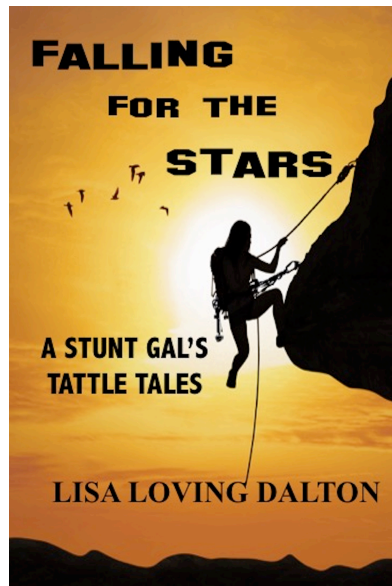


FALLING FOR THE STARS

A Stunt Gal's Tattle Tales

By Lisa Loving Dalton



FALLING FOR THE STARS

A Stunt Gal's Tattle Tales

Copyright © 2016 by Lisa Loving Dalton

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below.

Peak Performance Living
6101 Iron Horse Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76148
www.lisadalton.com

Printed in the United States of America

Ken Howard, Figure 1, Stunt Full Body Shot, Copyright ©1987

{Nick Elemente, Figure 10. Sinatra Tourney with Jack Lemmon Copyright © }

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication data

Dalton, Lisa Loving.

Falling For The Stars: A Stunt Gal's Tattle Tales / Lisa Loving Dalton

ISBN 978-1-62747-403-0

ISBN 978-1-62747-010-0 ebook

1. Entertainment. 2. Biographies and Memoirs 3. Courageous Women 4. Movies

Dedication

To those who have fallen

For the love of the craft

Table of Contents

Dedication	iii
Author's Note	ix
1. Peeking Behind Oz's Curtain	1
2. Smacked and Pampered	2
<i>O'Malley with Mickey Rooney</i>	
3. Muddy Hell	7
<i>The Soldier with Ken Wahl</i>	
4. The First Fall	16
<i>Edge of Night: Landing a TV Role</i>	
5. Jazzed to Be in the Movies:	19
Extra, Extra, Read All About It! Neil Diamond Is the <i>Jazz Singer</i>	
6. First Film Stunt – Gilligan's Island Anyone?	22
<i>The Day the Women Got Even with Tina Louise</i>	
7. Guess Who Came to Dinner with Me?	30
<i>Hanky Panky with Gene Wilder and Sidney Poitier</i>	
8. Guffaws 'n Giggles	32
<i>The World According to Garp with Robin Williams, Swoosie Kurtz and John Lithgow</i>	
9. Ignoring Ignorance and Taking Hold	34
<i>Wrong Is Right with Sean Connery</i>	
10. Sometimes, You're the Windshield, Sometimes the Bug!	37
<i>One Life To Live</i>	
11. The Gag I Wish We Needed To Do Twice	41
<i>One Life To Live with Paige Turco</i>	
12. The Most Unusual Stunt Double	43
<i>Grace Jones Video</i>	
13. The Booby Prize	44
<i>Splash with Ron Howard and Daryl Hannah</i>	

14. The Giant Marshmallow Man	51
<i>Ghostbusters, the Original</i>	
15. Walking in Meryl's Shoes	54
<i>Still of the Night</i> with Meryl Streep and Roy Scheider	
16. The Shaking Stakeout	58
<i>Grace Quigley</i> with Katherine Hepburn and Nick Nolte	
17. When the Stars Fell On Me!	60
<i>Found Money</i> with Dick Van Dyke and Sid Caesar	
18. MYOB	62
<i>Tootsie</i> with Dustin Hoffman	
19. I Love Not Falling for Lucy.....	64
<i>Stone Pillow</i> with Lucille Ball	
20. Sheer Silliness with Mr. Sly.....	66
<i>The Survivors</i> with Walter Matthau and Robin Williams	
21. A Sweet Gag.....	68
<i>Alphabet City</i> with Vincent Spano and Kate Vernon	
22. Booby Trapped	70
<i>F/X</i> (with Bryan Brown and Diane Venora)	
23. Budget Squeeze.....	76
<i>Highlander</i> with Christopher Lambert and Sean Connery	
24. Like A Virgin	82
<i>SNL</i> with Madonna and Robert Downey Jr.	
25. Happy in Hot Pink	93
<i>The Money Pit</i> with Tom Hanks and Richard Benjamin	
26. Expecting Respect	97
<i>Sweet Liberty</i> with Alan Alda and Michelle Pfeiffer	
27. Knot Tying 101	101
Some Low-Budget Aussie Thing	
28. <i>I Love N.Y.</i> and BMW	104
With Scott Baio	
29. Sticking to the Plan	108
<i>Magic Sticks</i> with Kelly Curtis	
30. Dead in the Water and Hung Out on a Ledge	112

