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sunset strip tease

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Everyone on Earth owns a floater and the top one-percent can maybe afford a high-end glider or two, vehicles that have replaced automobiles over the last century and a half, but autos are still around. Cruising is about the only thing you can do with the infernal things so it has become mostly a rich man's hobby to pass the time and throw buckets of money at. A lot of common folk also have automobiles but those are usually a mod, or a repro, or some rat-rod they took forever and a day to cobble together—lending to some very envious results.

Be ye rich or poor this community accepts all comers.

Most of the major metropolitan centers in the United States still have paved roads, and where cruising used to be scorned and ran out of town the cities of today, with long stretches of retail storefronts and restaurants, aggressively compete for that now desired traffic. In Los Angeles, back in the day, it was Whittier and Van Nuys Boulevards where cruising first started, but nowadays it's Foothill Boulevard on the first Saturday of the month, Hollywood and Sunset Boulevards on the second Saturday followed by Redondo Beach on the third Saturday. Well, that being the Pacific Coast Highway from South Redondo all the way up north to Manhattan Beach.

Where 77 Sunset Blvd in West Hollywood was the location for the long forgotten Dino's Lodge, six clicks east, here in the Los Angeles portion of Hollywood, 77 Sunset Blvd is the location for a very popular watering hole called Rufie's Landing, and where all of the freeways have long crumbled away, the short quarter-mile stretch between Hollywood and Sunset Boulevard's is the only segment of freeway that survives to this day.

Knowing Monique's plans the state gave it to her for a song.

This little eight-lane strip of the 101 freeway is now a glorified parking lot. Underneath the Hollywood overpass is a little drive-in burger joint, with human carhops on roller skates, that is a hybrid of the In-N-Out and Sonic chains of old named simply enough, Smaks! Then take a five-minute walk south and you'll find a glass-enclosed bar under the Sunset overpass called, Rufie's Landing. Popular with both the locals and tourists, business here is brisk when it is not the second Saturday of the month, and on that day things are jumping.

It's crazy-packed during the annual rally here in March.

Now, Monique owns the land, yes, but it's Rufino Tyrolia who owns the Landing as well as the burger joint, occupying those spaces under lease, and even though Tyrol owns them it's Monique's goons who happens to be running them—as hired hands on the books. She does this for all her "stars" because if and when their careers goes ass up, and it's inevitable, they'll have a revenue stream to fall back on that is both successful and held in trust. Something that they can't touch and fuck-into-failure because by then a successful actor will have the acute money management insightfulness of a crack whore.

The décor of Rufie's Landing has a fifties naugahyde feel to it with a different music style for every night of the week except on Saturday's. On that day it is always old-school rock-n-roll.

Behind the bar is a NORAD quality vault door that leads to an underground storage facility that has space for a hundred and thirty automobiles with two mechanical bays that is owned and operated by the Herrero family. This "garage" leases reasonably priced spaces for owners giving them a safe place to store their cherished automobiles with the one caveat being that the bar has their choice of which two or three they park and display in the bar on any given day. Roadsters and muscle cars being the favorites on Saturdays.

With the Herrero's in from Cuba at the last minute, and the popularity of *iFamilia Cubanaza!* off the charts, the crews from the production team mad scrambled to get their camera droids in place for tonight. They have always ended the season in October during the annual Redondo Beach Run, and return for Christmas to crunch-edit that video feed for release on New Year's Eve. When something big comes up, like with Diego's quinceañera, they can squeeze a two-hour special out of the footage and maybe six-hours of *The Full Monty* for streaming—and double-dipping always generates huge revenues.

Tonight was a last minute thing because everyone is going to be here so the crew showed up in case something big happens, and on that point the production team will not be disappointed because Lucia and Tyrol have already conspired to talk smack and race for pinks. Lucia in her red Dodge Hellcat against Tyrol in his black Lamborghini

Huracan will be a nice touch for ratings.

The question at hand is who do they pick to drop the flag to start the race? Hermosa? Diego? Connie? Everyone was considered but they settle on Jessica because she'll be dripping with attitude, but that little tidbit of stupidity is still four hours away...

Paula's famous gangsta-chopped black Lincoln, Frankenstein, now owned by Monique, has just been brought out by the attendants. Paula, Angela, Diego and Cap, pile in and right as they start to roll out of the bar to the applause of the crowd, Angela, who is in the front passenger seat, spins her hands in the air while cackling, "Yea, baby! Me be shotgunnin' all ya'll, baaa-bay!"

With them climbing up the ramp for Hollywood Blvd, the Herrero's '59 Impala ragtop is brought out for Léon, Ophelia, Mini-Mon, and Seth. They take their time piling in, and after holding the driver's side door for Ophelia, Léon turns to Jessica and smiles, "Now that I'm part of the family I have little time for *moi!*"

Jessica grins back, "And you wouldn't have it any other way."

"*Oui!*" He laughs, and as he runs around to the other side to hop in the passenger seat, "I'll have to give Mac a heads up!"

With them zooming up the ramp, and an Aventador-S pulling up for Josav and Cloé, Monique sighs, "I miss my chef."

Jessica asks, "I thought you liked Ursula?"

"That woman is an obstinate, as you say...cunt, but I'll keep her in spite of her warts!" With Josav and Cloé pulling away, she asks, "Not to pry, my love, but have you given up on our Josav?"

"No, I'm just busy and I refuse to put the screws to 'im."

"You will be back tomorrow afternoon for him, yes?"

"Yea, and...I'll have my breakdown then."

Monique nods as more cars are brought out, "With Cloé off to her shoot you'll have quality time for once. Make the most of it."

"Till Tuesday, but I'm gonna take him with me. He'll get an eyeful, but after that I'll be off the clock for two weeks."

