



Lost and Found In Positano

Stephanie Dardanello

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Chapter One

A Much Needed Vacation

My name is Anna Sarro and I am a successful finance executive for a Fortune 500 company in Miami, Florida. I finished graduate school at the top of my class and took one job after another, always making a very good living, and constantly moving up the corporate ladder. There is only one problem: not one job has been challenging, exciting, or thrilling. Sound familiar?

I thought that I was going to get out in the real world, get a great job and make a lot of money, and oh yeah, get a job that I love. Then I would be happy, right? Not really.

My life as a Chief Financial Officer is very stressful. I work 18 hour days and probably work the remaining hours of the day in my sleep (leaving absolutely no time for a social life). I am physically and mentally exhausted and in much need of a vacation. I do not want to answer my cell phones. Yes I have two. I do not want to check voice mail. I do not want to check emails. I do not want to answer my pager. I do not want to have any early or late meetings. This may sound weird, but I feel that I need a break from myself and my everyday life. I just need to relax!

I am feeling a bit lost at the moment with regards to my life and feel that a vacation can help me figure out my passion in life. Oh my goodness, I cannot believe I actually verbalized that. I do not have passion in my life! What should I be doing? What do I like? What do I want to do? I know what I do not want to do, but I have no idea what I would like or would even enjoy doing. Where do I belong? Should I be living in the U.S. or abroad? Where should I be focusing my efforts? Work? Family? Friends? Everyone around me seems to be doing what they like and living the life that they hoped for. When is something going to “happen” to me? When am I going to be happy and fulfilled in my life?

Whatever job I have done has left nothing to rave about. Nothing has sparked any kind of flame or got me excited to wake up the next day and say, “I can’t wait to go to work!”

The next question or concern that I have is: what does it feel like to have passion? Will I know the feeling when I have it? I assume that when I find my passion, it will be something that consumes me, every minute of every day.

Many times you hear people say that they would love to do this or that. Someone would say, “Oh how I would love to own my own pizzeria” or “Oh how I would love to be a professional football player.” And I think to myself, hmm. Maybe I would like to have more money, so I would not have to work. I would then have less pressure in my life. But passion? Wouldn’t you think somewhere in my 25 years of working I would find my passion?

I admire those in life that love what they do. Have you ever seen a person that loves what they do and when asked by others, their face lights up before they speak. Perhaps one day....this could be me.

Thinking about my stressful job and my humdrum life, I decide to call my friend Lina in Positano, Italy. Lina and her family were born and raised in Positano. Perhaps I will take a trip? They own a quaint bed and breakfast and two restaurants, all located on the main drag in Positano, called Via Pasitea. Their hotel is called Hotel Bel Fiore, which means beautiful flower. The first restaurant they own is next to this hotel and is called Sirena, which means mermaid. The second restaurant they own is about 50 yards away, located on the same street, and called Pesci Del Mare, which means fish of the sea. Lina manages the hotel, her mother Bianca manages the restaurant Sirena, and her father and brother, both named Carlo, manage the restaurant Pesci Del Mare.

I met Lina several years back when I vacationed in Positano, and have gotten to know her and her family very well. She is married with three children and not much younger than I, I suppose, but we hit it off, despite me not being married or having any children. Her brother Carlo is single, like much of the Italian men I know who enjoy living at home well into their 40's or so, while having the comforts of mamma always there to take care of them. He is very sweet, always protecting me like a big brother.

Well, I had a few minutes in between meetings and decided to call Lina to see if she had any vacancies in her hotel. And as soon as I heard Lina say that she had an available room with my name on it...I booked my flight!

Chapter Two

En-Route

So it is about 8:00 am and I am sitting in Miami International Airport waiting for my flight to leave, where my final destination will be Hotel Bel Fiore in Positano, Italy. Being that I did not have advanced planning with this trip, I did not have many options with regards to flights. So with my three stops, Philadelphia, Milan, and Naples, it will take me about 17 hours to get to my hotel. Ugh!

This trip, that I am using to figure out what to do with the rest of my life, could not come soon enough. I must do something. I know I do not like my current state of affairs, and I know I needed a change, but I didn't know how pressing the issue was until I read a friend's father's obituary. The Italian man died at 96 years old and the obituary was not one of those traditional obituary types stating the surviving relatives. This obituary was a sort of ode to this man. It talked about his accomplishments and the things he loved. He was a world renowned painter, poet, and author. He loved the sea, the arts, and the women that came in and out of his life. His obituary also ended with one of his poems. It was truly beautiful. After I read this, I became depressed. What are my accomplishments? What am I proud of? What do I love? Oh my God, I have nothing to show for my life! What will my obituary say?

My wait in the airport on that Saturday morning in September was rather uneventful. Just before I boarded my flight I met a very nice young married woman who had just gotten back from Costa Rica and was on her way back home to Boston, Massachusetts. She was telling me that she and her husband own a piece of property in Costa Rica and they were just checking up on the land, making sure all was okay. They are actually planning on moving to Costa Rica within the next 8 years when their daughter gets out of school. They plan to open up a holistic center, which will have all different types of alternative medicine. She described all the wild animals and terrain in Costa Rica. She even took out her digital camera and showed me photos. To say the least, she was very passionate. Again, I started thinking to myself...where is my passion? What is my passion? After about 20 minutes or so I told her to have a safe trip back home and I boarded the first leg of my trip to Philadelphia.

