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Last Exit to Montauk

AUTHOR
Phillip Vega

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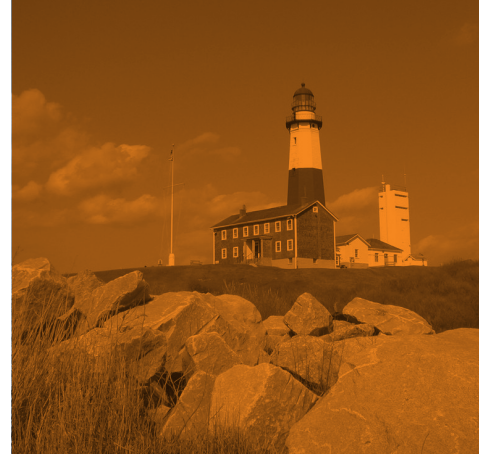
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THE AUTHOR



PHILLIP VEGA

Phillip Vega has always been a storyteller, but he'd never put pen to paper until a few years ago. Suddenly, he had a publishing contract, and in the midst of the vortex of marketing, analytics, refining, and continuing to write, he discovered what he defines as his true calling, his passion. He is now fully and happily immersed in the whirlwind that is the publishing industry, even as he diligently continues his work in software sales.

Phillip is a Long Islander with Hispanic roots, now living Florida, and it is from those memories of summers in Long Island that he crafted his book, *Last Exit to Montauk*. Now he can't stop his brain from working through new ideas for future stories.

His hobbies, aside from enjoying his ongoing work as a published author, include many of the other art forms: singing, performing, and reading. The beach is always home to him . . . and laughter, whether his own or someone else's, is an unsurpassable joy that he embraces whenever possible.

Phillip lives in the Tampa Bay area with his wife of twenty-three years. He has four sons and "two and a half dogs," which actually is four dogs, but three out of the four are Chihuahuas while the fourth is a shepherd mix. So he calls it at "two and a half."

Comfortable in a room full of people or one on one, he welcomes opportunities for guest appearances, interviews, and book signings.



THE BOOK

(SHORT SYNOPSIS)

When he approaches her at the market, he has no idea the next three weeks of his life would change him forever.

It's the late 1980s, summertime, on the North Shore of Long Island. The air stirs with possibilities as it often does during this time of year. And so begins the romance between one Hispanic seventeen-year-old male, on the verge of manhood and ready to conquer the world, and one beautiful and intelligent young woman named B.

It is much more than romance, though. B will forever become a part of this young man's soul. He will never forget her.

This is a coming-of-age story, a love story, replete with milestones, tangled emotions, and adventures that are the embodiments of first love. Not just for the young, but for the young at heart.

KEYWORDS

first love
first sexual experience
the eighties
Long Island
summertime
beaches
Latino families
high school memories
losing a loved one

CATEGORIES

Fiction, Romance, General
Fiction, Coming of Age
Fiction, Multi-cultural, Interracial



LONG SYNOPSIS



“Who knew that going to Whole Foods, on a rainy Saturday afternoon in Florida, would bring me back to the summer of ’87?”

Thus starts a story of love, romance, heartbreak, and loss.

Set during the end of summer break in the latter part the 1980s on the North Shore of Long Island, we meet a Hispanic seventeen-year-old—a physician’s son on the verge of manhood and ready to conquer the world. It is during this time that he meets the blonde who changes his very soul.

While stopping at a local grocery store, he spots the blonde, named B, a classmate, standing in the produce section, sniffing fruit. Slightly embarrassed, she waves hello and calls him over, recognizing him from school. Little did they know; this happenstance meeting would change their lives forever.

What starts off as friendship soon blossoms into something else. They spend the next three weeks together in the pre-internet world of 1987, traveling across well-known locations on Long Island, from the Hercules statue in Stony Brook to Smith Point Beach, from Port Jefferson to West Meadow Beach, to the upscale community Old Field. The locale is the backdrop to this interracial love story.

