

“Second Act”

By Helen Lutz

Some people are blessed with ‘street smarts’ which my grandmother called plain old common sense. Then there are the people who are book smart, most of whom possess expensive and impressive college degrees. A person who is book smart and street smart is dangerous and will always find a way to survive. Never underestimate us.



“Second Act” starring Jennifer Lopez as Maya takes us to Queens, New York. For 15 years Maya has worked her way up the corporate ladder to assistant manager of a big box store with a good record, loved by the staff, resourceful, innovative and responsible for increasing the bottom line. Everything is going her way when the manager position opens up except for her GED. The company policy supports those with college educations; in this case an Ivy League master’s degree (at a big box store? really?) and Maya is passed over for promotion – on her 40th birthday no less.

Maya enjoys what she does and is really good at it; however, dead-end describes her career. While bemoaning her troubles to her best friend Joan (Leah Remini) her birthday wish of being a ‘better’ and ‘more important’ person is overheard by Joan’s son Dilly (Dalton Harrod) who happens to be really good with computers and Stanford bound. In his mind what’s not to like about his godmother Maya? All it takes is an outstanding resume which includes a Harvard MBA as well as Peace Corps activity. A person who is friends with the Obamas, fluent in Chinese, and wait for it – has successfully climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro or Everest or something like that. Build the resume, create a great Facebook page and submit her application for a position at the fancy New York cosmetics firm Franklin and Clarke as his birthday present to her. What could possibly go wrong?

Imagine Maya’s surprise when she is called for an interview not knowing anything about our computer genius’s efforts on her behalf. What’s a 40 year old woman stuck in a job going nowhere to do, but change out of the Wal-Mart type vest, quit her job and show up for the interview. She’s quite surprised when she learns of her many credentials and accolades.

While meeting with Anderson Clarke (Treat Williams), the company CEO, Maya makes an impression. When introduced to a young executive, Zoe (Vanessa Hudgens), Maya’s comments about some of the company’s products prove that she’s knowledgeable and a consultant position is offered to her. A consultant position she never dreamed about with a fancy corner office, a posh condo and a Bergdorf’s company credit card. The question, should she come clean or continue to live the fantasy?

“Second Act” offers many plot twists as Maya weaves her way through her imaginary life; what about her boyfriend, can she really interpret for a Chinese business man at a company dinner, just how many secrets can one woman carry? “Second Act” is categorized as a romantic-comedy, but the director and writers are hoping for something more – feminine empowerment. However, there comes a time when honesty, character and integrity become the trump cards. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “Second Act” ♡♡. It’s a fun way to spend a couple of hours especially with a friend and a glass of wine.