

**WHEN THE
SEATBELT
SIGN
GOES OFF**

by Nichole L. Davis

When The Seatbelt Sign Goes Off

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Although this book was inspired by happenings in the author's life, it contains a combination of facts along with embellishments. Details including certain events, places, and conversations in this book have been recreated from memory and/or supplemented. In some instances they have been invented simply for literary effect.

The chronology of some events has also been either compressed or changed completely. When necessary, the names, and identifying characteristics of individuals and places have been changed to maintain anonymity. The beliefs and opinions expressed in this book are solely those of the author at a specific time within her life and does not necessary represent the views or beliefs of any organization. The reader should not consider this book anything other than a work of literature.

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INTRODUCTION: **WELCOME ABOARD**

Whoever said that life is all about the journey, and not the destination, never worked a five-hour flight with three screaming babies, twelve needy first-class passengers, and two annoying coworkers.

Otherwise they would know: it's all about the destination.

It's about getting there and getting everyone on and off the plane as quickly as possible. It's the sigh of relief when you hear the landing gears descend after three days of nonstop flying from city to city.

It's the polite, angelic chime when the seatbelt sign goes off at the gate, letting everyone know that it's time to grab their things and go.

Because, once at the destination, the way-too-long journey is finally over and life –my *real* life – off the plane begins.

At least that's how I look at it.

On the plane, I'm simply the flight attendant. The one with the drinks, snacks, and friendly yet firm demeanor (well, most of the time.)

But off the plane, away from the airport and out of uniform, I'm Nichole, a single thirty going-on-forty-something black woman. I'm a daughter, sister, auntie, and red wine drinker trying to live my life to the fullest.

So, of course, I like to travel in search of new adventures and experiences. If you're a Facebook friend or Instagram follower, you'll find pictures of me sipping wine in Venice, petting elephants in Thailand, and riding camels in Morocco. From the outside looking in, I'm a wild and free gypsy spirit with a chronic case of wanderlust. Without the responsibility of a spouse or children, I have this unconventional exciting existence that so many people can only dream about.

But, if you take a closer look, you'll find I'm nerdy and quirky too. Although ambitious and adventurous at times, I'm also naturally guarded and cautious most of the time. I can be outgoing when necessary, but at my core, I'm an introvert. I prefer to be left alone to read books and write – until I get bored or lonely – and then I want to travel again.

I'm also a planner. I always try to plan for worst and best-case scenarios. Despite all my planning, I never planned to become a flight attendant. It was not on my long list of life goals. I kinda fell into it. Nevertheless, it has been one of the most rewarding plot twists that has allowed me to explore all the places I dreamed about, along with some I never imagined.

For my first couple of years as a flight attendant, my life was so unrecognizable that it felt as if I was really in a movie, living someone else's story. I started a blog called "Released To

Crew Rest" using the penname Chi McFly to document my new experiences and to make sense of it all. Plus, it was fun to share my travels with family and friends who always wanted to know about the places I went. They were understandably curious, and I was excited to talk about it. Since I've always enjoyed writing, the blog was also a great way to keep my storytelling skills sharp. Eventually, I collected so many fun stories and memorable life lessons that I knew would be of interest to family and friends, but also to others in the world. One day, after re-reading my old blog posts, I realized I had the framework for a book about flight attendant life from a unique perspective.

Many stories I tell in this book are lighthearted and funny. Some are a bit more serious. The book, with old blog posts sprinkled in between the happenings of my life, recounts the past seven to eight years working for a major global airline. I share some of the most memorable places I've been and the many interesting and wonderful people I've met. I write about how my occupation complicates my everyday life dealing with family, friendships, and romantic relationships. My hope is that a glimpse into a foreign world and this unconventional lifestyle will amuse and maybe even inspire you to choose your own adventure.

In all fairness, the journey, or what happens between point A and point B, has significance. There have been delays, diversions, and holding patterns in my life that have led me to the point where I am today; A place where I'm constantly

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evolving, learning, loving, and most importantly, laughing, even if I'm not yet "there" at my final destination.

So, here's my journey – on and off the plane. Beyond what people imagine a flight attendant's life is like and how it really is. There's the good, the bad, and the utterly embarrassing, which includes an excessive number of beach vacations along with unforgettable adventures with old and new friends.

Now, sit back and strap in as my flight attendant story begins in a turbulent state of transition...

ACT I



HOW I BECAME A FLIGHT ATTENDANT

If you had handed me an occupational handbook with every job in the world and told me to pick my dream job, I would've skimmed right over "flight attendant." Didn't you have to be blond and skinny to do that? I'm neither. I'm tall with brown skin and curvy hips. Besides, wasn't being a flight attendant like being a waitress, janitor, or highway tollbooth worker – it's a job, not a career.

At least that's what I'd always thought. Growing up in a middle-class family in the suburbs of Detroit, I aspired to be a high-powered career woman, like a lawyer or a doctor. Maybe even a news reporter.

It wasn't until I went to college and studied abroad during my senior year did I know that travel – and more specifically, international travel – would be an important part of my professional life. After spending time in London, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, the world grew smaller and my professional ambitions grew bigger. I no longer wanted to be just a career woman; I wanted to be an *international* career woman.