

Starlet (40's Hollywood Starlet TG)

By FoxFaceStories

A commission for aabcehm

Robert is a camera operator working in Hollywood who is accidentally transported via a magical video reel back to the Golden Age of Hollywood as a budding bombshell of a starlet! Suddenly stuck as Rachel Carmine, a gorgeous twenty year old woman on her way to fame, the new female must navigate not just her new time period and job, but also her attractive new gender that is being plastered all across the country.

Starlet

The director yelled, "Aaaaaaand . . . cut! End of the day, folks. We'll finish up the scene tomorrow. Solid work, solid work. Someone get Judy some water, will ya?"

Robert Angford switched off his camera and wiped away some sweat. It wasn't that he was unfit: he was a relatively able 5'10 man with dark hair and solid exercise regiment. No, it's just that it had been a hard, long day of shooting on the lot in the blistering California heat, and the stock standard love scene still wasn't finished. The thirty-two year old was happy to be involved in production, of course - Judy Bamford pictures were always a hit, and the union had just organised a new contract with the studios that gave their members a small percentage of the net profits - but it didn't mean he actually *liked* what he was shooting. It lacked flair, it lacked drama, it lacked the fundamental thrill of thrill of what made the silver screen pop. It was just another genreless piece of garbage that lacked fantasy and excitement. Sure, he was just a humble camera operator, but he'd seen blockbusters rise at the office and fall from memory. His real hope was to work on a project that had the pulpy joy of something like *Jurassic Park* or *Dracula*, bereft of modern sensibilities that favoured CGI and digital wizardry over heart and proper filmography. He wanted to work on something genre, not just another 'literary' piece that bored him to tears.

"Ah well," he said to himself as he finished packing up and readied to head out. "Not like I can just skip back to the classic age of Hollywood. The Hepburns, the Bogarts, the Greers and the Flynnns are all gone now, and even the ridiculousness of Hammer Horror."

It was an exaggeration, of course. He was sure that little indie projects were doing just fine, and some classics were being made. Jarvis' next project *Hellespoint* looked to be a modern masterpiece in the making, a magnum opus for the great director who loved to delve into thoughtful scifi. But Jarvis only used talent he'd worked with before, and Robert Angford wasn't it.

“Just wish I could star in something exciting and fun, but I guess those films are all taken, or just plain don’t get made anymore. Sometimes I think I was born too late.”

He shrugged, annoyed at his own melancholy. He’d just worked on too many banal projects, and with too many bad directors who couldn’t even do blocking well. Nothing but shot-reverse shot-shot nonsense that was a waste of everyone’s talents. With a sigh, he got in his cheap auto and drove home.

He was stuck in the nightmare that was LA traffic when he suddenly got a call, one that excited him.

“Hello, Robert speaking,” he said after answering it, barely able to keep the excitement out of his voice.

‘Hey, Rob, this is Avery. We got what you were looking for. Don’t know how we managed it, but we did. Took a whole lot of searching, but we’ve got six reels ranging from 1942 all the way to 1945 for ya to peruse.’

Rob checked the time. It was only 5:10. He still had another fifty minutes, if the traffic let him cross town in that time.

“Avery, keep the place open. I’m coming right over to pick them up and drop you a tip!”

Forty minutes later, Rob walked out of the aptly named *Avery’s Traderies* with six heavy reels of very protected footage, encased so as not to be ruined by sunlight. He took them home with the greatest of care, trying not to bounce in his seat.

Robert’s apartment was small, cramped, and rather shabby in construction. It had a view of the next apartment over, specifically a brick wall only a foot away, and it was constantly being shaken from the nearby rail-line that passed far too close. But the place was cheap, fairly central, and it was his own so long as he paid his rent on time. And all that shabbiness had been hidden away by his decorations, which he admired each time as he entered.

Numerous posters from classic films lined the walls, the stars of the Golden Age smiling and gasping at the viewer. There were props from *Laura*, the maltese falcon from the *Maltese Falcon* (not the original, of course), and a wig from *Psycho*. An original reel from a nearby cinema that played *Some Like It Hot* was carefully protected on a shelf, while an original recording of the score from *Grand Hotel* was set up to play on a vinyl recording. On a shelf was a series of tapes and reels and VHS and DVDs of *A Star is Born*. It was an old joke that whenever Hollywood got bored, they remade *A Star is Born*. Various busts, images, photographs, and posters of stars looked down on him, with the likes of Humphrey Bogart, Katherine Hepburn, Charlie Chaplin, Joan Crawford, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, and more.

But the absolute cream of the crop was the display in the viewing room - which was just a cheap living room arrangement with blacked out windows so he could watch his films unbothered. There, a great temple to schlocky horror and science fiction films was displayed. The entire range of *Hammer Horror*, the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, everything directed by Ed Wood, as well as the great dinosaur craze that culminated with *One Million Years B.C.* with the immortal Raquel Welch. Robert may have desired to work on a classic film, but his comfort food always remained sci-fi, fantasy, and horror. The great works of pulp.

Damn, he thought to himself, *if I could operate a camera on any of these. Or be involved in any capacity!*

It made him excited for the package he carried. There were a series of old pulpy horror and sci-fi flicks made in the forties that had been lost to time and memory . . . until he stumbled upon faint evidence they might still exist. It was strange, almost no one seemed to recognise or know the films, or their star, and it was almost an urban legend that they did not actually exist, and that the leading woman was but a fiction. Some online legends went further, suggesting that there was a supernatural element to this mystery. He discarded that immediately as pure fluff, and investigated the reels. Bad or good, the cheese of these films was the stuff he loved - there was such a thing as a 'so bad it's good' flick after all. He pulled them out under the safety of his room, checking the names on the reels and giggling with delight.

The Vengeance Factor

Stranded on Planet X!

Heart of the Crystal Lion

Encounter with the Aurela-Sphere

The Girl from Outer Space

The Beast of the Badlands

Yeah, he thought, *these are going to be amazing.*

Robert placed the first reel on his projector, making sure that the sound file was synced up. Not all of them had audio, sadly, but he was keen to witness them all in their black and white glory. There was something about this era of film that he wished could return, especially that time of gorgeous classic beauties who could give a shrill scream with the best of them, all while wearing tattered clothing and clinging to their muscled man. It was, in fact, no small fantasy of his to be that man, or at least to shoot a film in the modern day that replicated such a tantalising image.

For the next few hours, he relished the footage, eating his dinner as he watched the cheesy horror of *Encounter* and the bizarre low-budget trippiness of *The Girl from Outer Space*. He was surprised to see that the scant online rumours were true: the same woman

featured in each of the films - a figure named Rachel Carmine. She was a real beauty too, and prone to prancing about in skimpy costumes, even for the time. She had a classy dame look to her, with sharp dark eyebrows, curled brunette hair in the pompadour style, and full lips with dark lipstick to emphasise them. She had high cheekbones, and a face that could alternate between cute and innocent, mature and sexy, and then just plain terrified as she fled from the creatures that chased her. It didn't hurt that she had a total hourglass figure with what had to be a full D-cup bust.

Damn, she is mighty fine. How come she was never a bigger actress? Wish she had been! She's a total knockout!

He played reel after reel, absorbed in this woman's movements, entertained by her cheesy scenes, of which she was always the most magnetic part. In the parts that still had sound, her voice was like honey, demure yet attractive, with a classic Transatlantic accent.

"One more reel," he told himself, even though it was getting late. "Just one."

He set up *Stranded on Planet X* and readied the projector.

Last one, he thought to himself, before starting the reel.

There was a flash, like the projector was exploding. He panicked as the image of Rachel Carmine flashed again and again on the screen, her gorgeous face contorted into a scream as a rubber-costume alien tried to pull her from her handsome leading man. Robert took to his feet to try and stop the projector, but as he did he swayed, feeling suddenly nauseous. He tripped and fell forward, staggering towards the screen onto which the movie was projected.

And then, to his horror, he fell through it.

Into another life and world.

Rachel Carmine screamed. It was a damn good scream too, almost as if it were real. Almost as if she had *not been Rachel Carmine a moment ago*.

"Aaaaaand cut! That was a good one, Rachel. We'll take it again, from the top. Someone expose her shoulder a little more. We need the audience getting hot and bothered, and this gorgeous star is the one to do it, aren't you sweetie?"

Rachel Carmine looked at her surroundings with confusion. She was on some sort of Hollywood set, albeit a crude and strange one with flimsy cardboard walls and painted murals. At her side was a tall, rather attractive man in a lame astronaut outfit that wasn't nearly accurate, while on her other was a rubber-costumed alien that was dark green in colour, and currently taking a quick drag on a cigarette as it waited for filming to restart.

“Nearly took my ear out, honey,” the man said. “That was a killer. But warn me next time. Don’t want to lose my ability to hear that honey voice of yours.”

His voice was Transatlantic, which confused Rachel, but not nearly so much as the realisation that she was thinking of herself as Rachel.

I’m Robert. Robert Angford. That’s me. Why am I thinking of myself as Rachel Carmine? Oh God, why do I feel like a woman who could be Rachel Carmine!?