	<i>House On Carroll Street</i> with Kelly McGillis, Mandy Patinkin and Jeff Daniels	
	<i>Suspect</i> with Cher, Dennis Quaid and Liam Neeson	
31.	Missing the Mark	127
32.	God Bless the Chevy	135
	<i>Funny Farm</i> with Chevy Chase	
33.	Cruzin' on an Ole Harley	139
	<i>Homeboy</i> with Mickey Rourke, Debra Feuer and Christopher Walken	
34.	A Sticky Shift	142
	<i>Leg Work</i> with Margaret Colin	
35.	The Fall of '87.....	148
	<i>Everything's Relative</i> with Jason Alexander and John Bolger .	
	<i>Wendy's Big Burger</i>	
	<i>United Way: Rape Crisis Center PSA</i>	
36.	Leaping Tall Buildings in a Single Bound	163
	<i>Last Rites</i> with Tom Berenger and Daphne Zuniga	
37.	A Pain in the Glass	164
	<i>Tattinger's</i> with Blythe Danner and Stephen Collins	
38.	One Last Fall	165
	<i>True Blue</i> with Ally Walker and John Bolger	
39.	OKAY, JUST ONE MORE... IT'S EASY!	172
	<i>Three Wishes</i> with Patrick Swayze and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio	
40.	His Wish Granted	179
41.	Can't Believe I Fell for That!	183
42.	A Surprise Gift	186
	<i>Berry Gordy's The Last Dragon</i> with Taimak and Vanity	
43.	A Crossword Puzzle for My Mom	191
	Find the Answers in the Book	
44.	Dalton's Dictionary	192
	A Biased Film Industry Glossary	
	Acknowledgements	208

45. Crossword Key: 210
Meet Lisa Loving Dalton 211



Author's Note

Dear Reader,

I hope you are a film fan, and that you are curious about the world of illusion that stunt players create for you. In my days and nights on sets, I rubbed elbows with the greats and the aspiring unknowns, along with the incredible crews and creators who make it all possible. Here are a few of my stories.

I have found, as I travel the world over, that a stunt person can strike up a conversation anywhere we go. Our stories are sometimes amusing, fluffy little things and sometimes deeply tragic. And they are always biased. Over the years, some become like “fish stories,” morphing into something greater than they were.

Other stories reveal little lessons we learned along the way. And sometimes, like mine, our stories are those of survivors who fight daily to live normal lives in the aftermath.

If you aren't familiar with movie-set terms, I have written Dalton's Dictionary to help you understand the stories. It is definitely biased. Similarly, the SCENE descriptions are purely from memory and are not intended to represent actual script excerpts. I hope you have fun with the crossword puzzle at the end with **clues** throughout the book.

I am occasionally prone to poems, weird as that may be. They pop up every once in a while. You can easily skip them if they aren't your thing. A poem is risky for an author to do, yet stunt folks are always willing to risk, though we are not thrill seekers. We are, first and foremost, athletic artists working with skill, scientific precision and calculations.

The tales here cover a very special part of my forty-year career in entertainment, sometimes slipping in some key aspects of my larger aspirations toward Acting. And where my stunt stories conclude, I invite you to read *Murder Of Talent: How Pop Culture Is Killing "IT."* There you will discover the crazy world that I, and others, experience as performers. It isn't necessarily safer. Surviving as a talented artist can be deadly too, as the title suggests.

I hope that you find your curiosity piqued, your ribs tickled a little, and your heart warmed with appreciation for what we do. Most of all, I hope that, as you read, you might reflect on what you have learned from your own adventures in life. I wish for you to grow in a less painful way than I did, because I was just too stubborn and scared to listen.

The logo for Lisa Loving Dalton features the name in a stylized, serif font. 'Lisa' is in a smaller size, 'Loving' is in a larger size, and 'Dalton' is in the largest size. A small flower icon is positioned above the 'L' in 'Loving'. A decorative flourish or underline is present above the 'L' in 'Dalton'.