I ended up sleeping through the entire flight. I guess the excitement and anxiety of going to Italy had caught up to me.

I arrived in Philadelphia and made my way to the international terminal, where I would catch my connection to Milan, Italy. On my way to my gate, I stopped off at a newsstand and grabbed a large water, a bag of chips, and a piece of chocolate. I chose a seat by my gate, organized my bags, and called my mother, telling her that all was going okay. I then quietly sat and ate my bag of chips while starting my favorite pastime: people watching. To myself, I quietly guess who was traveling on business, who was going on a

vacation, who was married, who was single, who was European, etc. I was right in the middle of eating my bag of Cool Ranch Doritos when the woman next to me looked up from her book and said, "The smell of your chips interrupted my reading." I said, "I am sorry, do they smell badly?" She replied, "No the smell was just very strong and familiar. I knew they were Doritos, but I just didn't know where the person who was eating them was sitting in relation to me." "Oh" I replied. Sitting there not knowing what to think or say next. The woman then carried the conversation further by asking where my final destination was. I told her, "I will be taking a connecting flight to Naples, where I will then take car service to Positano, and spend 9 days on vacation." She had never been to Positano before, but mentions she was meeting up with her wine tasting group in Florence and they will be taking wine tours throughout Italy. Wow! Sounds like a lot of fun. I thought she was so excited. You could not only hear it in her voice, but see the sheer excitement on her face. She then continued to quietly read her book. I started to think to myself...this woman loves something so much that she is traveling across the globe to do more of what she loves. What do I love? Do I love anything at all? What would I travel across the globe to do?

Another woman sat on the other side of me and asked if I was traveling for business or pleasure. I replied, "Pleasure, and you?" "I live in Parma, Italy," she replied. "My husband accepted a temporary transfer in the States, so I am going back home to Italy to get my winter clothes and de-stress for about a week." Ahh...her words were magic to my ears. De-stress...exactly! And what a better place to do it, but Italy! "I want to move to Italy. I think the quality of life is better there or at least with regards to stress levels." "I agree," she said. "Parli italiano?" "Si. I did my MBA in Milan a few years back. So I lived there for over a year. This is actually my 2nd trip back this year." "Just keep in mind, yes it is less stress, but you make a lot less money." I stated, "That is okay by me." "ALL ZONES PLEASE BOARD. ALL ZONES PLEASE BOARD." We both hear the announcement and make our way to the gate to board. As I wish her a nice stay, I am off on the second leg of my trip.

I board my flight to Milan. The movie that they were showing on the plane was Spiderman. Stupid! I didn't even waste my 5 euros to rent the earphones. There is one empty seat between a Korean woman and myself. She is dressed to the 9's and starts to eat a delicious looking salad that she brought on board. I anxiously sit and wait for my meal to be served. The meal was some type of mystery meat (I think chicken), mashed potatoes, cooked carrots, butter and bread, nonfat vanilla yogurt, cheese and crackers, and raw carrots with light ranch dressing. I have to say that I ate all but the yogurt and was pretty full. I start to get myself comfortable with my blanket and pillow when the Korean woman next to me offers me a Korean dessert. I graciously said, "No thank you, I am actually full." She then continued the conversation. "Business or pleasure?" "Pleasure," I replied. "And you?" "Business. I am a fashion designer and the fashion show in Milan is this week. I currently live in Las Vegas, but I lived in Livorno, Italy for 20 years. I will probably move back." "Wow! That is great." I state, depressed, and wishing it was me. I then close my eyes and put my head back on the head rest to sleep for the remainder of my flight.

Nice! I have made it to Italy! I am now in Malpensa Airport in Milan, Italy. I feel better already, probably because I don't have a Board Meeting, connected to any type of

