TV Close-Up: Bitsie Tulloch

by Eirik_Knutzen

Called to jury duty on a hot, smoggy, summer day in 2007, Bitsie Tulloch sighed, then loaded up on reading material before reporting at 8 a.m. in the cavernous holding area for prospective jurors at the massive Superior Court of California facility in downtown Los Angeles.

BITSIE TULLOCH - Bitsie Tulloch plays Dylan, the star of the Web log drama 'quarterlife.' CNS Photo courtesy of Elisabeth Caren. After four excruciatingly boring hours of reading, re-reading and letting her mind wander into outer space, Tulloch finally struck up a conversation with the man sitting patiently next to her. When he proved to be an extremely smart and articulate person, she quickly ruled out the likelihood that he was a sadistic rapist, serial murderer or cat burglar.

Tulloch - working at the time as a researcher for Democratic Party strategist and pollster Patrick Caddell - introduced herself as an actress. He said his name was Marshall, a writer.

"Such a quiet, modest man, he didn't say what he had written," she recalled, laughing. "Thinking I was being all sweet and was throwing him a bone, I invited him to an actor-writer group I was involved with at the time."

They chatted on for a few hours, then were dismissed from jury duty for the year.

"But Marshall came to my little group a few weeks later, just to appease me," said Tulloch. "Once he left for the evening, the writers in the room went nuts. 'Oh, my god! Do you know who that is?' I had no idea."

The answers came hot and heavy: His name is Marshal Herskovitz, 56, and his miles of credits as a creator-writer-producer-executive producer and/or director for feature films and television projects include "Blood Diamond," "The Last Samurai," "I Am Sam," "Traffic," "Once and Again," "Dangerous Beauty,"

"Legends of the Fall," "My So-Called Life" and "thirtysomething".

Herskovitz gracefully declined a second visit with Tulloch's coterie of creative associates, and they were out of touch for several months while he was shooting "Blood Diamond" that winter with Leo DiCaprio in South Africa. Finally back in L.A., he spotted a positive newspaper review of her work in a local stage production of Sam Forman's "Quarterlife."

The heavyweight showbiz mogul liked what he saw in her award-nominated role as Sally in "Quarterlife" and quickly signed her for the lead role of Dylan in "quarterlife," his upcoming Internet/TV network series created and produced with his usual distinguished partner, Ed Zwick. But she had time to play the role of Alex on the 2007 Internet serial "lonelygirl15" before "quarterlife" became reality last November as 36 eight-minute episodes on myspace.com and quarterlife.com.

All the minisegments are carved from six one-hour "quarterlife" episodes ordered by NBC, according to Tulloch. The play and the show only have two things in common: similar titles and action revolving around people in their 20s. The characters and stories are totally different. In the play, Sally was breaking up with her boyfriend of several years during a weekend. The show deals with Dylan Krieger's relationships with five other insecure twentysomethings sharing digs and communicating with the rest of the universe through computers.

"Quarterlife" - according to NBC and the producers - is "a commitment to realism and the recognition of universal human themes through the truthful depiction of the way young people speak, work, think, love, argue and just have fun."

Tulloch's Dylan is a frustrated writer who loves to share her closest friends' secrets without their knowledge through her painfully truthful video blog.

Born in San Diego while her mother was visiting relatives, Tulloch and her older sister were brought back home to Madrid, Spain, a week or so later. By the time the family moved to New York when she was 12, her

Dad had become a Latin American finance specialist after lengthy reassignments in Uruguay and Argentina.

Highly intelligent and monetarily secure, the 27-year-old Tulloch lived in Boston for four years to earn a bachelor's degree from Harvard in her double major, English literature and fine arts. Between her freshman and sophomore years, she spent a summer in Australia basically to have a good time. While Down Under, she stumbled over George Lucas as he was prepping to shoot his TV mockumentary "R2-D2: Beneath the Dome." She started out as a location scout for the production company, but the single, tall, dark beauty ended up cast as R2-D2's "girlfriend."

"The casting director, who saw my dailies, told me that I was very good and should consider acting professionally," she recalled. "When I went back to Harvard, I had to make up my mind between going to graduate school in England for a master's in art history or moving to Hollywood," she explained.

"Luckily, I chose the latter on a whim ... probably because the thought of acting scared the hell out of me. I took acting classes in L.A. for two years before I even auditioned for a part. It worked. I have two features coming out this year: 'Lakeview Terrace' and 'Vacuuming the Cat.' And I shoot 'Riding the Pine' soon."

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