{this Page Deleted}

2. Smacked and Pampered

O'Malley with Mickey Rooney

Whew! I feel like someone has taken a spanking paddle and hit me upside my head, my torso, my legs, my arms, and every inch of my body all at once. “So that’s what a ton of steel on four wheels feels like” as I am spinning through the air.

This isn’t what is supposed to happen. I am supposed to be at least ten feet away from the car, diving through the air and rolling in the snow. That car is supposed to pass through our little crowd and go on its merry chase with Mickey Rooney’s **STUNT DOUBLE**¹ pursuing the bad guy through Central Park. Who knew it would snow today? Who knew the consequences?

The day on this comedy film, *O'Malley*, began with a **STUNT COORDINATOR (SC)** hiring me based on another guy’s recommendation. That’s usually how folks get started in the stunt business. He needs a group of joggers and walkers that will **ALMOST** get hit by the good guy. It seems simple enough that they risk hiring rookie me.

THE SCENE :

Mickey Rooney is chasing a bad guy who is driving through Central Park, not on the road but over the grass and through the trees. Joggers, paired up or single, will be running along the road, see the vehicles, pause and sort of collect into a group as more joggers approach and see the commotion. Then the bad guy will pass and Mickey will almost hit a tree, swerve, head for the group and correct himself as the group dives out of the way. All are unharmed.

I am about sixth in the lineup, toward the rear of my group with two people who will come up behind me. This easy little job is a nice entry-level kind of thing for me. It is my second stunt job. There are a dozen or more stunt people here so it is exciting to meet these folks.

The SC decides, because of the snow, that we will not do the normal half-speed rehearsal with the car actually moving because it will put tracks in the freshly laden snow. The

¹ The first time certain elements, like a new character, prop or location appear in a film script they are often in **ALL BOLD CAPS**. In this book, the first time certain jargon is

coordinator points out where the car will be going, where we should stop and where each of us should dive.

We get set to go. **ACTION!** I wait until the five people ahead of me start jogging and I go. They see the car. I see the car as I approach. I stop, and keep jogging in place. When it is heading towards us, I suddenly can't **see**² the car because the person in front of me has blocked my view. People start diving so I turn to dive to my appointed spot. I can't jump because the person behind actually comes to my side, blocking me in. It's just a fraction of a second, yet time seems to go into slow motion. Finally, there's a place to go and I launch. Whack! Too late.

I am flying up onto the hood, off the windshield and spinning over the right side onto the ground. The car has slid off its **MARK** by ten feet. Dazed and stinging, I roll right up and start brushing off the snow. Thankfully, the snow has softened the blow even as it caused the skid.

Production insists that I go to the hospital emergency room (**ER**) despite the fact that I feel it is unnecessary. They want an official determination that I really am uninjured, to protect themselves from liability.

My coordinator is very concerned that I might reveal to the production that I am brand new in the field, and that might look bad for the stunt coordinator. I am a good sport and keep the secret tight. Like the biker mentality that I ride with, I know that to do otherwise would seal my fate in this man's world of stunts.

The hospital X-rays me from tip to toe, especially my brain and spine, and gives me the thumbs up. I head back to the set, thinking it will be good for everyone to know I am fine, and hang out until we **WRAP**, just watching.

I learn that the crew, and some of the stunt players not working that shot, were apparently quite impressed, and wondered if it was something that was planned. Definitely not. The script doesn't support the idea of the good guy hitting a pedestrian in a comedy.

At the end of the **SHOOT**, the coordinator and his associate invite me to the stunt office, which is an apartment on the west side of Manhattan, not too far from the set. They want to talk with me more about my interests.

When we arrive, I sit on the couch. On the coffee table, they lay out a joint, a line of snow, and a Champale. They draw a bath with Epsom salts, set out towels, show me the bedroom and say "You are going to be quite sore and stiff tomorrow. So help yourself to

² A bold word that is not all capital letters might just be a useful clue when you fill in the crossword puzzle on page 22.

whichever of these you'd like. Take a snort, a nap, a beer or a bath. Take as long as you'd like. And when you are done, come on out and let's talk about your career in stunts."

I accept the Champagne and the bath, and pass on the other refreshments. Inside I am bubbling with excitement as I soak, wondering what they will say. I am too antsy to sit there for very long. I hop out, get dressed. "Let's talk!"

