

LIFE BY THE STARS

A true story about letting go, looking up,
and remembering who you are.

**SNEAK
PEEK!**

AMANDA WALSH

With Astrologer's Notes by Natasha Alter

Prologue

It was a rare midday window of time when I had the chance to take my young daughter Madeline to the park. Our nanny had called in sick, and after being cooped up in the apartment all morning, it was clear—she needed to run, to breathe, to play. And maybe, though I didn't know it yet, so did I.

Bundled up in layers, we stopped at the crosswalk just below our apartment. As we waited for the light to change, the familiar crossing guard's face lit up at the sight of Madeline in her stroller. "Where's your mama today, Madeline?" she asked sweetly, bending down with a warm smile, but the words were meant for me.

It took a moment for the comment to land. And then it did.

She didn't recognize me.

She thought our nanny was Madeline's mother because that's who she always saw with her.

Not me.

Something hollow opened in my chest.

"Oh... I'm her mama," I said quickly, my voice thinner than I meant it to be, as the light turned green. I rushed us across the street, eager to escape the moment. My cheeks were hot, my throat tight, my stomach twisting with a quiet shame I couldn't quite name.

At the park, Madeline took off joyfully toward the playground. She looked like a tiny fashion icon in her tweed winter coat, cream tights, matching hat, and ankle boots so stylish I wished they came in my size. Her delight was pure, unfiltered, radiant.

Mine, however, was divided.

Though I had stepped away from my workday, I hadn't really stepped away. I took a conference call as Madeline played, toggling my attention between her and the decisions being made in the background of my professional life. I noticed, almost with a sense of numb camaraderie, that most of the other adults were doing the same—heads bent over their phones, distracted, and detached. And those who weren't were clearly nannies, being called by their first names, not “mommy” or “daddy.”

For an hour, I played both roles ... sort of. I answered questions from colleagues while glancing up to make sure Madeline wasn't climbing anything too high. I threw her a smile here and there, a half-hearted “Good job, baby!” from across the playground. My presence was fragmented. My body was there. My heart was somewhere in between.

Back at the apartment, I handed off the parenting baton to Jason and slipped back into work mode, immersing myself in the mountain of emails waiting for me. My Blackberry phone, my lifeline to the world I was desperately trying to keep up with, buzzed nonstop with incoming messages, meeting invites, and requests. That Blackberry was essential to my life; I relied on it to manage my job, my identity, my connection to everything outside the walls of our apartment.

Somewhere in the shuffle, I dropped my BlackBerry onto the couch without a second thought.

“Mama!”

Her voice startled me. I looked up just in time to see her tiny hand hurl my Blackberry across the room with all her might. It crashed onto the rug, then skidded violently across the hardwood.

I froze, horrified.

“Madeline!” I shouted, my voice sharp with outrage.

She stood still, her small body trembling, eyes wide and wet with tears. In that moment, defiance and heartbreak were intertwined on her face. Something profound and old stirred in me—an echo of a future I had once glimpsed in a vision, the Queen of Hearts: a mother and daughter separated by silence, resentment, and wounds left untended.

I saw the beginning of that story in her eyes. And I couldn't bear it.

I dropped to my knees and pulled her into my arms, her sobs folding into mine. My heart cracked wide open.

“I'm so sorry, baby,” I whispered into her ear, rocking her gently, my tears streaming down.

“I'm so, so sorry. Things are going to change. I promise.”

And for the first time in a long time, I meant it.

Chapter 20:

The First Astrology Reading

“You have to book a reading with this woman, she’s absolutely nextlevel amazing,” my friend gushed through the phone. “Her name’s Natasha Alter. She lives in Hawai’i somewhere. I’m not sure which island. But look her up. I really think you’ll get a lot out of it.”

The call was from a woman I’d met near the end of my Manhattan chapter, a successful, published wellness author who had become both a mentor and a friend, and I trusted her instincts. Although I didn’t give much merit to astrology, I figured I’d give it a shot. *What did I have to lose?*

And with all of the experiences I was having, I could feel it: I was standing on the edge of something big. The version of myself I’d so carefully built, one that was polished, capable, and composed, was unravelling. Not in a chaotic or destructive way (*at least not yet*), but more like a chrysalis softening, the new form inside gathering strength before emerging.

