a few were called back, Lisa being one of them.

A cardinal rule of Hollywood callbacks? Look exactly the same as you did at the first audition. It had only been six years since Lisa had moved to her city of dreams, but she fancied herself a veteran. She couldn't believe she had made such a rookie move. Still, something inside her knew this haircut was right.

Her recent ex, Mr. P, was passionate about her flowing brunette mane, so when that relationship ended, her long locks did as well.

After the breakup, Lisa drove straight to the Super Cuts on Ventura and told them to chop it all off. It was a spiritual moment—cutting off her hair meant ridding herself of all the baggage of the past year. It was a shame such a momentous occasion had to happen in a Super Cuts, but Vidal Sassoon wasn't open on Mondays.

Plus she thought this new short shag suited her fiery personality better. It was a signature look, something she could grow old with, especially since she wasn't growing old with Mr. P anymore.

Still if she had known she would get a callback, she wouldn't have jeopardized herself. The minute her agent read her the description of Billie Reed, she knew it was the role of a lifetime. Billie was a no-nonsense ball buster with a heart of gold.

Lisa hadn't felt such a connection to a part since she was called in to read for the role of Kit in *A League of Their Own*. She really wanted to be Kit, but was told she was too current, too pretty, and had zero athletic ability. It would have been amazing to be in a big Hollywood movie with that guy from *Splash*, but growing up in her house, soap operas were "the thing."

Every afternoon, Lisa and Lois would curl up on the couch, chips in hand, and tune into *Days*. The trials and tribulations of the fictional Salem stole their attention in a way movies never could.

It was more than just a television show, Lisa realized; it was a bond with her beloved mother. This made her stomach turn.

For the last 24 hours, she'd been pretending this was just another gig she was going to lose. Lisa had been hustling for so long that she'd become cynical.

"Listen Mom, I gotta do a million things before my callback today. I'll call you when I get home."

"Break a leg dear! Grab some hairspray and tease the top like we did for your high school plays."

As if she didn't have enough to worry about. Lisa glanced at the to-do list she had scribbled the night before. Why did she always wait until the last minute? First stop, making copies of her headshot.

The fax and print shop didn't open for 10 minutes, but Lisa was

already parked out front in her white Mazda Miata, her first real purchase with her modeling money. Grabbing her script, she slouched down in the driver's seat. Living in LA, she spent 87% of her time running lines in the Miata. It was part of her "process."

Lisa took a deep breath and tried to picture Billie's "moment before." It was the only useful acting technique she took from her year at the University of Oregon's acting program. It was a big deal that she got in, but it didn't mean she fit in. In a theater full of blonde, blue-eyed co-eds with breeding hips, Lisa was a unicorn. Her dark features, luscious lips, and sultry voice were meant for Hollywood. Getting cut her first year was the greatest gift the school gave her.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door. Ugh, could she go anywhere in this town without running into Krista Allen?! Lisa begrudgingly rolled down the window.

"Oh my gawd! Your hair!"

"Yeah, I just needed a change," said Lisa, rubbing the back of her head.

Krista gushed, "It looks really cool. Gosh, you are so brave. My agent would be furious!"

Lisa shrugged and smiled. Of course, her agent didn't know...yet.

"Let me guess," said Krista, looking at the script that was in Lisa's hand. "Callback for Days?"

So she was going in too. Lisa and Krista were always auditioning for the same parts, which was puzzling to her because Krista was just so...vanilla.

"Yup, at 3:00. You?"

Krista pulled her appointment slip out of her purse.

"Oh! Way earlier. I'll miss seeing you twice in one day, but maybe they're saving the best for last! I actually read it and thought of you."

Why did Krista always have to be so nice? Was she trying to throw Lisa off her game?

It was now 10:57am, and with new copies of her headshot and resume in her hand, her first task was done. She surfed the radio and turned up the volume as her favorite En Vogue song, My Lovin', began. She jammed out to the lyrics as she made her way to the dry cleaners: Never gonna get it, never gonna get it, woah woah woah WOAHH!

She may not have the same hair, but she'd strut into that casting office wearing the same red Todd Oldham dress she had on the first time.

Manny's Steam and Clean was right next to the 405 on Van Nuys. The seamstress from The Hogan Family had recommended him. Manny was a miracle worker, and it also didn't hurt that he had a crush on her. The walls of his shop were lined with framed, signed celebrity headshots. Lisa couldn't wait for the day Manny would ask for hers; she knew it was just a matter of time. But right now, she needed the discount Manny always gave her more than any fanfare.

Lisa walked in and noticed right away that Antonio Sabato Jr. had been added right between Jennie Garth's and Bronson Pinchot's photos. Antonio came here? She should really try and run into him now that she was single again. She looked at her

watch; time was ticking.

"Manny!" she yelled over the machine noise. "You there? I'm in kind of a rush. Think I can get my dress?"

