

Desiree Mancion

How could any man stare at her for too long without going blind? Jarod noticed how males flocked to her. What they couldn't see was a raisin-sized heart paved with asphalt grime within her supple body. She would simply shrug a shoulder and a teenage boy would offer to help her put on her coat or a happily married elderly man would pull out a chair. She was sipping a fruit-ginkgo beverage fresh from the Health 'N Go snack bar. She enjoyed others staring, while pretending not to notice.

Her hair was lustrous and a blond cascade of shimmery strands. No dye job for this actress. Her mane was natural and the envy of any Clairol commercial advertiser. She would have laughed at the suggestion of posing for make up or other beauty aides as she considered them far beneath her abilities.

She could also be anyone you might need her to be. Her pictures included racy films with fast cars and flying bullets, movies with saucy heroines who used wits instead of their bodies, a bit of Broadway, and even a rumored part opposite Brad Pitt in his next film. Not that she would ever tell you.

Oh, but even you wouldn't mind...even women stared after her in envy. Females imitated how she tied a not-too-flashy scarf, or if her skirts were slit on the side or well above the knees. She was tall for a woman, but dainty, like a lithe figure skater fresh from the Olympics. She tapped her straw on the side of the plastic container and she slyly winked in Jarod' direction. His stomach used to flutter when she did that long ago. She knew he was watching her and that annoyed him even more.

Jarod remembered how she had finally agreed to have him as her agent. He was still trying to forget the awful price he paid and was still paying for having her as his client. The conversation when he first met her had been brief, but businesslike.

"I am going Hollywood and fast, so if you can't do that for me, I am going to need to know now or find someone who CAN get me there."

"But it takes time to process a portfolio, we need more snapshots, and you haven't even done a stand-by role for television yet!"

"Dahling, I am too good for television, even you can see that! Now, will you rub my shoulders? They are soooo tight after days like this. I have spoken to more agents than you of course. Can you imagine how stressful that can be? For me?"

Jarod had admired her guts and great looks, but even he wouldn't be caught by a sleazy trick like that.

"The hell I will! Look, I will be your agent and do the best I can. I accept nothing less than twenty percent off any film you do eventually break into, and my price is negotiable after that, but if you do go Hollywood, I get exclusive rights to your career, NOT your body."

"What ever do you mean? Do you take me for a common prostitute?" she rankled. "Dahling," she laughed, "even if I was, you could never afford me!"

"I, well, I..."

"Dahling, I like your style. Most guys your age would already have offered me more than the complimentary handshake by now. You are smart and I like that. Besides, I have some information that will convince you that I have to go into film by next week, and Hollywood soon after that. And you can have fifteen percent commission...maybe a bit more if I get a call from a producer by tomorrow."

"That's impossible! Even Spielberg in a slump wouldn't hire an actress with a resume and limited screen experience like yours!"

"Maybe ol' Stevie will give me a call this weekend if you have a look at this..."

She pulled a fat manila folder out of her chic leather bag and delicately slid it across the desk to him. It was the last time Jarod ever dared to disagree.