They explain that their main stuntwoman is moving to Los Angeles and they need to add a good stunt gal in their **STUNT ASSOCIATION** book. They feel I am a team player who demonstrated great instincts. They also know I am an actor first and foremost.

They reveal that doing stunts can help me get more acting parts for a while, maybe five years. If I stay in it longer than that, I will likely get typecast as only that and stunts will, in effect, stunt my acting career. Am I willing to take the risks? I say I am very interested and need to discuss it with my husband, Kenny. They know Kenny from the motorcycle industry.

Kenny and I agree that I should go for it. My full body shot goes into the association's book. The car hit has worked in my favor in a weird way. However, in reflecting on whether it was the snow on the ground or the snow on that table that caused the car to be so far off course, a seed of caution about industry colleagues has forever been planted in my mind. Not all is glorious.



Figure 1 Lisa Loving's "Body Shot" with Hubby Ken Kerman checking her out. Photo by Ken Howard

3. Muddy Hell

The Soldier with Ken Wahl

It is freezing in this cow barn of a deserted cowboy honky-tonk in Buffalo in November of 1981. There is no heat. I am soaked, and covered with mud from head to toe. And I am sick. No one knows I am. I don't even know just how sick, or that I am a few days away from an ambulance ride to the hospital.

Pride is a funny thing, and it sure is rampant in the stunt industry. My pride is no exception. I am determined to get through this nightmare like a champ and keep my secret safe.

Fear teams up with pride in curious ways. I am scared that I could cause undue stress on the production if I go to a doctor. I do know that I am too sick to be mudwrestling in freezing temperatures, with no way to keep me comfy or warm, for hours on end. I don't want to ruin my relationship with the stunt coordinator from Los Angeles, nor damage my reputation with my East Coast colleagues. Such a thing could really limit future opportunities.

The East Coast stunt community always has a challenge with feeling respected by the West Coasters. It is easy to see why. It is an era when ninety-five percent of production initiates in Los Angeles, so if budgets are big enough, they haul the coordinator and his team of favorites with them. The **SCREEN ACTORS GUILD** has started requiring that these productions hire about ten local members on a seven-to-three ratio. That is seven men and three women.

This particular film has a little lower budget, so the majority of the stunt team comes from New York and is driven to Buffalo. I am actually hired by the wonderful **CASTING DIRECTOR** Donna DeSeta as an **ACTOR** who will play a mud wrestler with some lines.

My **CONTRACT** specifically states that I will get a **STUNT ADJUSTMENT**. That's what they call an additional fee that production pays you for your exposure to danger. For a very dangerous single event like a car hit, we negotiate per take in advance. For a more general job, like fighting in a bar brawl, the coordinator divvies up a pot according to their budget for the show and your exposure to danger, discomfort and skill sets required. You usually are told how much to expect when you **WRAP**.

I have always had a work ethic of going the extra mile, and I really do that on this job. I get together with Edgard Marino, the stunt man who is going to oversee the wrestling, and the other gal who was also cast. She is not a stunt gal but has aspirations to be.

THE SCENE

The scene is a rowdy brawl that happens around the mud pit as she and I are wrestling. Then a drunken guy, Edgard, gets rambunctious, climbs into the ring, and pulls off our bikinis. Ultimately, she and I, naked but for the mud, drag him to a window and throw him through it. My contract calls for a closed set with no photography.

On our own time and without being paid, Edgard, she and I choreograph and rehearse the fight sequence several times. It is pretty well balanced with each of us taking some big falls.

Kenny and I have scheduled a motorcycle ride west when the job comes up, so we choose to ride to Buffalo on our **BIKES**. He is welcome on my sets, and he often takes pictures of me with my stunt friends and the actors. He has a special task this time: Enforce the Closed Set/No Photography clause.

Before I leave, I start feeling a bit nauseous, bloated and cramping in my stomach. I pass it off as pre-menstrual symptoms and dread going through this at that period of my cycle. Oh, well, I am committed and I don't want to pass up the opportunity or let my wrestling partners down.

When we arrive in Buffalo, I discover that the other woman has backed out of her acting contract and will not wrestle. For some reason she manages to be hired as a stunt woman, despite renegeing on the contract and causing production to have to find someone in Buffalo qualified to wrestle and willing to have her clothes torn off in the mud.