Here, in this wild place—under the bright moonlight, beside the restless sea—I often found myself caught between two instincts: retreating to the safety of the identity I’d so carefully constructed, or surrendering to the pull of this unfamiliar energy within me.

Who was this woman emerging from behind the polished mask? I suspected the astrologer my friend mentioned might hold some of the answers.

I looked her up online and was shocked to discover she wasn’t just on the same island, she lived ten minutes down the road from me. There she was, practically in my backyard, and it was my friend in New York who had pointed me to her. Even the logical part of me couldn’t dismiss it. This was more than a coincidence.

Now, I don't know about you, but whenever I've had a life-changing experience, I remember exactly what I was wearing at the time. On this particular day, I had on a short, bright pink dress I'd bought in New York City, one of the rare pieces from my former life that had made a seamless transition to the islands. I slipped on silver flip-flops and attempted to tame my hair, which had grown much longer since we'd moved.

I had fought these curls my whole life—blow-drying, straightening with an iron, trying to manage them into something sleeker, more “together,” and “professional.” However, the humidity had its own ideas here. The ocean air teased it into wild waves until I found myself surrendering—letting it grow out, letting it curl. Still dark, yet slowly yielding to the sun's tender light.

It was a small thing, maybe, but it mirrored the quiet battle within me between the woman I had been, and the one I was becoming.

I tied it back into a messy half-up/half-down style, my best attempt at “island polished,” and hopped into the car for my first astrology reading.

Natasha lived near the ocean, and I relished the rare opportunity for a solo drive to her house. The road wound through hardened black lava fields, ancient remnants of past eruptions, stretching wide and raw under the open sky. It rolled gently over lazy hills, offering sweeping cliffside views where the Pacific Ocean crashed violently below.

I pulled into her gravel driveway and took in the scene. A tasteful beige two-story home stood quietly on the land, a large circular window catching the light on one side. Lush greenery surrounded the house, lilikoi vines curling up and down a fence, their tendrils thick with passion fruit.

Natasha had told me her space was on the top floor. I parked in the carport and stepped out, my sandals crunching on the gravel. As I climbed the stairs, anticipation mixed with unease in my chest.

What if she tells me something bad? What if she sees something terrible in my future? The thoughts flickered by, but curiosity pulled stronger. I kept climbing.

Another circular window crowned the door. I knocked, heard a cheerful “Just a minute!” and seconds later it swung open. Part of me had expected the cliché—an older, heavysset woman draped in robes and beads, maybe wearing a headscarf and holding a crystal ball in one hand. The kind of mystical character conjured by movie scenes and novelty shops. But the woman standing before me couldn’t have been further from that image.

She was striking. A natural beauty with short, dark hair and soft bangs swept effortlessly across her forehead. Her large brown eyes sparkled with intelligence and warmth, and her skin had a kind of lit-from-within glow. She wore a loose-fitting white top and flowy tan pants that moved with her, understated and elegant. And her smile—open, radiant, effortlessly warm—relaxed me immediately.

“Welcome! You must be Amanda! Come on in,” she said with an accent I couldn’t quite place. With a graceful sweep of her arm, she gestured me into a bright, airy room with gleaming wooden floors, a soaring ceiling, and expansive windows that looked out toward the ocean.

“Take a seat over there,” she said, palm outstretched toward a wooden table nestled beside yet another circular window, this one framing a view of the distant lava fields and the volcano, Kīlauea.

I settled into a wooden chair with a soft, earth-toned cushion and took a moment to absorb the scene. The room was serene, sunlit, and filled with the rhythmic sound of waves in the distance. A fluffy white-and-tan cat, perfectly matched to the natural tones of the home, rubbed affectionately against my leg, purring.

“Would you like a cup of tea?” Natasha asked, already making her way toward the kitchen.

“Sure,” I said, idly petting the cat as I took it all in. This wasn’t at all what I had imagined, but strangely, it felt as if I’d been here before. Moments later, she returned with two steaming mugs and that same warm smile, setting one in front of me.