Through the narrator’s eyes, we see their relationship bloom, going through the various stages of discovery, love, and intimacy. He experiences the insecurities of first-time moments, including his virginity. Is he kissing her correctly? Is he touching her correctly? Where are the boundaries? What lines is he allowed to cross?

As their love story builds, so does the conflict between the narrator and B’s ex-boyfriend, who can’t seem to get over her. This leads to blows, an unexpected trip to the hospital, a broken hand, and tragedy.

It’s during a rainy Friday evening, after leaving their back-to-school dance early, where they take the next step in their relationship, discovering more about each other, physically, emotionally and spiritually, as they plan their future together.

Fate would have different plans.

“A romance that begins in the heat of a Long Island summer bares two young souls to new love, intimacy, and tragedy. Highly recommended!”

– *Lawrence Kelter, bestselling author of
BACK TO BROOKLYN,
the sequel to My Cousin Vinny*

“Raw, real, and packed with heartfelt emotion, Last Exit to Montauk is a sentimental love story of a whirlwind romance that stands the test of time, spinning the perfect tale of the challenges and awkwardness of love at first sight. One minute you’ll laugh, the next you’ll reach for a tissue. Full of twists and turns, the unforeseen twist at the end wrenches your heart, leaving you breathless, and reminding us all just how precious life truly is. We all have but one life. The magic is found in living it.”

– *Cheryl Bradshaw, New York Times
and USA Today bestselling author
of the Sloane Monroe mysteries*

“I loved the book and cried at the end. It was a wonderful heartwarming tale of an adolescent boy and his heart. I loved the characters and could relate, as I am a fellow Long Islander. The references to the 1980s are great.”

– *Nancy O’Hara, early reviewer*

“I loved the ’80s memories of Friendly’s fribbles, Spencer’s Gifts, the music, movies, etc. I have lots of family in Long Island and grew up going there all my life, and I feel like he nailed the Long Island ’80s vibe of malls and beach days. The book has great nostalgia for me, especially given the world we live in today with constant social media and everyone on their phones. It was a great escape!”

– *Danielle Boniauto, early reviewer*

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“Vega’s account of first love is so authentic it’s hard to believe he wasn’t seventeen when he wrote it. Last Exit to Montauk will have you reminiscing about summers as a teenager and all the foibles and joys of those times. With references to the 1980s that ground you and an ending that doesn’t pull any emotional punches, this book keeps you turning the pages.”

– *Elena Stowell, author of Flowing with
the Go and co-founder of the
Carly Stowell Foundation ([www.
carlystowellfoundation.countmein.com](http://www.carlystowellfoundation.countmein.com))*

“It brought back some great memories of high school. I felt very ‘seventeen,’ which was a fun way to feel during the week of my fiftieth birthday. I can’t even guess how many times I literally laughed out loud. I was expecting a great book and was definitely not disappointed.”

– *Karen Nelson, early reviewer*

DOWNLOADABLES

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*Hercules Pavillion
Stony Brook, New York*

SNEAK PEEK

The bowling alley was located at a strip mall near my house. We checked in with the guy behind the counter, who assigned us a lane, then gave us each a score sheet and a pair of really fashionable bowling shoes. You know the ones. Red and black separated with a white stripe down the middle, white soles, shoe size emblazoned on the back. To this day, they still remind me of clown shoes.

We found a couple of black bowling balls and put them in the ball return area. I placed the scoresheet on our bowling desk and wrote our names down.

Back then we didn't have electronic scoreboards, so you had to know how to keep score. You had to know the difference between a strike and a spare, how to score it properly, and what happened in the last frame if you threw one. Of course, each table had the rules written down, so if you didn't know how to keep score, you could read the directions and learn the rules. It was bowling, not rocket science.

We were playing the best of three. Like tennis, the loser would buy pizza. "And don't take it easy on me. I plan on winning again," she warned me, grinning.

I laughed. "Oh don't worry; I don't plan on losing two days in a row. I hope you brought your wallet."