With great fear, even as the studio crew reset her surrounding actors and set piece coordinators for a second shot, she looked down at her body, only to see two impressive and heaving D-cup breasts rising and falling with every breath, heavy and full upon *her* chest.

Oh God. Oh fuck! I’m a woman! A woman wearing a torn, skimpy damned lame-looking space outfit, just like out of the reel I was watching! This has to be a dream; how could this be possible?

“Okay, Rachel, are you ready to do that scream again?” the director asked behind the old-fashioned camera. And Christ, was that camera old. Robert/Rachel knew his/her stuff: that thing was a Mitchell 35 mm Standard A piece, used mainly from 1940 all the way to the end of the decade. The rest of the cast and crew were similarly dressed for such a period, and the state of the rest of the technology was just as obviously dated.

No. No, it can’t be. There’s just no way. I can’t be back in the past. I can’t be!

“Rachel? Did you hear me? Ready for the big scream again?”

A masculine hand patted her behind, an action taken by her masculine co-star. “Hey, Rache, we need to start rolling. Get that fine tush into position and show some leg for us, will ya?”

But Rachel’s mind was reeling. She was a woman. She had a distinct absence between her legs, and some very soft thighs that were partly on display thanks to her torn clothing. Her hair was loose around her shoulders, and her very breathing had a soft, feminine lilt to it. And on the banner beyond the backdrop they were shooting on was a poster with a beautiful pinup dame sitting on a bomb.

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Rachel screamed, and screamed, and screamed her high lungs out, even as an alien man gripped her wrist and shoulder, exposing more of her delectable cleavage. Even as her co-star pulled her away, and held her protectively against his chest. She only stopped when the director yelled again.

“Cut! Cut! That was perfect, Rachel! We’ve got a star in the making, folks!”

For the next hour, the former male was made to pose, shriek, run for the camera, and give life to bad dialogue with as much genuine emotion as she could summon. It was insanity, but as best as Rachel could figure, it was smarter to go along with it and not arouse suspicion rather than being seen as a crazy person. If she really had been catapulted back into 1940s Hollywood, then there was no telling the horrors she might endure if she were locked up as mentally unstable. She wasn't even entirely sure she *wasn't* crazy, in fact. Who suddenly time travels and becomes a hot silver screen scream queen just because they watched an old film reel?

Still, Robert had always been quick to adapt - one had to as a cameraman given adverse weather conditions, on-set spats, re-cuts and re-shoots etc - and as Rachel she was no different. It was bizarre, as utterly hokey as *Stranded on Planet X!* was as a film, she found she was actually able to somehow act fairly well, all things considered. After all, she was terrified. But it wasn't enough: scantily clad in her torn space outfit, her large breasts heaving on her chest, and her new voice so sweetly feminine, it was all too much. She was terrified and sweating and scared that she was going crazy, and the rest of the cast seemed to notice when it came time to shoot a regular dialogue piece with her handsome leading man.

"C'mon, Rachel!" he hissed. His name was Reynold Watson, apparently. "Get your head in the game, dollface. We need a stunner to sell this cheap movie, and you're it. I'm not having this picture like a loadstone round my neck. We're joined at the hip in the contract, remember?"

She had no idea what Reynold was talking about, but as much as he fit the tall, dark, and handsome mould, she was already getting a bad sense from him, like he was used to getting his own way.

"We'll do the take again!" the director called. "Rachel, if you could add some more feel to it, darling. We want everyone to see how much you love Captain Bastion, okay?"

Captain Bastion? Who the hell wrote this flick?

"Um, okay. Sure thing, uh, boss."

"Very good. From the top now; three, two, and . . ."

There was a sudden loud crash. To her surprise and embarrassment, Rachel shrieked just as she had in one of the shoots mere minutes ago. A large wooden wall of the Planet X set collapsed to the side, and she fled out of the way. Reynold pulled her aside, and to his credit kept her safe from this blatant OSHA violation. Well, not that such regulations existed yet.

Jesus, I can spot two dozen things right now that would have the director fired off set if they were allowed to occur. The cord placement alone!

Reynold took his masculine arm off of her bare shoulder. She hadn't realised it was there, but it made her shiver a little when he removed it.

"All safe, baby girl?" he asked.

"Um, yeah. Thank you, Reynold."

He gave an award-winning grin that practically sparkled. "Well, there's no leading man without his leading lady, is there?"

And then he leaned in for a kiss. It was so sudden that Rachel wasn't prepared for it. The new woman's eyes went wide as he locked her lips on hers, kissing deeply. The sensation was deeply wrong, and all wonderful, which was just another layer of wrong as far as she was concerned. She hurriedly pushed him back.

"Stop that!" she replied.

Reynold just rolled his eyes. "I don't like this any more than you do, gal. But appearances are important, so don't ruin this."

He turned, laughing off the experience as a joke. "She's all right, folks!"

There was a brief applause from the crew, though the director didn't look too happy.

"Goddamn it, we'll need this fixed up. We're already approaching our budget. Everyone take half. Hopefully we can buttress these walls or something and get the shoot done. Miss Carmine, make sure to go over your lines with Reynold, okay?"

She nodded, feeling utterly confused, hoping that it would all make sense. A random set worker draped her with a coat that covered her body, which at least made her feel less humiliated for a spell.

I'm a woman. I'm in the past. I'm starring in a horror space pic, and I need to act like some damsel in distress. What can I even do!?

The answer, as it turned out, was quite boring and practical: learn her damn lines. Rachel retreated to a corner of the studio with Reynold, and the pair began going over their dialogue together. As hokey as it was, the cheesiness of it at least buoyed her, even gave some distraction, particularly given the many wartime posters and pieces of evidence that she really was in the past. The fact that she could see a lot of old cars out on the streets beyond the studio was hard to ignore, after all.

"C'mon Rache," Reynold said, looming over her. "Why are you shying away all of a sudden? If you want to make it in showbiz, you gotta deal with the hand it deals you. And yours ain't too bad. Hell, mine ain't bad, either."

He looked her up and down, lingering on her cleavage. She'd accidentally exposed it again by opening the front of her coat. She hurriedly covered it up.

"What hand are you talking about?" she asked, trying to sound innocently sweet rather than stupid.

“Boy, you really are out of it today. The contract we have with Paramount? Five pictures? Us paired in each of them? The fact that we’re a swell item in public as part of it? That contract?”

Rachel swallowed, realising *exactly* what Reynold was talking about. It came upon her like a dawning horror. As a man, she’d always been enamoured with the Golden Age of Hollywood, ignoring its more . . . seedy aspects. But one she remembered that she had previously, and selectively, ignored, was that the old studios forced up-and-coming actors to pretend to be in relationships for the public, to the point of making them share living arrangements. They were locked into draconian multi-picture contracts, and much of the personal lives of their actresses were controlled. With a sigh, she realised that as Rachel, she was having to pretend to be in a relationship with Reynold, potentially for *years*.

Wait, this is during World War II. Oh, shit. I better not have to work at the Hollywood Canteen, that’s for sure!

Still, she managed to regain a bit of pragmatic footing, and laughed.

“Oh, I know all that!” she exclaimed in her attractive, Transatlantic voice. “I mean the way you’re acting towards me, that’s all. Like I’m doing something wrong.”

Reynold sighed. “You’re just off your game today, that’s all. Just don’t mess up the next take, okay? I don’t want a screw up for another four pictures.”

He stormed off, leaving her to fold her arms, annoyed that *this* was her co-star, potentially for several years. It was enough to forge her confusion and anger into determination, and she spent the next twenty minutes learning her lines, all while subtly picking up information about her new life and context, in the hopes that it would get her out of it.

Maybe if I finish the day with some good acting, I’ll be changed back?

She continued to read the lines. She was going to act the *hell out of this*.

One thing she got right: Rachel acted the absolute hell out of her scenes, that was for sure. The director was impressed, as was Reynold, in his surly way. But it didn’t change her back, and when shooting was finished for the day a mere few hours later, the only consolation she got was being allowed to dress (albeit *in a dress*) and being driven home to her apartment.

And that was when it all began to make sense to her.

“It’s the same goddamn place,” she moaned before the driver opened the door for her. She got out, flattening the skirt of her dress awkwardly, and strode up to the very same apartment she’d had as Robert. The key in her purse (*God, I have a purse now*) fit the very same lock, and she opened it to find a small, cramped little apartment with almost the same

dimensions as her own in the future. Very little renovation took place in the eighty year gap, evidently, though at least there was no mould or cracks in the wall, and everything was a bit more pristine.

Better inspect the damage. Figure out what the flying fuck is going on!

The former male inspected her new apartment - one she thankfully did not share with Reynold Watson thanks to the period's moral 'standards' - and found that it was full of exactly the kind of things one would expect a young actress to possess. There were still some posters, albeit older ones, but her cupboards were now full of period women's wear, a number of slinky dresses, and a variety of coats, pantyhose, heels, hats, blouses and the like. And, of course, a number of brassieres that were most certainly for her very full bust.

Still, she was able to find a lot of evidence about her own current life, much of which came from her very own purse. Her full name was Rachel Lorraine Carmine, and she had de-aged fourteen whole years to a mere twenty years old. She was gorgeous, of course, something she realised again and again as she returned to the mirror, but she was only an up-and-comer, having starred in just a few flicks that gave her some buzz. A stack of papers on her dresser had various cutouts and framed pieces about her.