I noticed a piece of paper on the table in front of me. It was covered in symbols, lines, and a large circle divided into sections resembling the spokes of a wheel. In the top left corner, I saw my name, birth date, time, and location neatly typed. I assumed this was my chart—whatever that meant.

Natasha sat across from me and tilted her head slightly, a playful glint in her eye. “So... what brings you here?” she asked, her voice light, almost mischievous.

I smiled, a little sheepish. “Honestly? I’m not sure. Curiosity, I guess. My friend spoke so highly of you, I figured I’d give it a try.”

She nodded. “Have you ever had an astrology reading before?”

I shook my head. “Nope.”

“Do you know anything about astrology? How familiar are you with it?”

“Absolutely nothing,” I admitted with a laugh. “I mean, I know I’m a Capricorn, but I don’t even know what that means.”

“Perfect,” she said warmly. “Then we’ll start at the beginning. Stop me anytime if something doesn’t make sense or if you have questions.”

She pointed to the paper on the table and said, “This is your natal chart, a snapshot of the sky at the exact moment you were born. It’s a map of your soul’s journey.”

I glanced at the symbols and lines, trying to make sense of them. *Hmm... if you say so*, I thought, the old skepticism and twinge of fear from earlier bubbling up again.

But any fear that tried to make its way into the space was completely swept away by the softness of her words, the enthusiasm with which she spoke, and the loving clarity she shed on my past, present and potentials for my future. To my surprise, she began describing my early life with uncanny accuracy. She spoke of a large family with many siblings and a house overflowing with energy and noise. It was a busy, boisterous home, full of constant activity. She described my mother as vibrant, always in motion, the magnetic center of the household. She was full of conversation, nurturing, and care. My father, she said, had a strong masculine presence, and his love for my mother was unwavering.

Then she paused, tilted her head, and asked, “Were you in a family business? Maybe with your father?”

I blinked, surprised by the question. “Yes,” I said slowly, curiosity blooming even more. “We built one together with my brothers and mom.”

Within the first five minutes, we were already miles beyond the surface-level horoscope blurbs I had once assumed were “astrology.” Natasha had described my childhood home and family experience, even the family business, with such striking accuracy that I could feel my defenses start to melt.

Natasha then began describing more of the outer framework of my life. She spoke of my accomplishments, ambition, and my relentless drive to succeed. But she didn’t stop at the surface. She gently guided me deeper into the undercurrent beneath the striving. The fear of failure, the fear of embarrassment. The quiet anxiety that I might only be lovable if I were successful.

Her words sent a steady stream of shivers up and down my spine. *How does she know this? How does she know exactly how I've always felt ... things I've never even said out loud?*

She was naming fears I hadn't fully admitted to myself, much less shared with anyone else. And yet, here they were, reflected back to me with startling precision, as if she had been reading the quiet script I'd been carrying inside my whole life.

Then she paused, looked at me with clear, steady eyes, and spoke slowly, as if to be sure I felt the weight of her words.

“You have a very specific mission in this lifetime,” she said. “A lofty one. And the reason you don't feel entirely in control of your hunger for growth, expansion and deeper truth ... is because it isn't coming from your mind. It's coming from your soul. This drive is part of the intention you had before you decided to incarnate.”

Wait ... I decided to incarnate?

That was new. I'd always been told we didn't have a say in that.

And I had an intention with that decision? Hmmmm....

And yet, what she was saying landed in a place deeper than reason. It explained that haunting sense I'd carried in New York—that if I didn't change my life, something essential in me would begin to wither. It wasn't surface-level dissatisfaction; it was a soul-deep warning: stay on this path, and your soul will die.

She continued, her voice calm, unwavering.

“You’re here to deliver, create, build, and offer something to the collective field of humanity. It’s beyond the realm of what you can even imagine. You are a cosmic messenger, and you’re here to bring something through—through your words, through your presence. Not behind the scenes. It’s about your beingness, your frequency. That’s all part of the plan. And you’re here to share information that is on a universal level.”

A cosmic messenger? Universal level? I had no idea what universal, cosmic message I might be carrying.

“It’s not something you’ll need to chase,” she added gently. “It’s part of your 12th house. Woven into your destiny. It will unfold through you, not because of your planning, strategy or effort, but because it’s time. The details are yours to cover, and your free will matters, but the map is there; you choose how to walk it.”

