

# “A Walk on the Wild Side”

## Actress Navi Rawat Goes from *Burn Notice* to an African Safari

Words by Vanessa Pascale • Photography by Joey Shaw

On a balmy Friday evening in the posh pool patio area of Santa Monica Beach’s **Shangri-La Hotel**, stunning natural beauty **Navi Rawat** and I bonded over a shared love for a certain *housewife*, one of her favorite pastimes and our Floridian roots. Most recognized for her five-year run on CBS’ crime show hit *Numb3rs* as **Amita Ramanujan**, mathematician and girlfriend of **David Krumholtz’s** character, the gregarious actress spoke candidly about life after *Numb3rs*.

Sad to see *Numb3rs* end earlier this year, [“The last day of the show I was very emotional. I basically cried for 17 hours straight...”] Navi went on to her next project – a guest spot on USA’s *Burn Notice*. Much different from her character on *Numb3rs*, Navi played **Kendra**, the not-so-good girl. “It was really fun to kick off *Numbers* with something that was so different, and kind of a wild, crazy character. She’s a wild card,” Navi explained with excitement. “I did a lot of my own stunts, and had a stunt-double woman who did a lot of my work for me, since I had to do stuff with **Jeffrey [Donovan]**. God forbid I hurt their leading man. That would be something that would happen to me. I have a funny life, kind of, like haha funny, but only if you’re not in it...” she joked.

Her *Burn Notice* character only appears in a couple of episodes, but you never know where a role can go. Her role on *Numb3rs* actually began as a guest spot. “When it first started, I was contractually obligated to



another show. After that show went away, it was actually *The O.C.*, I became a regular on *Numb3rs*. You never dream— ideally, you always hope. I hope my show goes for years and that one [*Numb3rs*] did,” she said cheerfully.

The fact that *Burn Notice* films in Miami was an added bonus for Navi, since this is where she grew up. “It was a fun city to grow up in. The best thing I ever got from Miami is my friends. Getting *Burn Notice* was the dream job. When I got the job, they were like, Do you want to stay in a hotel? I’m like, *Hell no, I’m staying with my family (whom she is very close to)*,” expressed Navi. A true Miami fan, she continued, “I love Miami. I’m there all the time. It’s a great city, especially since it’s changing so much, I see with the **Wynwood Arts District**, the **Design District**, all these places, it’s really kind of evolving.” She was also looking forward to seeing her friends. “It’s really

nice to go home and have friends. All my friends from high school are my best friends to this day. I would hope for everybody that they have those kinds of relationships. And Miami’s fun because my dad lives on the beach, I meet up with my friends, either they pick me up or I take a taxi, we go have dinner, have some wine. It’s where I let loose and have a good time. Whereas here [Malibu], I’m very much here to work. I wouldn’t live here if it wasn’t for my work,” Navi confessed.

Passionate about acting since high school, Navi went on to study at **NYU**. “I double majored because it was so

### WHO WOULD YOU LOVE TO WORK WITH?

*I’ve always been a big, big Clint Eastwood fan. I love him as a director. Darren Aronofsky is an amazing director and I love J.J. Abrams.*

expensive to go to NYU. My dad was like, 'If you're going to go to that school, you have to do something useful.' He didn't think acting was useful [she said with a smile], so I double majored in **British American Literature and Theater**, and as soon as I graduated I moved out here." Navi's first acting job was on a show called **Popular**. "I was Girl #5, something really glamorous and fabulous," she said jokingly. "I don't really have a fab story. I just work hard. I'm working my way up, so to speak. I wish I was discovered pool side at a fancy hotel in Santa Monica," she laughed, referring to our locale.

The challenge that comes with being a professional actress is what appealed to her though. "I'm a restless person, so I love that it's such a challenging profession. There's always room to grow, get better—do more projects and expand your repertoire... that's what I like about it. I think the day that I feel that I've done it all, I probably won't do it anymore. I've been doing it professionally now for 10 years (knocks on wood). It's really a hard career 'cause there's always someone new or hot, the most you can do is try to be the best actor you can be. I still study regularly. I go to class twice a week if I can. I try to do the most I can to maximize my chances for success," said Navi. The

WHAT WOULD FANS BE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOU?

*I'm dorky, definitely. I have a really good knowledge of film and trivia. I know a lot of general information. And, I'm a terrible cook. I can cook three things. My boyfriend complains all the time. I'm thinking about buying Bethenny's (Frankel) cookbook. I'm not even joking with you, that way I can learn to cook and help Bethenny.*

ambitious actress has appeared on several hot television shows including **The O.C., 24, Castle** and in the feature film **House of Sand and Fog**.

Truly appreciative of the field she works in—if she's not acting on TV, she's watching TV. "I watch way too much TV. I'll go on record as the first person to say that. Some people do other things like go out and have fun, hang out with their friends, go have dinners, I watch TV currently or work on my auditions." While discussing television shows and reruns we watch, Navi excitedly

asked me, "Do you watch **Housewives?**"

**ML:** Miami Living: Yes.

**Navi Rawat:** (Wide-eyed, she continued) Ok, which one is your favorite show?

**ML:** New York

**NR:** Me too! Who is your favorite character?

**ML:** Bethenny

**NR:** Me too, YAY! (She enthusiastically raised up her hand to high-five me.) Obviously, you watch **Bethenny Getting Married?**

**ML:** I have watched it.

**NR:** She's a superwoman. That's my current obsession, **Bethenny Frankel**. I admire her. I like seeing people get everything. It's nice. She got the career, the man and the baby. And she's doing it all at once. It's interesting.

Navi was also thrilled to share that she will be on safari in **South Africa** with her family the beginning of this month (August). "I love traveling. I'm a real travel bug. If I could figure out some plan to travel and get paid for that, it's probably what I'd do... I watch a lot of **Travel Channel**, apparently because I'd rather be traveling," said Navi.

In addition to her adventuresome vacation, the summer holds the opening of the indie movie she's in, **Ocean of Pearls**. "It's going to be coming out in limited release in art house theaters." As for what's next, Navi is on the prowl for her next job. "I had interviews yesterday, today. I think something will happen soon. It's exciting. Being on a series so long, it's kind of like being in one relationship, doing one thing. Now, I'm a free agent again. It's fun—you can do a little bit here, a little bit there. Maybe do some movies and travel," Navi said brightly. With the obvious chemistry between **Michael Westen** (Jeffrey Donovan) and Kendra, hopefully, Navi will become a regular on **Burn Notice**—perhaps as his love interest. **ML**