Oh God, I'm damn pretty. A real Golden Age dame.

Her jaw dropped at some of the headline titles, however.

Buxom brunette Rachel Carmine debuts in Love Me Sweet!

Rachel Carmine Single? New Dame on the Block Attracts the Sight of Leading Man!

Pinup Star Rachel Carmine Poses for Returning Soldiers

New Pairing Spotted! Are Carmine and Watson the Future Thing of the Silver Screen?

"Well, I sure do hate *this*," she said, rolling her eyes. "God, I even sound like I've come out of an old talkie. I could be a regular femme fatale with these looks. And it seems other folks think so too: I'm an up-and-comer, apparently."

It begged the question as to why Rachel Carmine never took off. But then, was she ever real? There was something odd about those reels, something magical. She couldn't exactly say why, but it certainly felt like she was filling a previously empty void in history.

Wish whatever magic did this could have at least not made me a damn pinup!

She said this while looking at a poster of herself on the wall. In it, she wore a sort of sexy housewife costume that consisted of a blouse tight above her navel and a skirt that revealed her thighs, with a nice pair of red heels to complete the effect. She had one leg over the other, and was 'writing' a list of things she wanted for Christmas from a supergoods store. The tied blouse had the effect of pushing up her full chest, all while exposing her

gorgeous stomach. The big wink she was giving the camera with a lipsticked smile upon her face just emphasised the cheeky, fun, and attractive vibe of the piece.

“Yeah, I’m not doing that,” she said. “No way, Jose.”

She moved to the mirror again, and looked at her gorgeous body. Slowly, she stripped down to just her brassiere and panties, taking in her form.

I look like a busty Jane Greer, she thought. Maybe a bit of Hepburn in the eyebrows and hair.

Rachel frowned, and found that there was even a bit Lauren Bacall thrown in there, perhaps. Or maybe she was just projecting other famous Golden Age actresses onto her new body. The former male felt her breasts, cupping them and appreciating their weight and bounce.

“Okay, these aren’t too bad.”

Her hand lowered to between her legs.

“Oohhhhh, okay! That was sensitive. Leaving that alone for now. Maybe a bit of experimentation later. You know, since I have no idea how long I might be trapped like this.”

She set aside appreciating her gorgeous body, though she didn’t mind the shape of her tush, and instead focused on getting herself some dinner. It proved to be an ordeal, especially given that technology was gas-operated and ancient by her modern standards.

I might be an up-and-comer, but right now I’m clearly just getting by.

In the end, she managed to sort herself some meat and peas and mashed potato, and called it quits. At least her stomach wasn’t as demanding as before. Afterwards, she was so tired that she practically flopped into bed, her nerves frayed, her body alien to her (flopping into bed made two other things flop, evidently), and her mind frazzled.

I really hope I turn back if I just finish this movie.

She fell asleep, dreaming that she was a man again.

Rachel Carmine maintained that hope over the next several weeks. She had to adapt, and adapt fast, if she was going to finish this film and do a good job of it. She figured that the magic was giving her a challenge of sorts, ensuring that this void in history would be properly filled, and that Rachel Lorraine Carmine became a real star, destined for film fame. Perhaps *Stranded on Planet X!* was her way of achieving that, and if so, then she had to learn how to act, and act *fast*, on top of adjusting to her new time period and what it was like to be a woman.

She quickly found out that it was 1942, only three years out from the end of the world’s greatest war. Hollywood was abuzz with propaganda flicks, but low budget sci-fi and

horror pulp was still very popular, particularly for their low budgets and quick turnover time. There was an appeal to the new woman there, because these were the flicks she loved most, and the notion that she'd actually be able to take part in them - even if she had to be the leading lady with the showy thighs and carefully-revealed cleavage - was kind of exciting.

Of course, things did not go off without a hitch. Being a woman in 1942 was a very different experience than one in the modern day, though some experiences were likely universal. Robert's nostalgia for this era was quickly disrupted by the ways in which men looked at Rachel, gawked at her, spoke to her, and even *groped* her. The first time it happened was in a studio meeting prior to a shooting of another love scene. The director - a man named Jack Barnes - stubbed out his cigar after his little speech.

"That's the vibe we want with this scene, okay? Think you can get us there, Miss Carmine?"

"Absolutely, sir!" she exclaimed, trying to be as enthusiastic as possible.

"There's my gal," he said, and as he walked past, he had the actual *temerity* to slap her lightly on her ass as encouragement.

She turned, eyes glaring, mouth hanging speechless. But the man just laughed while Reynold took her by the arm rather forcefully as she raised her own hand.

"He just slapped me on the ass?" she said.

"Mind the language, Rache," Reynold just said. "And that's just his way, besides. You gonna slap every man that gives you a light squeeze on the tush? It's a compliment, honey. You got a mighty fine one."

And just to emphasise that sexist point, he groped her ass as well, chuckling as he got in position for the shoot. She was left flustered, embarrassed, and feeling very small, but knowing she couldn't argue back much. Women were expected not to have the same fire in that time, at least not until they had the success to back it up.

Maybe if I can get up there, I can have a bit of that Elizabeth Taylor fire . . . without all the husbands, of course.

That was not the only case of sexism either. Despite being one of the stars of the film, she was being paid significantly less than Reynold, and even one of the male supporting cast members. She was also asked to do poses for the film's promotional material in a tight faux-astronaut outfit that outlined her gorgeous curves, also part of her contract, an unpaid part at that. The fact that this was not done privately but just off the side of the lot where any man at the studio could ogle her and comment did not help.

"Looking mighty fine with those legs, Rache!" Reynold called.

"Try to emphasise that bust a little more, dollface," Jack said. He didn't even need to be present for this particular shoot, but always made excuses to see his leading lady, much to her annoyance.

It made her grateful to be single, even if the low-level media was quietly abuzz with the possibility that the dashing Reynold Watson and possible 'next big thing' Rachel Carmine were dating. Paramount's management was pretty clear that the pair had to go along with this, as it generated further buzz for the film, and it was part of their contract besides. Rachel was furious: Reynold may have been handsome as all hell but he was infuriating in his treatment of her: to him, she was a pretty face and a nice body and a tick to stardom, and little else.

"Just one kiss, out off the side of the lot while the press passes," he said on her ninth day as a woman. "For God's sake, Rachel, you're being a total broad about this. You know how this industry works - better be seen out with a soon-to-be-famous actor than stuck sleeping with fat Jack Abrams on the casting couch. Which would you prefer?"

She was forced to agree on that last point, but didn't like it.

"Fine. One kiss."

"A long one. Passionate."

"I'm a fucking actress, Reynold. I'll sell it."

"Mind the cussing, lady. And you better. And I think we both know we'll enjoy it."

Yeah, sure asshole. Just wait till I'm a modern man again. I can't wait to read about what a waste of a D-lister you'll turn out to be.

And so it was that by the big Paramount lot she was forced to endure walking hand-in-hand with Reynold. He was nearly a foot taller than her, and she had to admit he looked sharp in his 40's suit. She was no ugly picture either: thanks to some of the girls in the studio, she'd gotten plenty of advice on what to wear for moments like this. She wore a gorgeous black and white flowery dress that pulled tight at the waist and plunged low at the neckline. She looked like 'real dynamite' as a number of men had felt the need to comment.

Can't even stop swinging these wide hips when I walk, which I bet these pigs don't mind.

Certainly, Reynold was clearly turned on by this. He took a drag on his cigarette and threw it to the ground (*gross*) before placing a hand around her waist.

"God, you look like a real angel, hot stuff," he said, drawing her close.

It was at that moment, as his tall, dark and handsome aspect loomed over her, making her submissive to him, that poor Rachel had another terrible revelation about her new life.

Oh fuck, this is turning me on. Does that mean I'm gay now? Or straight? Straight for guys? Oh, this is confusing, but I think I am.

It was undeniable. Pig that he may be, Reynold Watson was deeply handsome, and with his strong arms around her, she suddenly felt like putty in his hands. Her nipples

stiffened with arousal, and a warmth settled in her belly. Her vaginal lips tingled as he drew closer. He must have sensed her lust, because he smirked slightly.

“Told you that you wanted this,” he said, before moving in for a deep kiss.

Shit, here it comes!

His lips locked with hers, and she was unable to resist moaning slightly as he cupped her head. She even lifted one leg in a classically feminine pose. She was putting on a show, but she didn't care. All that mattered was how deeply aroused being embraced and kissed by this man felt.

And then the bulbs flashed loudly as the press passed, right on cue. The whole thing had been arranged, of course. The media and the studio had a lovely partnership over this. Rachel felt her cheeks go red as Reynold finally separated from her. He lifted his hand up and brushed her cheek softly, kindness in his eyes. Then, extending his arm in a crook, she folded her own arm in his, and he led her back into the studio grounds.

“Okay, that went damn well, I'd say,” he said.

“Y-yeah, I g-guess it did,” she replied. “I think - I think I need a lie down.”

Reynold chuckled. “I have that effect on women. And you are one mighty fine woman, Rachel. We should make this whole thing official at some point. I've got a good feeling about us.”