Natasha leaned toward the chart. “I see a new quality emerging—a feminine wisdom, a different kind of leadership. One that gathers people through resonance, not control.”

I tilted my head. “Resonance?”

She nodded. “Yes. Your soul already knows focus and determination. But now you’re here to learn collaboration, harmonization and the power of collective energy.” She paused, then asked, “Have you resisted stepping into leadership roles in the past?”

“Absolutely,” I said without hesitation. “But I always end up in them anyway, whether I want to or not.”

A smile tugged at the corner of her mouth. “That’s because it’s part of your design. You are meant to lead, but differently than you have before.”

Her words stirred equal parts recognition and resistance. She seemed to sense it, turning toward the parts of me that still felt raw and unresolved with steady kindness.

“You doubt yourself a lot,” she said softly. “You rarely feel like you’re doing enough. There’s this almost constant pressure, as if you’re carrying everything on your shoulders. And with it, guilt. So much guilt. But you’re here to bring awareness to these patterns—to master them. And to show others how to do the same. You’re here to model what it looks like to move beyond the old, debilitating stories and step into true self-authority.”

Her words bypassed the skeptical part of my mind and landed directly in my heart. Something inside me broke open. Tears welled up and began to spill silently down my cheeks. Without missing a beat, Natasha handed me a tissue. Her eyes were kind, steady. As if she’d seen it all before.

I don’t know how else to describe what I was feeling, except to say that I felt seen, in a way I had never felt seen before. It was as if Natasha was looking straight through me, past the surface, into the depths of my being—and gently offering back the treasures she found there.

Despite my lingering fear that she might uncover something unlovable about me, she was reflecting the beauty in my imperfect perfection. Through her words, I began to see my life in a different light. It no longer felt like a random collection of experiences or disjointed decisions, but something purposeful. As if every step, every twist and turn, had been part of a larger design—shaping me into exactly who I was meant to become.

At one point, overwhelmed by the intensity of it all, I excused myself and slipped into the bathroom to regroup. I was sure mascara was streaming down my face. And while my defenses were mostly down, I was still a Capricorn at heart, and couldn’t quite handle the idea of appearing too messy.

When I returned and sat back down, she looked at me kindly. “Are you okay?”

I nodded, smiling softly.

“Would you like me to continue?”

Again, I nodded. And just like that, she picked up the thread and returned to reading into my soul.

I was amazed that so much information could be drawn from one small circle of symbols and lines sitting on the piece of paper in front of Natasha. Her understanding seemed endless, and still, she assured me: this was only the beginning. Just the tip of the iceberg.

When a moment naturally opened for me to ask a question, I brought things back down to earth. Now that Sophia was born and we were more than a year into our adventure, the pressure to figure out how we'd make a living was intensifying with every passing day.

“Will I be making an income soon?” I asked, “And if so, are there any clues for how that might happen?”

“This isn't a time to be overly focused on your career,” Natasha said. “I know it's unsettling not to have a plan, especially for you. And I understand how vulnerable it feels not to have financial security. But if you trust the timing and stay focused on your family and the process of shedding old conditioning, the way forward will reveal itself when you need it.”

I wanted to believe her. The idea of completely surrendering to the moment, tending to my family, and my own transformation sounded beautiful. But it also felt like a luxury I wasn't sure I could afford. Our savings were disappearing by the day, and her words, though comforting, didn't calm the growing urgency I felt inside.

As our time came to a close, I stood up—tears streaming down my face again—and said, without hesitation, “This is the clearest, most obvious evidence of God I've ever encountered.” And I meant every word.

Because if this woman, a complete stranger, could see me so clearly, speaking to the nuance and complexity of my life from nothing more than the exact time, date, and location of my birth, then surely something far greater was at play. Some Intelligence far beyond anything I could wrap my mind around. And if that Intelligence could craft something so precise, so meaningful, so rich with purpose, then it had to be loving. How else could such care and intention be explained?

