

# Confessions Of A Celebrity Assisiant



*When Miranda Davidson, 35, landed a job working for US actress Kirstie Alley, she thought she'd finally made it in Hollywood. But after realising fame is not all it seems, she turned her back on showbiz to pursue a new life in Dubai*



**“I had my first taste of showbiz at the age of 19. I was working as a dancer in a club in my hometown of Minneapolis when I met Aaron, who was head of security for the singer Prince. We started dating and I was suddenly plunged into the world of celebrity, flying first class and staying at five-star hotels.**

One day, I was watching Prince from backstage at a gig and I had to pinch myself because Mariah Carey was standing beside me. I also met Sheryl Crow and had dinner with Eddie Murphy. I was starry-eyed with the glitz and the glamour of celebrity life and I longed to make it as a performer myself.

I've always loved performing. I was a child figure skating star and left home at nine to tour with other Olympic skating hopefuls from around the world. In my teens I started dancing and landed parts in a Destiny's Child video and in a video for Janet Jackson. Now, here I was hanging out with Prince and Mariah Carey. I was learning so much about the amount of hard work that goes into becoming a star.

Three years on, Aaron got a call from Warner Bros. Studios in LA. They wanted him to come and work as a second assistant for the actress Kirstie Alley, star of the show *Veronica's Closet*. Aaron turned

down the job, but recommended me for the position instead. Before I knew it, I was on a plane to Los Angeles.

## Hello, Hollywood

In LA, a limo picked me up from the airport and took me to Kirstie's guest apartment. I could barely sleep with excitement. I'd grown up watching Kirstie on *Cheers*, now I was in her apartment, surrounded by her personal belongings! The next day I was taken to Kirstie's mansion in the Hollywood Hills, where I was interviewed by Kirstie and her then-boyfriend, an actor called Chad\*. While it was intimidating getting grilled by two famous TV stars, I tried not to let my nerves show. Kirstie asked me if I had aspirations to be an actress myself. I told her that I was definitely passionate about performing, but at 22, I still wasn't sure what direction I wanted my showbiz career to take. I couldn't believe it when I got the job. I had a front-row seat to the inner workings of Hollywood and I wanted to be like a sponge and soak up everything.

I moved to LA and started almost immediately. I was given a phone, a pager and a credit card. A lot of my job involved dealing with the business side of Kirstie's life: arranging her meetings and liaising with her agent and publicist. I met with

her at the end of each day to brief her on any meetings she had the following day and keep her up to speed. I was fascinated by life behind-the-scenes and I quickly realised how hard Kirstie worked.

I loved working for her. She is a lovely, warm and down-to-earth woman. She has a lot of celebrity friends and there were always famous people calling at the house, like John Travolta, Kathy Najimy, her co-star in *Veronica's Closet* and Rhea Perlman, her former *Cheers* co-star. But she was also a mother and always made time for her family.

Working as a Hollywood PA for the next year, I felt like I had the keys to the city. I had the contacts to get into any club or restaurant in LA. But the job was exhausting, as I needed to be available 24 hours a day. I was also expected to run errands for Chad, who was a lot more demanding and difficult to work for than Kirstie. Things came to a head when Kirstie was on hiatus from her show and I was left alone in LA with Chad.

He could be mean and brutish. I'd badly bruised my legs roller blading, but he insisted I run up and down four flights of stairs in his house, rather than use the lift. His behaviour got worse until one day, he called me into his office to see how quickly he could make me cry, like it was a game. I

eventually cracked and burst into tears. I knew I had to quit. I left my phone and pager on the coffee table in Kirstie's house, along with my letter of resignation.

## Celebrity Dating

Eager to learn more about the business side of showbiz, I moved to New York and began working for Next Model Management, whose clients included Miranda Kerr and Molly Sims.

Once again, I had the city at my feet, hanging out in the VIP section of the hottest clubs. I'd since split with Aaron and I hit the party scene, even going on a date with actor Owen Wilson after we met at a showbiz party. He was lovely – really laidback and normal.

Years on, I was managing the careers of several high profile models and actors. But I began to miss the performing side of things, so I moved back to LA to try to make it as an actress. I got in touch with acting coach, Ivana Chubbuck – who also coached Halle Berry's Oscar-winning performance in *Monster's Ball*. I started taking acting classes, hit the audition circuit and eventually secured a gig as a TV presenter on XL TV, doing red carpet interviews with celebrities. But the seedier side of the business soon wore me down. One director even asked me for a private dance on the set of a music video. I hated being treated like a piece of meat.

During a holiday in Dubai, I began to think about what I really wanted from life. I'd had enough of the shallowness of Hollywood. LA can be a lonely town – it's full of narcissistic performers who are only thinking about themselves. I loved the community feel of Dubai and I loved that people still cared about family.

I still loved the process of performing, but I was over auditioning. I decided to quit Hollywood and move permanently to Dubai where I opened Miranda Davidson Studios three years ago. I teach acting and I've also cast some major motion pictures in the region. The UAE film industry is so young. I love being part of something with so much potential and I love being able to teach my students everything I've learned in Hollywood. And you never know, I might just discover the next big star, here in the UAE! ■



*Miranda found that behind the gloss and glamour, Hollywood can be a cut-throat place!*

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