Rachel didn't agree. She couldn't stand Reynold, which made it so frustrating that part of that frustration with him was also that he was hot as hell. It made their following love scenes full of sparkling chemistry though, and she deliberately channelled that. While Captain Bastion confessed his love for Elizabeth Steele (*now that's a cool name I can get behind*) during the spaceship crash sequence, the back-and-forth between the two was electric, fuelled by their humorous, bickering dialogue. She channelled her dislike and attraction to him in equal measure, and the effect was not dissimilar to the Han and Leia dynamic in *Star Wars*. To say that the director was pleased was an understatement.

“This! This is what we've been missing. If we can get the public to know about this kind of attraction on screen before the film is released, we could have a real winner on our hands!”

It made Rachel blush, particularly as she looked at Reynold. In her mind, it was easy to see him as Captain Bastion, who cradled her as she was injured, bringing her back to life with the retrieved Genesis sample, then kissing her deeply as he cradled her with his strong arms.

It was an image she carried with herself to her apartment bedroom. She couldn't get it out of her mind, those kisses, those gentle touches, and particularly the forceful ones. For nine straight days she had managed to resist touching her body other than the occasional fun grope of her breasts - understandable for any former male - and when washing herself.

But now there was something electric that had taken hold of her. She couldn't even wait until after dinner: she went straight to her bed, tore off her clothing, and lay on her back.

And thought of how it had felt to be touched by Reynold.

"Mhmm," she moaned, already turned on before she even entered the apartment.

"Yessss . . ."

She rubbed her perfect pink nipples, admiring their soft areolas. She imagined a man's hands upon them - Captain Bastion's hands, that strong stalwart officer who would do anything to save his damsel in distress. Robert had been single, but had always enjoyed a degree of control in the bedroom with past girlfriends, but now as Rachel she was finding just the opposite. She imagined being forced down by her muscular captain, kissed against her will at first, then her returning it eagerly. *Hungrily.*

Mhmm, and his chest against mine. His hands on my big tits. His big cock -

She halted, heart beating rapidly. His big cock? Was she really imagining that?

Oh my God, I am. And it's turning me on so fucking much.

She rubbed her thighs together, feeling her vaginal passage moisten, her feminine juices slickening her tunnel in preparation for a big cock to enter her. To make her a woman. She bit her lip, moaned, and could stand it no longer. It didn't matter how humiliating it was, whatever mental changes had happened to her had left her deeply lusty for men, and it had taken over a week to finally realise it. She lowered a hand to tease at her wet lips, and soon she was rubbing herself, groaning in feminine passion.

"Mmhm, yes Captain. Take me. Take your Elizabeth to the s-stars. Ahhh, yes! Oh God, that's my clit. Mhmm! You found it, Captain! Right there! Come inside me!"

She couldn't help but speak aloud her own bad movie script as she came closer and closer to womanly fruition. She slipped two dainty fingers inside herself, feeling the sensitive inside of her vagina, stimulating the mass of nerves that made her toes curl in ecstasy. She rubbed her sensitive clitoris, even as she massaged and squeezed her breasts with her other hand, imagining that a man was groping them. Sucking on them.

"Yess! Yess! S-so close! YESS! OHHHHHH!!!"

She moaned the sweetest song she could imagine as orgasm after orgasm erupted through her body. She shuddered, utterly overcome by ecstasy and delirious bliss. She parted her slick thighs, imagining that her lover was ramming his thick manhood straight up into her, and that made her orgasm a fourth time. She arched her back, her lovely breasts wobbling on her chest, and finally she collapsed back down, panting.

Holy moly, that was amazing.

After that night, it was as if a switch had been flipped in Rachel. She simply *had* to push her own buttons nightly, or else it was like she might explode. She was twenty years old, after all, and a gorgeous woman to boot. The fact that she had the lustful temperament of one only made sense, though it embarrassed her male pride greatly. Still, pride alone was not enough to stop her from masturbating as she thought of handsome men kissing her, feeling her, and fucking her. It was just a damn nuisance that the one she thought of most was Reynold Watson, who was a total ass in real life. He liked to pat her tush, pull her over to him like she was a damn object when he wanted her presence, or generally comment on how attractive she was right in front of her, as if he were doing her a favour somehow. She could barely hide her distaste, but if she were to get back to her old life, she was convinced she had to see this fake romance through, which meant responding to his cuddles, his kisses, the way he helped adjust her dress and placed her on his lap so paternalistically.

I just wish it didn't have this female body getting so riled up.

It came as a relief when shooting was finally finished on *Stranded on Planet X!* Rachel was shocked to learn that the entire film was set to release just a month later. Old school Hollywood was something else when it came to turnaround time. But it left her slightly adrift. The Paramount guys told her that she was going to be in *The Vengeance Factor* next, starring once more alongside Reynold, but production on that slasher horror was not set to start until three weeks from then.

“But what am I meant to do until then?” she asked. She was dressed in a light coat, her hair dolled up and slightly curled in that Katherine Hepburn fashion. She knew she looked like a total doll, and hoped that would be an advantage while talking to some of the big wigs.

The fellow across the table simply smiled, looking over her with clear pleasure. “Well, you got options, see. One option, well, I’m not a married man in this office, Miss Carmine. And you are quite the beautiful -”

“And what’s the other option?” she asked curtly, fearing what would happen if she allowed that other line of conversation to continue.

The man shrugged, evidently not interested in pushing the issue, thank God.

“Well, we’re looking to promote you, of course. You could be our next big thing. With the war on, the Hollywood Canteen is a real hit, and it gives us an opportunity to have you wine and dine some of our other stars and be seen rubbing shoulders. You’ll be serving, of course. Plus, our affiliate wants some pinup shoots for the warboys. I bet they’d love to get you in a swimsuit on the side of one of those B-25 Mitchells, that’s for sure.”

Rachel tried to control her breathing. None of the options greatly appealed to her, but she’d rather get sent back again, this time to the Ice Age, if it meant avoiding the casting couch.

"I can do that, Mr Ross," she said eagerly. "I'd be happy to."

"Great," he said. "I might even sit in on the pinup shoot. Might be . . . educational."

It took all her willpower not to roll her eyes and raise a slapping hand to his face.

Once I'm a star, I can go back. And if not, then at least I'll have bargaining power enough not to have this creep present as well.

Rachel was starting to think she was getting Stockholm Syndrome, Time-Displacement Edition. Being a pinup model should have been utterly humiliating, enough for her to want to go crawl into a hole somewhere and die. And make no mistake, it was embarrassing, especially when various higher-ups - and that bastard Reynold - all made various excuses to come see her pose for the flashing cameras.

And yet . . . there was something enticing about it that she couldn't quite get out of her mind. Maybe it was all the love bombing - the cameraman and organiser heaped praise after praise upon her beauty and 'natural skill', though she suspected some of that skill was simply having a thin waist, hourglass figure, gorgeous smile, and a nice big bust (but not too big). Perhaps she just had a natural as they said, or maybe she was just getting used to being in skimpy things that showed off her form while her face and figure were planted on posters.

Or maybe I'm just going completely nuts trapped in this life, and my only way of coping is to hold up my umbrella while I wear this one piece, and flutter my lashes as best as I can. Oh, and thrust out my chest. They always make sure I do that.

So there were mixed feelings on modelling, to put it bluntly. The regularity with which she had to do it - and the knowledge that she really was going to be immortalised on a bomber over in the Pacific front - was certainly degrading, but it didn't take long to do, put more money in her purse, and was indeed helping her work her way up. She couldn't fight the big battles yet, but the more successful she got, the more she could pick who was in the room. At least, that was the plan. It was bolstered a bit by the advice from the other girls who did pinups alongside her, or were already in the business in some other capacity. Rachel still couldn't claim to have a fellow female friend yet, but it did help to know that women had a strong sisterhood in this day and age. She learned quickly which producers and filmmakers to avoid, and which were 'some of the good ones.' She took that advice to heart, especially from fellow actress Vera Kate. She was in small fry film, trying to kick her way into the upper leagues, much like Rachel. She had a sharp wit though.

"Well, I'd be a little more successful if I had your talents," she joked once, indicating Rachel's bust. "Men always do like a forward woman."

Rachel giggled, actually *giggled*. “They’re not all they’re cracked up to be. Especially around Reynold Watson.”

The other woman scoffed. “He’s a pig. Not the dashing new Bogart people want him to be. Plus, he’s thirty-four years old.”

“What, really?”

She grinned. “Yep. Pretends he’s twenty six, but I’ve seen the proof.”

“When?”

She grinned a little more sheepishly.

“No! Him?”

Vera sighed. “Like I said, he’s a pig. But in another way, he’s a bit of a stallion. Try to enjoy that at least while you two are ‘courting.’”

“I’ll do no such thing.”

“Well, you’re missing out! It’s a woman’s burden to take what she can get from life. Sometimes all you can get is a pig with a horse’s cock.”

Rachel struggled to keep a straight face as she posed in her Rosie the Riveter outfit for her wartime pinup, still thinking on what Vera had said. She burst out laughing at Reynold the next time she saw him.

It didn’t stop her from pleasuring herself silly the following night when she imagined just how big and impressive that ‘horse cock’ might be, though.