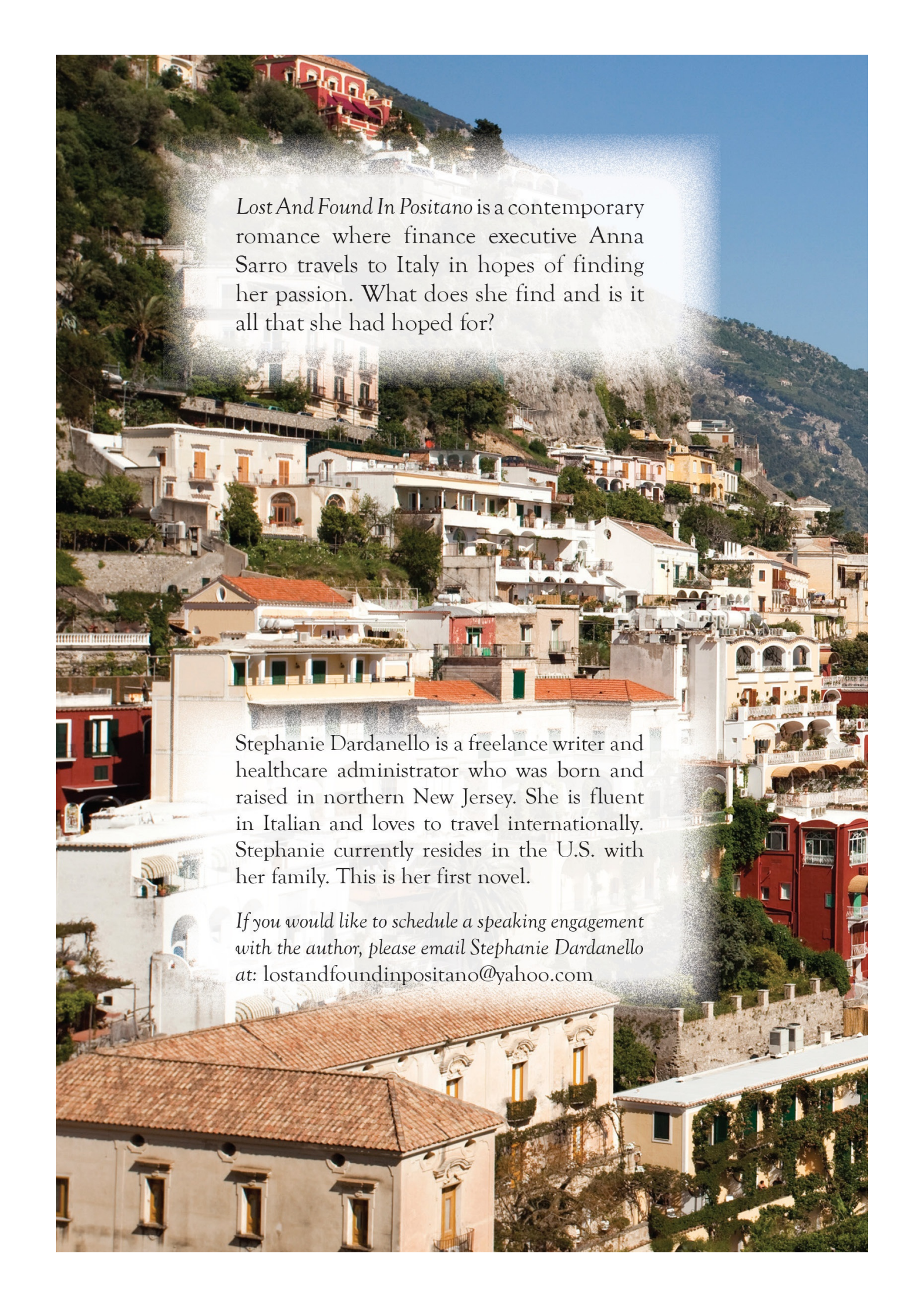
electronic device, or have to report year-end financials. Walking through the airport I head over to my departure gate, so I can start the third leg of my trip, which will take me to Naples, Italy. It shouldn't take more than an hour and forty minutes.

Sitting at my gate, it is hard to contain myself. I should be exhausted, as I have been up for hours, but I am excited that I can finally get the rest I need.

I am not sure if you have ever taken a flight in or out of Italy, but if you haven't, you will be very surprised to find out that most of the time you board your aircraft on the tarmac. This is a very different practice than in the United States. You are asked to head out into the heat or cold with your carry-on and climb up the very steep stairs to board your flight, a task which is very difficult for the elderly, children, and anyone mildly out of shape.

I only have to wait about an hour before I board, so it is not so bad. I rummage through my pocketbook and find some lip gloss which I apply quite generously. After fifteen minutes of waiting, an older Italian gentleman asks if the seat next to me is occupied. I can tell he is from Naples, Italy, because his dialect is Neapolitan, which is very distinct. It is similar to speaking proper Italian, but the word pronunciation is much more loose and poetic. I respond in Italian, telling him it is unoccupied and to please take the seat. It seemed like minutes later, but we all were asked to board. Again, I am not sure if you have ever taken a flight in or out of Italy, but if you haven't, when you are about to board your flight, all passengers charge the tarmac and enter the plane at one time. There is no such thing as standing in an orderly fashion and entering the plane when your assigned row is called. It is like a pack of animals all charging at once and it's difficult to handle when you are an obsessive compulsive, Type A personality American like myself. I always find it quite unnerving.

Apart from boarding the plane, our flight was smooth sailing and within two hours we were landed in Naples, Italy!



Lost And Found In Positano is a contemporary romance where finance executive Anna Sarro travels to Italy in hopes of finding her passion. What does she find and is it all that she had hoped for?

Stephanie Dardanello is a freelance writer and healthcare administrator who was born and raised in northern New Jersey. She is fluent in Italian and loves to travel internationally. Stephanie currently resides in the U.S. with her family. This is her first novel.

If you would like to schedule a speaking engagement with the author, please email Stephanie Dardanello at: lostandfoundinpositano@yahoo.com

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