



Charles and Annie

By Catherine Spinola

Charles saw the woman on a warm summer day, facing directly at him as he walked on the beach toward the ocean. Peculiar as it might seem, the woman was facing the boardwalk instead of the water, but still seemed as if she was waiting for the next break of a wave. Not that there weren't others facing away from the water, but she was clearly set up in the sand this way with absolute intention. You could not miss her on this very crowded beach. Charles smiled to himself.

The sun, the sand and the water did not seem the purpose of her stay today, although she did appear to enjoy wiggling her toes in the sand. Charles was curious as he chuckled and needed to know why she had placed herself this way and what she was looking at or waiting for.

The beach played its usual role, with sand castles and volleyballs as well as a rainbow of towels and beach umbrellas. Beach goers in their favorite bathing suits were sunbathing or swimming, enjoying the bright sunshine. The non-sun worshipers were happy just to listen to the sound of the waves meeting the shore. The beach housed the family of four, the teenage tanners, as well as, the young lovers holding hands as they walked the shoreline. It was a very typical day at the beach except of course, for Annie.

Annie's hair was shoulder length with an auburn glow. The rays of sunshine caused it to shimmer outside the brim of her straw hat. She wore sunglasses that accented the color of her hair, but the lenses were darkened, mysteriously not showing the color or shape of her eyes. Her skin was like silk with a slight tan, which would confuse someone to the fact that she looks at home in her chair under the sun. A maiden shy of the sun and the ocean view, but pleased to be here on the beach on a warm summer's day.

She wore a bathing suit of brown and turquoise flowers, faded like denim with a sarong wrapped around her waist that hugged her hips and draped over the top of her thighs. Her knees were slightly bent and her legs were tilted to the side. Annie rested one hand on her book, which lay next to her and with the other hand she sipped iced tea careful not to smudge her lipstick.

Her sandals were placed with care in the sand, not touching the blanket she had laid out underneath her chair. Annie presented herself with style and careful attention, but conceit did not seem to be a part of her profile.

You could see she paid attention to every detail, which would stir up Charles' attention to her, even more than merely her location. She was beautiful. Why was she on the beach and even more why was she alone? So mysterious, she didn't look like she was from around here. There were a lot of tourists this time of year, but she looked so comfortable, like she belonged here, the sun the sand, and the water truly enhanced her beauty. Charles could only believe that she possessed an inner beauty as well. His first thought was that perhaps he would not have noticed Annie otherwise, if it weren't for her position. Deep down inside he knew that was not true. Charles just had to speak to her.

Charles was tallish and definitely dark and handsome. He had brown hair, slightly graying on the sides and was groomed for the beach. He had deep brown eyes, a nice smile and a toned body that was shaped by the regiment of exercise that he was dedicated to. He wore a black bathing suit, brown sandals and a white t-shirt, with his towel was placed over his shoulder. He wore sunglasses tinted blue and carried a book, chair and water bottle in his hands. Charles was a little on the shy side, but he could find refuge in his

looks and the way he carried himself to use as confidence to meet his ultimate goal of speaking with Annie.

The more closely he moved towards her, the more excited he became. Charles had to know why she was so comfortable in this, what was thought to be an unusual position. He thought again, *“What would she say to me if I just walked up to her and asked her this question?”* He rehearsed what he wanted to say in his head. *“Excuse me Miss, may I ask you a question?”* He then repeated the thought, only this time more confidently. Then self consciously thinking, *“Would she send me away annoyed by my attempt to speak to her, or would she be glad for my attentiveness and attraction?”*

Still curious but hesitant, Charles continues to move toward Annie. He takes a few steps and is then detained by a woman that steps in front of him pleading for his attention. *“Excuse me sir, do you know where Tony’s Pizza is on the boardwalk? This is my first time at this beach and I heard he has the best pizza.”* Charles was startled by her question do to the intensity of his mission. His attention to the woman was weak. Charles finally spoke, *“Yes, can I help you?”* The woman repeated the question, *“Tony’s Pizza, can you tell me where it is?”* Charles more alert to what she was asking answered the question with a smile and said, *“Yes, it is to the right at the very end of the boardwalk.”* Charles being a native of the area knew where everything was

located so he was glad to help even though by now he is starting to sweat, not from the heat, but for the delay of his rendezvous. The woman picked up her child and replied “Thank you for your help,” and walked out of Charles’ path.

Charles then composing himself to continue on his journey began his steps to confront the woman that intrigued him. He began again to survey his path along the sand to reach her, now his heart joined the trail beating rapidly as his confidence began to turn to excitement.

“I don’t even know what to say,” Charles thought, trying to convince himself. *“How do I ask her such a ridiculous question?”* Rehearsing his words in his head, now feeling dazed and confused as to what he really wanted from the woman on the beach. He just had to know why she had placed herself so uniquely on the beach and now even more the need for him to be in her presence. He begins slowly stepping through the maze of blankets and beach chairs that are set in his path. A sandcastle and a rolling beach ball are amongst the prey that tries to detain him, but he maneuvers around them without stammering.

Just then, Charles retreats as he continues to sweat as he anticipated being in her space. He instead decides to set his towel and chair down slightly off to

the side of Annie and her backwards state. Trying not to be visible, Charles pretends to read and gazes at Annie through his sunglasses.

He couldn't help but stare at her and observe how beautiful she was. Everything about her was perfect, and he could only believe that her personality would reflect that as well. Time was passing and panic came over him. He thought, "*What if she repositions herself, or worse gets up and leaves?*" He knew that time was running out.

Charles then rises, now standing with confidence. They catch a glimpse of each other, now both of them curious of their positions and trying not to stare. Charles moves in closer and finds that Annie is even more beautiful than he thought. Knowing this, he can't help but to continue to creep his way to her, hesitant but yet hurried by his need to talk to her. Now with no more obstacles, the path is clear. He views her sandals and the book she is now holding in her hand. As she removes her sunglasses, her lovely big brown eyes overwhelm Charles.

He comes up in front of her viewing her silhouette framed by the ocean. She looks up slowly from under the brim of her hat adoringly. Charles can only hope that she doesn't see how anxious he is, but sees the confidence of his intentions. He felt as if every eye on the beach was looking at him. The beach

becomes completely silent as though it was in the scene of a movie, as Charles finally begins to speak to her. “Excuse me; I was wondering if I could ask you a question.” Charles spoke trying to be confident as he found his voice. He spoke again, “May I ask you why you are facing the boardwalk rather than viewing the beautiful ocean behind you?” Annie stares deeply into Charles’ eyes.

Just then Charles realizes what a ridiculous question he had asked and smiles. Annie smiles as well, and stands up almost pleased by his question. She then giggles knowing that her clever way of positioning herself worked and she got his attention. Annie moves in closer and puts her arms around Charles and gives him a kiss. He steps back and stares into her eyes. They both laugh out loud then Charles kisses her back. He then says, “Hello Sweetheart, I made it, right on time, and by the way, you look beautiful.” Annie replies, “Hello Darling, thank you, I’ve been waiting for you.” They stare playfully at one another. Annie then giggles and continues to ask Charles, “So tell me, dear, the beach is very crowded today, how ever did you find me?”

(All characters, names and incidents in this writing are fictitious. Any similarities are purely coincidental.)

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