The Hollywood Canteen was quite different from modelling, and Rachel was much happier there. Granted, the servicemen often gave her unsolicited compliments, and more than a couple touched her behind as she passed a table, a bit presumptuously, but they knew if they went any further that they’d be kicked out. This was a guild operation, after all. Here, the actresses had *some* power. Rachel was astonished to find herself alongside Rita Hayworth - *the* Rita Hayworth - as they served up free food and drinks to the boys back from the war, or simply on rotation. Sure, she was still a pretty face for men once again, but at least she was doing something partway nice, and being a gorgeous woman helped buoy their spirits. Of course, she felt like small fry against the likes of Hayworth, who was as resplendent in personality and image as she ever had been in all the movies Robert had seen back as a man.

One serviceman in particular was a lot nicer than the rest, however. He was a naval man, and caught her attention immediately with his smooth black hair, manly lantern jaw, and athletic frame. He was as tall as Reynold, but he had softer eyes. He was a total show in uniform as well, something she couldn’t help but notice. There was a scar on the right of his

lip, likely from a piece of shrapnel, and something similar on his left forearm. These only made him more attractive in her eyes.

“Hey, I know you,” he said. His voice was gentler than she expected. “You starred in one of my favourite flicks. *Danger at Base 4*. You’re Rachel Carmine, right?”

She gave her standard demure grin. “That’s me, honey. I’m surprised anyone knows that one. It was my first flick. It bombed in the reviews.”

She wasn’t lying. The former male had done her research on the life she had supposedly lived, and her first film was schlock beyond belief; mutant ants and lots of screaming and, of course, quite a bit of showing off her skin.

“Yeah, well, I’ve never been accused of having good taste, but I’ve always loved me a sci-fi flick.”

“That’s called having *good taste*,” she quipped. “Not enough people like science fiction. Though, I’m not sure it really *explored* the possibilities of planetary mutations.”

“True. I guess I also like the entertainment of giant ant-men attacking beautiful women in space. Sometimes bad cinema is its own reward.”

She giggled again. “I agree entirely. I love a good bad movie, as I call them. Not that they help my career much. I’m hoping this next one has all the pulp but none of the bad reviews, if you know what I mean.”

“I hope that too, Miss Carmine. I’m not joking, you really were wonderful in that film. You acted circles around everyone.”

Something about the man was a bit magnetic. She extended a hand. “Rachel,” she said. “You can call me Rachel.”

She expected him to kiss it - all the boys did - but instead he shook it gently before returning her hand to her. “Samuel Dolson,” he replied. “Navy.”

“I guessed as much.”

“That obvious, is it?”

“Are you returning soon?”

He shrugged. “I have only tonight and tomorrow morning to enjoy myself before I have to return. I was hoping to catch your coming flick, actually, but it seems like I’ll have to hope it reaches us instead. You think it’ll be good?”

She smiled. “Here’s hoping. I’m trying to crack into the big leagues.”

“You’ll get there. Lady with your looks, and your talent? You’ll be the talk of town, I’m sure.”

“It’s not all looks,” she said, feeling a bit defensive.

He just gave a mischievous smirk. “I wouldn’t know, I was born too handsome.”

Okay, that got me laughing. Goddamn, he is good looking. And pretty funny. And a science-fiction nerd. Maybe we could be . . . just friends?

“So, you like science fiction,” she said. “You big on horror?”

“Miss Carmine, you’re talking to the king of horror,” he said.

“Well, if you’re king, I’ll take the position of queen. I know all there is about it. Plus, I’ve acted in it.”

“Touche. To be fair, I prefer science-fiction. I want to write my own novel about it one day, once the war is done.”

“You plan to become a novelist?”

“Lawyer, actually. I want to work in human rights. Seen a big lack of them recently. But as I see it, science fiction explores what we could be, and warns us about what we shouldn’t. So I guess I’d like to have my own say on the side.”

“Fascinating,” she said, leaning in closer. “Tell me more, Mister Dolson. Who knows, maybe I’d like to star in the adaptation of this future novel.”

She moved her body, unintentionally, in a sensual manner, leaning over the table at him so that her breasts pressed together. He went red in the face, and it was a damned cute look too.

Not like the place is busy at this time of night. Maybe we just talk for a few minutes.

They ended up talking for well over an hour, exchanging jokes and barbs and tales of growing up, much of which she had to improvise. Samuel was one of those rare individuals ahead of his time; a supporter of women’s rights, an opponent of segregation, a figure who could sense the winds of change and wanted to be part of the new world that was coming, instead of clinging to the old one. She found herself feeling fuzzy in his presence, and by the time they had to part ways she had even worked up the courage to give him a gentle kiss on the cheek.

“When you’re back from the war,” she said, feeling quite fuzzy from that daring act, “I’d like to see you again, Samuel Dolson. Make sure to drop in. I hope some of my films make it to you.”

He promised he would watch every single one of them.

Why does that excite me so much?

That night, it was Samuel she thought of as she stirred herself into fits of ecstasy, not Reynold. She orgasmed even harder.

After such an experience, it was almost with disappointment when she was called back from the Canteen to be present at the premiere of *Stranded on Planet X!* The film had undergone reshoots and some changes to dialogue - all in response to her commitment to the part since arriving back in time - and she was hopeful that it would be enough to change

everything. Certainly, the amount of public interest in the flick was at a massive high, and she found herself surrounded by crowds and photographers as she was delivered to the El Capitan Theatre. She wore a gorgeous green gown that was stylish and modern (for the time), with a shining necklace that fell into her lovely cleavage, emphasising it. She didn't like how 'exposed' it made her feel, especially since she was expected to smile sweetly and sign autographs.

Man, I feel like such a cheat. Half of these people didn't even know me until the marketing push for this film sold them on all the sex appeal. This dress doesn't hurt that appeal though, I guess.

Reynold was on her arm. Well, it was more accurate to say that she was on his. They waved at crowds together. They weren't the great masses that would turn out for a Bogart and Bacall duo, but it was a start. A sign that she must have done well.

Perhaps if the premiere goes well, I'll turn back?

"You really do look ravishing, dear," Reynold said as they moved to the entrance of the cinema. "I can barely take my eyes off of you."

"Fake relationship, remember?"

"It need not be. I see the way you look at me."

He wasn't entirely wrong. He looked *fucking incredible* in his suit and tie, his hair combed and gelled to one side in a business smart look that had her feeling things she didn't want to feel. It was with relief when they were finally sat for the premiere, surrounded by reviewers, viewers, film-makers, A and B-listers, and numerous other Hollywood types who would spread word about the film, good or bad.

"Please let it be good, please let it be good," she said to herself.

It was Reynold who took her hand, holding it gently. He gave her an easy smirk. It actually managed to reassure her.

For the next hundred minutes, she watched *Stranded on Planet X!* unfold. It was a surreal thing, to witness scenes she hadn't taken part in play, and scenes she had even more so. She truly was a beauty on screen, and the camera was certainly hungry for her in particular. She couldn't deny the electric chemistry between her and Reynold, or the way he held her being utterly romantic. Several women audibly swooned at the climactic moment where he brought her back to life and cradled her lovingly. But most of all, she was impressed with her own acting talent: the big scary moments with the alien creatures was sold on the power of her terror, her terrific wails, and the way in which she held herself against the stalwart Captain Bastion.

When the film finally closed out with its triumphant score, the audience erupted into cheers. It was like a huge weight had been lifted off of her shoulders. Reynold cheered beside her, leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. To her surprise, she actually turned her

face so he could kiss the other one. She rose alongside the other stars and made a bow before the clapping audience. She may have been stuck as a woman, but this was something to be proud of.

I'm the centrepiece of an actual sci-fi pulp classic! Hot damn!

It was a crazy feeling, and one that lifted her spirits immensely. She still hoped to turn back of course, but being the leading lady of the kind of film she loved as a man in the future was something to be truly proud of. When the after party arrived, she was front and centre at the celebrations, meeting other stars and producers, and for once happily on Reynolds arm. The wine flowed, and she was eager to drink it.

Which led to a rather big mistake.

She knew it was wrong, but her lust was out of control. Reynold's lips were upon hers, and his tongue danced in her mouth. She moaned softly, pressing her boobs against his manly chest, going up on her toes so that she could be fully enfolded within his dominant presence. They were at his much larger apartment, and she was positively tipsy. Perhaps a bit drunk. But not so much that she didn't know what she was doing.

Just enough that she didn't much care, and enough that her inhibitions were currently running wild. The space between her perfect thighs was moist and ready, and her sensitive nipples tingled as he groped her full chest.

"Such magnificent breasts. You really are a gorgeous creature."

"J-just want you," she moaned. "Take me. I can't stand it any more. After this whole night, and you in that suit. I want you inside of me."

"God, you have no idea how long I've been looking forward to this, doll. A looker like you is just something else. A body like yours deserves special treatment from a guy like me."

His words reduced her to little more than a sexual object, but at that moment she couldn't care less. She needed to be fucked, and if that meant having to pretend it was Captain Bastion instead of Reynold Watson doing the deed, that was fine by her. He picked her up easily and took her to his wide bed. Her heart beat with excitement.