The best they can do is to hire a lovely dance teacher who knows nothing about falls. She is a good four or so inches shorter, and smaller all around in her dancer's figure, with long, sharp, beautifully manicured nails. Due to the brevity of time and her not being able to take a nasty fall, I have to do all the big flips, etc. From the movie's point of view, she is going to kick my butt. That pride thing that I mentioned earlier is not happy about this.

When we arrive at the set, real ugliness begins to set in. The honkytonk, which is no longer occupied, no longer has functioning heat. It is a large wooden structure with a bar, mechanical bull, dance floor and restaurant kitchen. Through the kitchen is the parking lot where the **CAMPERS** are located.

The mud pit is not a real professional pit that is filled with fuller's earth, free of rocks, sticks, etc. The crew is building a wooden frame and dumping raw dirt into it. Now, they are trying to turn that into mud with a cold hose. There is no means of using hot water.

DAY ONE:

The first day is terrible. We are shooting afternoons into night on the freezing set. I am in at most a bikini, covered with rocky mud that is not doing the fingernail scratches on my body any good. There is no way to keep us warm between takes, which sometimes is an hour at a time. They scramble for blankets, yet we need to stay wet so the mud won't be too dry for the next shot, so we are getting sprayed with ice water, while standing in the pit which has no drain.

The stunt coordinator treats me dismissively when I appeal for help. The wardrobe folks bend over backwards trying to fix things. And some **EXTRAS** are running around with cameras. Kenny jumps in and calls a halt to that, reinforcing my privacy.

By the time we **WRAP** the shoot that first night, the whole stunt crew just kind of ups and leaves. Wardrobe is wrapping up stuff in the parking lot. My wrestling partner and I are covered in freezing mud at eleven at night, with no place to get clean. We ultimately have to hose ourselves off in the pit with the ice water.

There is no hair dryer, no dressing room, and no actual towels. It is not pretty. We are on the last van back to the hotel. The gang is meeting in the hotel bar. I feel horrible. Not from all the falls, but I am having such severe cramps and I have started bleeding. I hurt so badly that to take a step sends jarring pain right into my womb. Kenny asks, "Do you want to go to the hospital?"

"No, I want to go the bar and appear social and appear unscathed and have a conversation with the stunt coordinator about fixing this situation. I can tough this out."

Gingerly, I walk down the hall toward the bar. In a moment, I will really suck it up and act sprightly. I don't want anyone to think I can't take all those falls or that I got hurt doing it incorrectly.

By the time we get there, my stunt pals are well into their second or maybe third drink. Kenny and I settle in at a small two-top. We chat a little. I notice that the gal who reneged on the wrestling is leaving with a California stunt guy. Hmmm.

I see that one of the other gals is getting a lot of attention. Guys are buying her shots of Jack Daniels or something. She downs a couple right in front of us. Kenny asks who she is.

I answer, "She's one of the top stunt gals on the East Coast."

He asks, “What can she do that you can’t?”

I say, “I don’t know. I know I am an actress first, and I am a five feet, eight inches tall, busty, size-ten redhead. That means I am most likely going to do **NONDESCRIPT STUNTS** (ND) that might require some acting, rather than double the lead characters. The leading ladies are generally around five feet five inches, size four to six and brunette just like she is. But aside from that, I really don’t know.” Do keep in mind that since the 1980s, women’s sizes have shifted. A size six then was like a size two now.

Suddenly a recurring chant starts and a spacious circle forms with her in the center. Clearly, the whole group adores her. She downs one more shot as the guys egg her on. “To do what?” Kenny and I muse.

Next thing you know, she does a standing back flip and nails her landing perfectly. I look at Ken and say, “THAT is what she can do that I can’t.” No one even spotted³ her. How incredible a gymnast must she be that the guys who clearly love her dearly allow her to do that, incite her to do that, after drinking, with no warm up, and not spot her? My curiosity is piqued, but I am pooped, and I hobble off to bed.

The stunt coordinator is nowhere in sight.

DAY TWO:

The next day I call...

– 30–

Thank you for reading the preview!
{End of *Falling For The Stars: A Stunt Gal’s Tattle Tales* Preview}
Lisa Loving Dalton, Peak Performance Living, 2016
www.lisadalton.com

³ To spot a gymnast means to stand nearby and assist them only if they need it, to prevent injury if the gymnast should fall.