Sheepishly, he came out from the back. "I tried calling, but no one picked up. I'm so sorry, but the dress ripped. We can give you your money back. I feel terrible."

Lisa felt like she couldn't breathe. A totally new haircut AND outfit for a callback? This was a fatal Hollywood sin.

The reason no one answered Manny's call was because Lisa had turned off her answering machine this weekend. Mr. P had been leaving constant messages, telling her what a mistake he'd made and begging for another chance. She'd only plugged it back in this morning. Her ex was ruining everything!

Lisa rushed out, almost knocking over Kristy Swanson as she barreled through the door. "Hi Kristy, bye Kristy! Gotta jet!" she shouted as she blew a kiss in the blonde's direction. No time for small talk; she had to come up with a plan. THE MALL!

Lisa looked like a crazy person rushing in and out of every shop and boutique at the Galleria. After an hour of scouring the place, the only thing that came close to the original dress was a Versace at Bloomingdale's that was out of her price range. But this was important—this was for Billie.

Lisa sat down at a table in front of Orange Julius and pondered what Billie would do. Billie would buy the dress, rock the audition, and then return it the next day.

Lisa silently prayed her Visa wouldn't be declined as the salesgirl ran it through the machine. She was relieved when the girl

handed her the receipt. Lisa placed it gingerly in her wallet for the inevitable return. Since she spent so much on the Versace, she continued on to Payless to pick up simple black pumps.

Lisa got back on the 405, but it was bumper-to-bumper traffic. "No!" Lisa shrieked out loud. "Any day but today!"

Damn she wished she had one of those new car phones! If she did, she'd dial her mother who always knew what to say. Instead she looked out of her window and up toward the sky. "God, are you there?" Lisa silently asked the heavens.

She didn't see God, but her eyes did land on a huge billboard for the new season of L.A. Law. The picture was of the entire cast, but her eyes only saw one person: Harry Hamlin. Lisa never watched crime dramas, but maybe she should start; that man was delicious. She let her mind wander and thought about his gorgeous head of hair. Harry's hair plus her hair could make some beautifully haired babies.

HONK! Lisa was ripped from her fantasy by the cars in her lane FINALLY moving. She might make it just in time!

At the studio gates, Lisa was directed to the "actor parking lot," which was at least three football fields away from the casting office she so desperately had to reach. She parked and fumbled around for her new clothes.

As an actress, Lisa was used to changing in the car. But there was hardly any cover in this busy and bustling place. Screw it, she thought, as she peeled off her clothes and shimmied into her dress. Mid-change, two crew guys walked by and whistled.

"Take a picture, it'll last longer!" she screamed at them.

Wow, she had to calm down. She needed to be relaxed before an audition, not wound up. She breathed, re-applied her Clinique makeup, teased the top of her hair like Mom advised, and stepped out into the sunshine. She was ready. Or at least she thought she was.

It was boiling outside in the dry summer heat. She could feel the beads of sweat form on her lower back and brow as she hobbled across the lot in her new and quite uncomfortable pumps.

After the mile-long walk, Lisa was grateful for the air conditioning in the office and collapsed into a chair. She caught a glimpse of her reflection in the window and then a glimpse of the casting assistant's shocked face. She was a mess—melting from the heat, sweat stains through the Versace, blisters on her feet, and her new hairdo now a flat helmet.

Lisa wondered how she'd ever forgive herself for blowing her biggest opportunity yet. Her eyes stung with angry and frustrated tears, but she held them in.

"They're ready for you Miss Rinna," the assistant said cautiously, like he was talking to a wild beast.

Less than an hour later, she found herself back in her Miata, feet bloody, hair matted, and script crumbled. As she pulled onto Laurel Canyon, she finally let herself cry.

The audition had been a blur. There was a sea of network suits sitting on a couch, taking notes, and looking her up and down. Was she too old? Too sweaty? Was her hair too short? Did they wonder if she was "fuckable" enough? None of it mattered now though.

It was sundown by the time she pulled up to her apartment. Lisa

just wanted to read some Cosmo, soak her feet, and forget about this wretched day. Throwing her bag on the floor, she made her way to the kitchen.

Her answering machine was beeping. It had to be Lois, always so impatient. She braced herself as she hit play.

"Hi Lisa, it's your agent, Cheryl. You booked it! You booked Days! They said you knocked it out of the park. That you brought an emotionality and vulnerability to Billie like no one else. And something about your hair...I don't know. Call us back!"

Was this a dream? Or a joke? Lisa cried happy tears for the first time all day and danced around the kitchen on her swollen and blistered feet, feeling no pain. She was Billie. Billie was her.

Was it the magic of her haircut? Was it the Versace dress that she now didn't have to return? It didn't matter right now. What mattered is that she had to call her mom.