I can't believe I'm doing this. But I need it. God, I need a cock inside me. I've imagined it too long, played a lovestruck dame too long. I can't not want this.

She spread her thighs, hurriedly removing her skirt and panties. Reynolds stood like an Adonis at the edge of the bed, grinning at the sight of her. She removed her top and brassiere, now entirely naked.

"Y-your turn," she breathed.

He followed up with a great show, taking off his clothing easily, a man of pure confidence. And true to Vera's word, he truly had a massive dick.

Will that even fit inside me?

She got her answer after several minutes of erotic foreplay. He groped and sucked on her tits, but he soon became impatient. Reynold positioned his dick at her entrance, and she instinctively parted her legs to take all of him in.

And then he ploughed into her.

Oh God oh God oh God OOHHHHH

She moaned like a whore in heat, overwhelmed by the alien experience of being *penetrated*, and so deeply at that. He worked his way in slowly, until he nearly reached her cervix. She howled, but her wails of ecstasy became even more vocal when he began pumping in and out of her. She gripped him with her thighs, and raked her sharp nails down his back, clinging on for dear life as this handsome actor fucked her pussy. Her voice was sweet and high, and she could only imagine how absolutely hot she was to him in that moment. God, to actually *be* Reynold in that moment, she wished they could switch places.

Instead, she shuddered in orgasm, and he shuddered not long after. As she moaned, he ejaculated, thankfully into the condom he had placed over his penis before entering her.

In the aftermath of their lovemaking, her breathing slowed. He pulled out of her, and like she was just some gorgeous thing to use when he wanted, he went and cleaned himself off, then turned on the radio in his living room.

"That was good, sweet stuff. Let's make this official," he said.

Fuck, she thought, even in that wonderful post-coital delirium. *I've made a huge, huge mistake.*

Stranded on Planet X! was a huge success. The poster, depicting Rachel in a torn spacesuit clinging to her stalwart love interest, was suddenly everywhere. Demand for her to model for various pinups and be seen at events skyrocketed. It was like she had gone from a somewhat recognisable C-lister to an A-list starlet overnight. It was overwhelming for the former male, particularly since she was expected to dress up her buxom body all the more, and be seen at stylish events. Unfortunately, such events always had Rachel with her 'beau', Reynold Watson. It was 'official' now; the couple were a pair, and she was the smiling sweet thing upon his arm, gushing over how her 'sweetheart' was the next big thing, how she learned acting from him, and how much she deferred to him like the perfect loving woman.

It was, in a word, sickening, not that Reynold thought it so. He genuinely seemed to think she was into him, despite their relationship effectively being a studio contract. Of

course, the fact that she found him so very attractive probably helped: after that first terrible decision to have sex with him, it was all too easy to keep making said mistake. The truth was that she was a very libidinous woman, and the feeling of having his enormous manhood plunge into her depths was simply too wonderful to resist. The studio pounced that lusty flirtiness she exuded: she had a media-cultivated reputation as a busty scream queen with a sensual streak, tempered by an absolute devotion to her man. It pleased both sides of the aisle, and only boosted her popularity.

And I have no choice in it at all, she mused as she posed with a new designer ladies cloak, her expression at the camera one of mischievous curiosity. *I can't get out of this contract, can't branch out in this field, and can't go back to being a man.*

Production began on *The Vengeance Factor* immediately. She had hoped the success of *Planet X* would have changed her back, but with that not happening, she threw herself into continuing her trajectory, almost out of sheer momentum rather than any passion. It was the kind of flick she should have been excited to be in, the kind Robert Angford would have loved: a noir-stalker flick with a grotesquely scarred assassin hunting her down as the witness to a political murder. But she found no enthusiasm in it. That was, until she received a postcard.

It was Vera who delivered it.

"I know a few servicemen at the Canteen," her only friend said. "And they know guys who know guys who know a guy called Samuel Dolson."

Rachel lit up. She'd imagined that gorgeous man while Reynold had taken her last night. It had made the sex a lot better, not that it was bad. But him in his uniform, and his kind eyes . . .

"I said I'd deliver it. I think you've got a crush. Better than old horse cock?"

"*Much* better," Rachel said. "But he's just . . . I don't know."

"Go on, hurry up and look at it. I already have."

"You scoundrel," Rachel jested, but she took it anyway. It was addressed from Brisbane, Australia, where she knew from posterity was where many American servicemen were gathered for the eventual island hop north to Japan. The message was simple, but it brought a broad grin to her face.

Rachel,

I saw the movie. It was a hit! All the guys loved you. You were like an angel on screen, running rings around the other cast. I haven't forgotten that promise to see you again. You are something else.

Sam

She clutched the postcard to her chest, and to her surprise, tears pooled in her eyes. Vera fussed and wiped them away.

“Boy howdy, he sure must have left an impression.”

“God, these female emotions. Yeah, he really did.”

“Reynold never made you feel like that, huh?”

Rachel smirked, shook her head. “I - I don’t think anyone has.”

Vera kissed her on the cheek. “Well, while you’re chasing stars out there, you make sure to keep that date, okay?”

Rachel nodded.

So long as he comes back safe. God, I’ve become one of those women, yearning for her man to come home.

From that point, it was like she had a new lease on life. She still hated the gross harassment of studio heads, the piggish behaviour of her director, the paternalism of Reynold. But she had a motivation now, something every actor - or actress - needs. She wanted - *needed* - to act her fucking heart out, and make the best films she possibly could. For Samuel, yes, that was no small part of it, but also so that she could become the kind of person Samuel saw her to be. An angel on screen. Someone who ran rings around the other cast, as he had put it, and whose fame and negotiation power could grow until she finally had the position to break free of her contracts, free of Reynold, and become her own woman.

If I’m stuck in this life - and I think I may just be - then I’m going to be one of cinema’s greats. And no man will keep this new woman down.

And as she took on this attitude, something amazing was also happening: she began to truly enjoy herself. Sure, much of the rest of life, and the trials of being a woman, continued to cause struggle, but while on set she could disappear into her roles and simply relish the experience of starring in wonderful, exhilarating pulp. She acted the hell out of her terrified part in *Vengeance*, and when Reynold finally rescued her from the assassin, she gave a speech that might as well have been an audition for the Oscars. It was a less titillating role than *Stranded*, focusing more on her natural beauty and class, and the wardrobe excited her more as a result: there was plenty to look like a refined damsel in, rather than just another sexual object.

The film was a blast to make in the end, even if she had to put up with the occasional grope, or lingering glance at her body, particularly in the scene where she was in little more than a sleek nightie, her cleavage teasing the audience. There was something just a little sexually exciting also to be putting herself on display like that. Yes, it was degrading, but by the time the film had wrapped up and was being premiered to rave reviews and great audiences, she had discovered there was quite a bit of power in being a highly attractive

woman in the entertainment business. With a breathy quality in her voice, she could bend a production assistant around her finger, allowing her to get reasonable breaks and amenities on set. When her damned period came, she could draw upon her well of very real emotions, and provide an innocent expression of dismay that would turn the stoniest of hearts. And her natural sweetness, which she exuded on demand, was easily paired with her concerns for the period. Rachel wasn't certain she could change much of society, but she could certainly change the lives of individuals. She was happy to make a show of donating her money to women's causes, including women's shelters and educational institutions for gifted girls. She also made it very, very clear where she stood on the matter of race in her country when one reporter made unkind comments on the loyalty of Japanese Americans. There was a minor blowback about that, but she was pleased to have done it. Perhaps it was her natural charisma. Certainly, with the right flutter of her eyelashes, or a ruby-lipped grin, or simply a deep breath that made her chest rise and fall, she could sweet talk producers into giving her a little more freedom, even some wiggle room in her contract.

It was enough power she exercised that the rising star actually managed to convince the studio not to make her star in *Encounter with the Aurela-Sphere*. Not only was the film so obviously a piece of absolute shit, but it was not what her rising star needed. It was science fiction at its most elusive and vacant, held together by repeated scenes that would have her in a proto-bikini. It wasn't sexy, it was exploitative.

And I know the difference now. I can do sexy. Hell, I can do it well and enjoy it. But I don't want to feel like a damn soft-core porn actress. I don't want Samuel to see me that way either.

Instead, she chose *Heart of the Crystal Lion*, an adventure flick that took her character alongside Reynold's into the heart of South America (via an LA studio lot), interacting with monkeys and wild creatures and, of course, various dangers and ruinous death traps. It was Indiana Jones before Indiana Jones, but the chance to dress up in a cute explorer outfit - even if it did emphasise her chest and hourglass figure - was too much to resist. Besides, it was a tight script, good entertainment and sure to be a box office hit.

What she didn't expect it to be was a box office *smash*.

When the movie premiered, it was as if her world had changed completely. Rachel Carmine had cemented her stardom with *Stranded*, and shot to the A-list with *Vengeance*, but *Lion* ensured she would live forever in cinema history. Far from being the submissive, terrified new woman she had been a year ago, she was now able to adapt and improvise her own lines, provided she cleared them with the director first. Instead of another hokey line about 'love being better than any lion made of crystal, because you're *my* lion, Cedric', she instead convinced the director to go with something much simpler: 'Leave it, Cedric. I have all the lion I need right here.'