For the first time, I felt the full weight and grace of that realization. That my life wasn't random. That I hadn't been stumbling forward alone. I was being guided. Held. Nudged in just the right directions. Drawn to people, places, and passions that would eventually weave together into something coherent and purposeful. It felt as if I had just caught a glimpse of the loving presence behind that soft inner voice, the one that had whispered to me at key moments throughout my life.

The same voice that asked, "Who are you ... really?" when I was ten years old, staring into my own eyes in the mirror.

The one that nudged me to explore world religions, seeking the golden thread of truth running through them all.

The one that guided me toward psychology as I searched for answers in the human mind and heart.

The voice that haunted me in New York, whispering, "You're here for something more."

And now, here it was again: illuminated through the stars, the symbols, the chart on Natasha's table.

I laughed to myself, thinking of my skepticism and dismissive attitude toward astrology. A little embarrassed about how self-righteously I had dismissed it as "unintelligent" and "woo-woo." I had no idea it went this deep.

“Why doesn’t everyone know about this?!” I asked Natasha as I gathered my things to leave.

She let out a soft laugh. “Well,” she said, “some people certainly do.”

We hugged goodbye at her doorstep, and I stepped back into the sunlit afternoon feeling changed. Not in some dramatic, movie-scene kind of way—but subtly, profoundly rearranged on the inside. I hoped I’d see her again soon. I wanted more.

I drove home the same way I’d come, yet the world seemed newly enchanted. The air shimmered with life, colors glowed brighter, and even the shadows felt softer. Billowing clouds curled around the volcano’s peak, crowned by an endless blue sky. The black lava fields, steady and strong as ever, now caught the sunlight in a way I hadn’t noticed before, revealing tiny crystals that sparkled like scattered stars. And then, something caught my eye.

A small cluster of vibrant green and red, pushing its way through the hardened earth. I recognized them—the same ‘Ōhi’a Lehua trees that graced our backyard. I was learning in hālau that these trees are sacred in Hawai’i. Symbols of renewal and resilience. The first life to emerge through hardened lava after a volcanic eruption. A living reminder that even in the most scorched and devastated landscapes, life finds a way. As I watched them sway softly in the breeze, I knew: this image would stay with me.

The ‘Ōhi’a Lehua would become a kind of lifeline, a symbol I’d return to again and again. A reminder that the same quiet strength, the same insistence on life, lived within me too.

And one day, when everything fell apart, I would need to remember that.

Astrologer's Note

Many of us have had experiences of fated meetings that were meant to profoundly impact our lives and even change the direction of our journey. The key players of our destiny's script appear oftentimes unexpectedly, yet years later, we realize the importance of that meeting and the role it played in our becoming. Sometimes those meetings are accompanied by a subtle sense of recognition, or "remembering"; other times, we can intuitively feel that something special is about to happen.

These destined life-changing encounters are always reflected and confirmed via our natal blueprints.

The combination of Amanda's and the Astrologer's charts is beaming with powerful conjunctions where all the planets are mutually activated and engaged. It means that the vibration and essence of one person is stirring the inner architecture of the other, and vice versa. The few examples of this fusion are Moon-Uranus, Saturn-Ascendant, Mars-Descendant, Mercury-IC, Saturn-Uranus conjunctions, all highly stimulating and buzzing with energy transference.

Moreover, the South Node of the Moon, representing our karmic patterns or encapsulating the "stories" from our previous incarnations, is activated in both charts, with the Astrologer's Jupiter (teachings, knowledge) on Amanda's karmic point, and Amanda's Sun and Venus (creativity, identity, love) on the Astrologer's South Node. Cases like this indicate an old and intimate soul connection, lifetimes of experiences together through the journeys of physical incarnations.

The timing of the meeting itself is as important as the natal chart comparison. The positions of the planets in the sky right before and during any important event add to the magic of the moment. On the day and during the reading, our celestial messenger Mercury landed on Amanda's descendant, as if she was about to receive a "message" through the person she meets. Simultaneously on that day, the transformational Pluto is conjoining her natal Mercury, delivering the information (Mercury) meant to stimulate a consciousness breakthrough.

**For more on "synastry" or relationship astrology or to understand the timing and meaning behind significant events in your life, go to www.lifebythestars.com/resources for more support.*

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A true story about letting go, looking up,
and remembering who you are.



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