I wasn't much of a bowler and only played now and again. I was lucky if I broke a hundred, but don't judge. How many famous Hispanic bowlers do you know? I bet you could rattle off a few hundred Hispanic baseball or soccer players though, right?

Besides, most kids in the neighborhood didn't come to the bowling alley to bowl. We came to play video games. I remember when they got Ms. Pac-Man. Adults and kids would put their quarters down on the lip of the machine and patiently wait their turn. While you waited, you could play another video game, like Asteroids, or play pinball.

They had the classic pinball games like Kiss and Pinball Wizard. Today, it's all about X-Box, iPads, Sony PlayStation, and online computer games. Man, times have changed. But that day, we were there to bowl.

She bowled first. She did a quick stretch, blew into her right hand, and picked up her ball. Before making her approach, she bent over and stared down the bowling pins as if to say, "You're mine."

What a view.

She inhaled, held it, and exhaled. Then in a very fluid motion, she took a few steps and released the ball, knocking down nine pins. She twirled around, smiling, and looked over at me, raising her eyebrows. "I hope you brought your A game!"

Oh, crap!

I just smiled back. Her ball returned, and she picked it up. She went right back to her previous spot and picked up her spare. She yelped and did a fist pump. She then turned around and bounced back to the bowling table as if it were no big deal. So, she can bowl. Who knew?

Maybe she got lucky. Yeah, that's what it was—luck. Just like tennis yesterday. Luck.

“Do you know how to keep score?” she asked.

“Yeah, I know how to keep score. This isn’t my first time bowling,” I replied. *It’ll only look like it.*

We spent the rest of the afternoon bowling without a care in the world. Strike! Spare! Gutter ball! Seven/ten split! Spare! We laughed. We high-fived. Most importantly, we had fun. We only played two of our best of three games. Yes, Charlie Brown lost again . . . *sigh!*

I just laughed it off. Besides, she had distracted me with her awesomeness.

“So where do you want to go for pizza?” she asked.

“I know a joint,” I joked.

Like most Long Island strip malls, this one had a grocery store, liquor store, card store, record store, Carvel ice cream parlor, drugstore, dry cleaner, Chinese food, and, of course, a neighborhood pizza joint.

On Long Island, every neighborhood has a locally-owned Italian pizzeria in every shopping center. You had Tony’s, Vinnie’s, Mario’s, Johnny’s, and an assortment of other places that were names ending in a vowel. The very best pizza on the planet, in my opinion, was our neighborhood’s local pizzeria—Giuseppe’s.

If you want to get into a pissing contest, make the mistake of saying your pizza place was better than someone else’s. You know the expression about never discussing religion and politics? Well, when you’re on Long Island, add pizzerias to the list. You will argue for hours.

When the pizza chains started to open up, people would order from them only if they didn’t feel like driving, or were in a jam; otherwise, people looked down their noses at those places. You never admitted to ordering from Domino’s, or being seen in Pizza Hut.

It wasn’t raining very hard, so we walked a few stores down to Giuseppe’s Pizzeria. We ordered a couple of slices each and Cokes and found a booth toward the back. And that was how you ordered it: “Let me get a couple of slices and a Coke.”

Back then, you didn’t have a great selection. You couldn’t order a Hawaiian slice or a Meat Lovers slice. Gourmet slices like goat cheese and truffles or escargot pizza were not yet *in vogue*.

For those of you wondering, yes, I was the one who once had eaten escargot pizza. *Yes*, it was *awful*, and yes, there was a girl involved. Fortunately, the girl I was trying to impress that day, still agreed to marry me in the mid-’90s. The lesson I learned *that day*? Don’t be a *shmuck!* When in doubt, go with pepperoni. Okay, back to the story . . .

“Did you let me win again?” B teased.

“You were there. Did it look like I let you beat me? Besides, you only beat me the last game by two pins. And I do recall someone coughing real loud as I threw my last ball. I’m not making any accusations or excuses, mind you, I’m just saying.”

She tried to hide her smirk.