And cue the collapsing tunnel, as the lovers raced to freedom, hand in hand. Even Reynold had to give her credit, particularly since his own star was waning.

It was a development she dreaded and relished, and she was unsure how to proceed. She was now the bigger star of the pair, and it obviously grated on the man. His intention was always to become an A-lister, but as Rachel found her voice, it became clear that she had captured the heart (and male attention) of the nation. His smouldering good looks could only get him so far when his acting remains just a little too stilted, his line delivery just a little too hammy, his swagger a little too affected. She'd tried giving him tips, but he'd actually barked at her.

"You think I'm gonna take acting tips from some dame? Listen baby, you're sweet, and I'm sure glad we're joined at the hip. But don't forget whose name is on the top of the poster, and everything at work and in the bedroom will be just fine."

She just rolled her eyes and stormed off, giving him a view of her swaying hips as she did so. To her own amused astonishment, she actually muttered: "Men!"

But then perhaps it was appropriate. She had been a woman for a year, and her perspective on men had certainly changed, and women too. Whereas Robert had looked at the Golden Age's glamour and film production with nostalgia, Rachel now understood its uglier side, along with the era's rampant sexism and mistreatment. She was very proud that she had successfully advocated kinder treatment of the animals on set during the production of *Lion*, but how many other animals were poorly taken care of, without regulation to worry about? Not to mention her own concerns about sleazy studio heads and the like.

Of course, there were other ways for someone to increase their fame in Hollywood, and it was one card that Reynold hadn't played, until the day that production started on *The Girl from Outer Space*. It was inarguable that this hammy sci-fi comedy had her as the main lead. But despite this, the man still had top billing, the bigger paycheck, and the expectation that she would play second fiddle. When a press release was made in response to the film's official production, the question that sent her back into a spiral after she had worked so hard to actually enjoy her new life was finally asked.

"Miss Carmine, when can we expect an announcement?" a well-suited man asked as his photographer practically blinded her with a bulb flash.

"An announcement?" she said, keeping her voice cool and playful. "What announcement do you mean? This *film* is the announcement!"

"But you and Mr Watson have been in four films now, counting this one. You've been a pair for over a year now, and the dailies are chock-full of the dates you go on!"

Yeah, sure, she thought to herself, *the manufactured studio-mandated dates where I try to talk about the war, the progress of society, the state of future film, and Reynold just*

waves these things off as 'men talk' and changes the subject to be all about him. The only good part is when he fucks me and I can imagine he's someone else.

But she didn't say that. Instead she said, "what, may I ask, are you getting at?"

She could feel Reynold's smirk beside her at the conference. He was slick as hell in his suit, and he *oozed* smugness.

"I think what they're getting at, my dear," he said, "is when I'm going to be popping the question."

Rachel froze. *No. Not that. I may accept I'm a woman. I may accept that I have a damn high libido, even one for men! But no way am I marrying you.*

But while Robert may have exploded in such a way, Rachel had to be smarter. She had to play the game, particularly as a woman. Instead, she leaned forward a little suggestively, gave a flirty smile at the reporter that she just *knew* would annoy the shit out Reynold, and said, "well, I'm still vetting him, you see. Training him up for the role, if he can make the cut."

The reporters laughed, perhaps a bit too heartily given the clear star attraction many of them had. Reynolds seethed beside her, but gave a slightly stilted laugh as well.

"Well, I'm hurdling over them at a good pace," he said. "And the world knows we've made a dashing pair on screen. We're just as dashing in real life."

"When I'm not dashing away from you!" she jested, going for the kill.

His gaze froze for just a moment, and a bulb flashed.

Boom. Headshot. Let's see that one in the papers, asshole!

Reynolds wasn't happy as they left together. The car was waiting for them, and he was the perfect gentleman, opening the door for her, placing her inside, and ensuring that they looked like a young, flirty couple (despite the fact that he was technically fourteen years older than her [though technically she was around the same age, really]). But once the car got going, his mood turned foul.

"That was really something, Rache."

"I told you, I prefer Rachel."

"You don't seem to mind when I have you moaning like a whore. And that's how you acted tonight. Do you have any idea how humiliating that was to me? Half the public thinks I'm on some damn leash you're holding! Hell, you've even got them talking about putting you on equal billing. To me! Reynold Watson! You may have a good body, and some moxy, but no woman is going to upstage me, not at a conference, not on screen. Got it?"

She sat there, fuming. *Christ, he's gotten worse. I'm really under his skin, aren't I?*

"I'm not marrying you, Reynold."

He gave a 'casting aside' gesture, as if the matter was unimportant. "It'd only be for the duration of our contract. You wouldn't even need to get pregnant, dear. The public just wants two good-looking stars to fill the dailies, that's all. And remember, it's in our contract that we'll be a pair. The studio will back me on this. They don't like women who cause trouble. And besides."

He leaned forward, smirking. His hand went on her thigh, creeping up it.

"I know you like me when it counts. You just need a strong man to tame you."

Oh no. Oh fuck you. Oh fuuuuuuuck youuuuu!

Something inside Rachel snapped. She wasn't sure if it was his more aggressive manner, or her own rising confidence, or whether this was just the straw that broke the damn camel's back. She ripped his hand from her thigh and slapped in the face so forcefully that her bosom nearly escaped free of her chest from the movement.

Reynold was momentarily stunned.

"Driver!" she called. "Stop the car. I'm going for a walk."

"Hey! What are you doing?"

"Driver!" she said, raising her voice. "Stop the car!"

The car screeched to a halt. "Yes, Miss Carmine," the driver said.

She quickly pulled up her skirts and opened the door, even before the driver could get out and open it for her. Reynold grabbed her wrist at the last second.

"Rachel, what in the Sam hell do you think you're doing? You're being hysterical! Get back in the car and we'll talk about this."

"Take your hand off my wrist, Reynold," she said curtly, finding her voice. "Or I'll scream. And you *know* how I scream. I'm the damn scream queen, and I'll shatter every window in this neighbourhood if it means someone arrives to help pull me from the man who's abusing me. How would *that* look in the papers?"

His face screwed up in anger, but he removed his hand. "You absolute bitch."

"Better a bitch than whatever you want me to be. Goodnight, Reynold. Find someone else to warm your bed at night."

She took to the sidewalk, her heart beating rapidly in her chest. After a year of being put down by the system, fighting back so openly had been terrifying. Terrifying . . . and freeing.

"Just you wait, Carmine!" Reynold shouted, his voice unhinged. "Just you wait till the studio hears about this! They'll recast you in no time! You'll be out on the street again! Good luck finding work in this biz without a man willing to stand for you!"

She kept on walking. Her mind reeled, spooling out each moment.

But she kept on walking.

When Rachel woke, it was in her own bed. The memories of the previous night haunted her still, the fear and the panic, and the anger in Reynold's eyes. But she also felt as if her chains had been loosened, enough for her to slip out from them. In a way, she felt daring.

There's only one card I can play, but I think it's one that I've earned. I get it now, whatever happens I'm going to be Rachel Lorraine Carmine for life. There's no going back to being a man. This busty body is mine for good, and ill. Which means I have to make the best of it, and take my shot.

She got out of her comfortable bed. Her apartment was much more lavish these days, and in a much more upscale neighbourhood, but she had felt like an imposter in it all this time. A puppet whose strings were still being pulled. Well, it was time to cut those strings. She slipped out of her nightie, admiring her form before her mirror.

"Gosh, I am certainly something," she said. But there was no embarrassment or shame in her voice now, just a sense of pride. "Whatever happens, Reynold is never getting to touch me again. I'll invent the fucking vibrator if I have to."

She had a shower, got dressed in a cute black dress with one over-the-shoulder strap. It paired well with the dark lipstick she professionally applied, and the long black gloves she slipped up to her elbows. She styled her hair just like Ava Gardner in *The Killers*, a film that wouldn't even release for three or so years, but the effect was clear.

I couldn't look more like a dangerous femme fatale if I tried.

It was time to take a little power back, and to see how much stardom she could flex. She took the postcard from her drawer from Samuel - the second one she had received - and admired his neat handwriting.

All safe and well after fighting. Just in case you were worried about me. Vengeance Factor was excellent - Watson was like watching cardboard, though! Keen to talk over a drink again, if you'll have me. I don't plan on dying in this war, at least until I can have one last conversation with the Rachel Carmine.

Sam

She hugged it to her chest. In some way, it didn't matter if the real Sam was a flawed man, or not even right for her. All that mattered was how he made her feel.

It gave her the confidence to do what needed to be done.

“Recast Reynold Watson? Are you kidding me?”

Rachel crossed her arms, affecting a piercing gaze that could have withered the most headstrong man. And she needed it too: Carl Ross was a hard man in the entertainment industry who’d steered the company through tough times. He was not the kind to suffer fools or power plays, and it didn’t help that he was a cigar-chomping, belly-slapping chauvinist to boot. But that could be played to her advantage . . .

“I’m serious, Carl,” she said, using his first name deliberately. “This charade can’t go on. The man’s a brute, and an ass, and a few other names I won’t mention in polite company but would happily scream into a pillow if I wouldn’t die from lack of breathing from how much screaming I’d be doing.”

“That may be true,” Carl said from his desk, weighing the situation, “but he’s an asset. A big star-”

“A medium star,” she said, “and you know it. Not even a star. He’s a moon around my orbit. Only this little moon insists it’s the centre of the universe. How many reshoots have we had to do just because he’s up there smouldering without any idea of how to do anything else? The man’s a cardboard cutout!”

“So you say, but he has the public eye.”

“I have the public eye, and you know that too. Look Carl, I’m not trying to pull one over you. Pair me up Bogart, or Stewart, or whoever you want (*Oh man, I am totally pushing my luck naming those two*), but half the men in this country have a poster of me on the wall and the other half are hiding one from their jealous girlfriends.”

Carl shrugged. “I just don’t see what’s in it for us here. We’re about to start shooting, baby. I can’t halt production just because one girl is crying over having a bad co-star. This is all in your contrast besides, so it’s a moot point.”

She folded her arms. “Then let’s change the contract, Carl. And if you want something to sweeten the deal, let’s extend it.”

His eyebrows arched. “Now I’m listening. Go on, toots.”

Ugh, he’s staring at my tits. Well, not like I wasn’t putting them on display for this exact reason. Here goes.

Rachel shifted closer to the desk, sitting on it sweetly. She leaned over a little, giving him a great view of her body, but not so much that he could expect a casting couch situation from her. “I’m just noting that I’ve done three movers out of a five mover deal. This one’s about to film, which makes four, and then you get one more from me before I decide to let another studio snap me up. Maybe MGM will pair me a little better, though that would be a little unfair, wouldn’t it, Carl? After all the hard work Paramount put into making me a starlet, it’s another studio who gets all the benefits going forward.”

Carl chewed on his unlit cigar, mulling over her words.

“Well, well, little lady, you’ve come a long way in just a year. I make no promise. No promises at all. But suffice to say that Watson isn’t the most popular man around, anyway. Costs us some money in other ways too. Reshoots, like you say, and other habits.”

She had a decent idea what he meant by that. Reynold made a lot of demands from his trailer that racked up expensive bills. He wanted a fleet of assistants just to pamper him. Attractive ones.

“Well, I’ve said my piece,” Rachel said. “I hope you listen, Carl. You know I do love working with you, and I’ve never made a demand before.”

Carl beamed, clearly enjoying her femme fatale routine. “You just give me a show on the way out, honey, and I’ll even consider it.”

With a forced grin, she sashayed out, letting him have that show. She even turned and smiled devilishly in his direction, making him guffaw.

Succeed or fail, I did what I could. And I’m damn proud.

Two weeks later, after a slight delay, Rachel Carmine was on set for *The Girl from Outer Space*. She didn’t get Bogart, and she certainly didn’t get Stewart, but the up-and-comer she had was fine, professional, and wasn’t even a little flirty. Perhaps it was because he was - at least to her modern sensibilities - very obviously gay and hiding his sexuality behind a clever veneer of charismatic performance. She and he got along just fine, and the movie came out later in 1943 to great aplomb. It wasn’t Rachel’s most well-received picture. It wasn’t even her greatest performance, though she got to flex some fine comedy chops in it. But it was a pic she’d be forever proud of, because it was free of Reynold Watson.

The studio dropped him like a sack of potatoes after she’d stood up for herself: even she had underestimated her star power and overestimated his. It took her a long while to realise that, even as a former man, she’d been susceptible to an emotionally abusive relationship. She only occasionally saw him afterwards, often at Hollywood galas and at the occasional guest premiere, but his star had fallen considerably, and it was clear he was on the way out. Hollywood, she knew from both sides of the camera, could be fickle that way. But in this case, she didn’t much mind at all.

For the next few years she continued to be one of Hollywood’s great starlets. There were challenges, and struggles, and she still had to do her model shoots and appear in every way the gorgeous young thing she now was, but such annoyances were tempered by the fact that she had much more influence over the films she was in. Her contract had been extended by four more films, and she made sure to make each one a hit with her

performance. She knew how to operate a camera too, so the directors willing to listen were astonished when she showed them how best to film her and get a dramatic - or seductive - shot. She starred in a comedy, and a noir crime (as the sexy femme fatale figure, naturally), but her love remained in horror flicks and science fiction pieces, and she did well to reinvigorate both genres into the mainstream once more.

But as much comfort as her stardom and wealth achieved for her, she remained single. She didn't even put on a fake relationship, except for a brief fake fling with Randy, her gay costar from *Girl* who needed a cover she was happy to provide. No, it was the single life for her, and while many in the public wished for another star couple, they could at least be content that she was 'available' to them, even if such fantasies were just that, fantasies.

Well, fantasies to all but one.

It took far too much time waiting, and too many messages expressed both ways, when they could even send them. But in July of 1945, Samuel Dolson returned to Los Angeles in a fine crisp uniform. He was tragically missing his left hand up to just above the wrist, and he'd gotten another fine scar, this one across his neck. But when she saw him at the canteen, after being sent a notification that he was waiting for her, all she saw was a handsome man. The 'lion she needed', as she had once said in dialogue over two years ago.

"Miss Carmine," he said, smirking somewhat sheepishly. "I'm afraid to say I've broken a promise to you. I told you I'd be back with all my parts, but I seem to have left a hand in Okinawa."

She smiled, sat down in the booth opposite him. "Well, I rather liked your right hand better anyway, Mr Dolson. And you've picked up some fine scars to impress a sweet gal anyway."

"That I have," he said, grinning a little more earnestly. "Though I feel you've done a lot better for yourself. None of the guys serving believed for a second that I had a date with the great Rachel Lorraine Carmine."

"Oh, it's a date now, is it?"

He blushed. "Well, dinner and a drink. Of course, I don't expect a date. I didn't mean . . ."

Oh, for God's sake. Time to turn on the lady charm.

She leaned over the counter a little more suggestively, studying the kindness that was still present in his eyes, even if they were a little harder. He really was still handsome.

"Sam, you didn't lose your balls in Okinawa, did you?"

He was briefly stunned. "How do you mean?"

"I mean that I've spent three years getting postcards - and responding to them when I could - from a sweet, handsome navy man who plans to do all sorts of wonderful things for

people in the world. A man who promised he'd come back here and see me. A bold man with a nice jaw and who looks damn fine in a service uniform." She moved closer, making him strain not to stare at her tantalising cleavage. "Do you really think I just want a drink? I'm *waiting* for you to ask me out on a date. Properly."

Got him.

"Miss Carmine -"

"Rachel, call me Rachel."

"Rachel, would you do me the honour of going on a date with me?"

"I will, Sam. In fact, I'll give you several."

And I'll even show restraint, and jump your bones on the third date.

She leaned in and gave him a kiss.

Robert Angford changed history, that was for sure. As Rachel, he lived a long and fruitful life. She did indeed date Samuel Dolson, and it wasn't too long before she was *Mrs Rachel Dolson*, though for business reasons she kept 'Carmine' as her name in film. It was quite the surprise marriage, but it was clear to all that the love was genuine, and once the story got out about how they met, well, the talkies had a field day. Especially since *Beast of the Badlands* had just been released, and her deeply attractive cavewoman attire had every man with a pulse wishing that this news of marriage was just tabloid nonsense, and that she was still available.

It was strange, marrying a man. It wasn't like Rachel ever expected to. Walking down the aisle was a surreal experience. But she'd long since embraced her womanly side. She wasn't going anywhere, after all, and the truth was that now that she was attracted to men, it wasn't that big of a step to truly fall in love with one either. And she couldn't have picked a better one than her Sam. He certainly agreed, when she surprised him on their honeymoon with the exact same saucy dress and high heels as the poster he'd first seen of her from *Danger at Base 4*, a cheeky smile on her face as she sashayed towards him. She hadn't *actually* starred in it, of course. She'd been sent back in time to just after its release. But it hadn't taken much digging to find the sexy red dress that was in its now rather famous depiction.

"My, my, Captain, it seems we have some exploration in need of undertaking."

He explored her thoroughly that night, and she was well pleased by it.

In the years that followed, Rachel continued to star as a sexy, buxom, beautiful starlet on the silver screen. It did make things difficult occasionally, but her marriage to Sam was rock solid. When they did see one another after a long shoot, she did all she could to

'make it up' to him, usually by fucking him in every room of the house. Her husband had indeed become a human rights lawyer, and she was deeply proud to be able to support his causes for the poor, the discriminated, and the disabled - the last of which was especially dear to him, given his own injuries from the war. And thanks to her own influence, he was also a stolid champion of women's rights as well. Fitting, since in the end Rachel Carmine bore four daughters and exactly zero sons.

She never retired, though. Rachel continued to act well into her middle and old age, though she took on less parts so she could raise her family. She was one of the few who transitioned successfully to parts for older women. The high point of her career, as she saw it, was being able to act alongside Audrey Hepburn.

The high point of her life, though, was simply in becoming Rachel Carmine. She never did find out who or what had created or imbued those reels with whatever magic had sent her back in time, but she wouldn't have had life any other way. In the end, she got to be part of the classic films she always wanted to be part of. And if that meant living her life as a female star, then frankly, she couldn't give a damn.

The End