"No point in hiding what you do any longer." Monique looks at her and says, "Though, you do seem a little frazzled."

"Does it show?"

"Not at all, but I know you well enough to know."

Jessica waves to Carlos, Jordan, Syleste and Hermosa as they pull away in a Rolls-Royce Phantom ragtop, "Who's the Mustang for?"

"The sixty-five is Agatha's latest acquisition." She gives a wicked smile, "Mac can barely squeeze into the passenger side so Agatha will be driving. Visually, it will be a hit with the onlookers."

With Tyrol opening the door for Connie on his Koenigsegg CCX, Jessica asks, "I've been waiting for you to ask about Peter?"

"What better alibi than to be present for one's last meal?" Jessica breaths deep and rolls her eyes, so Monique adds, "They found traces of a paralytic and adrenalin. Stewie's blood chemistry looked like he ran a dozen marathons, and with the deCap stream released it proves it was a homicide, but they can't seem to pinpoint the cause."

With the door to his Koenigsegg sealed, and a gleeful Connie bouncing inside, Tyrol runs around the car and calls out to Jessica as he hops into the driver's side, "Don't forget the striptease, gorgeous!"

As the CCX races up the ramp, and the white Metropolitan and the purple Super-Beetle coming out of the vault, Adolphina and Lucia step up to them with octodroid cameras in tow and Adolphina asking, "Striptease?"

Monique fields this one, "*Oui, madame!* Rufino refers to it as the Sunset strip...tease. When one parks and exits their vehicle, one must make...it...linger...for affect."

Jessica huffs a snort as she thumbs towards Monique, "Yea, Josephine Baker, here, she's a pro at it."

Monique snarks back, "And you, my little Mata Hari, have to wiggle those ample hips out...with a bump even."

Jessica's eyes bore though Monique, "ooooooh."

Out of character, Monique starts laughing big as Lucia realizes and asks, "Don't make it obvious, right?"

Jessica nods, "Yea, like last season when you were sitting on the hood of that blown Firebird with Hermosa revving it!"

Monique smiles, "It was like you were on a washing machine during spin cycle. The look on your face, it made my day."

Adolphina snorts, "Yea, that was up there with Sonia and Dot fighting over the pneumatic driver on the pilot!"

Monique quietly admits, "And shortly after watching them tussle over it I find out we had one in my garage. Imagine that?"

"Yea, imagine that." Jessica chuckles.

Lucia notes, "Just don't make it look like a pole dance."

Jessica just shakes her head, "Stick with what you know."

"Body slam!" Adolphina laughs while high-fiving Jessica.

Lucia shakes her head with, "I gotta be me!"

Adolphina looks to Jessica and asks, "Rufie finally get around to teaching you how to clutch yet? He was supposed to."

Jessica gestures towards the ramp, "Yea, the Ku-nig."

Adolphina points towards the ramp and, "The Koenigsegg?"

"Yea, that's the one! It was easy."

Adolphina and Lucia look at each other, then at Jessica with Lucia asking, "You pop it or grind the gears at all?"

"Once, but after that it was a cinch to feel it through." Jessica pushes her left hand out and, "Like Rufie say, if in doubt, clutch!"

Monique looks at her then gestures towards the beetle and the Metropolitan, "If this is the case which do you choose?"

Jessica points to the Super-Beetle and says, "I kinda get the feeling that this one is more forgiving."

Monique takes the keys from the attendant, "Thank you sir." Then tosses them to Jessica, "Here's the keys!"

Jessica rears her head back thinking for a second and, "Oh!"

With Adolphina and Lucia hopping into the Metropolitan, and Jessica and Monique in the Super-Beetle, Jessica follows them up the ramp onto west-bound Hollywood Blvd.

Now out of eye and earshot of the octodroids, Monique says, "People need to be held responsible. I can only applaud the effort and, at the very least, enjoy some modicum of involvement vicariously through my grandchild." She looks to Jessica, "And his sister."

Jessica glances at her and, with a weak clutch into third, she pushes it in and seamlessly corrects it with power while saying in a deadpan, "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"As it should be." Monique nods with a smile, which then fades, "I dared to path the deCap feed this morning and I have to say the notoriety for Cap may become burdensome."

"She'll hold up."

"I've come to realize why people delight in that monster's work...and, with Stewie out of the way, I did take the opportunity to contact Mr. Popov yet, *à mon désespoir*, Mikey said that he'll remain on the program for another handful of years...by your request."

Jessica points out, "This is not about me."

Monique follows with, "Well, that being the Annex."

Jessica slows and breaks for a light, "We have a couple of big reveals coming up and people trust Mikey."

"I gather the importance. Anything to share?"

Jessica starts laughing, looks at Monique and laughs again saying, "One is a three-ton flying dragon, no shit! It sounds fucking ludicrous but that coming-out is a bit of a ways off."

Monique is surprised, "*Mon Dieu!* I would love to meet them!"

Jessica snorts with, "Trust me, you will, and feeding them is a little extreme compared to feeding the Xhemel!" She chuckles and, "See the Xhemel loves cow but these guys will want...the cow."

Monique nods and, "I'm sure Ursula can accommodate."

Jessica points into the air before she shifts and starts the Beetle moving again, "As for the other one, it's coming up very soon and, on that note, I was wondering if I could maybe impose upon you."

"You have never asked for anything, so I have no objections."

Jessica glances at her, "I want to invite four people to your New Year's Eve party. We'll be showing up about nine-ish or so." Jessica shifts again, "And since the conference rooms have already been purposed out I was wondering if we can reserve the observation platform on top of the chateau?"

"Consider it done."

"It'll only be for an hour. We will have two meetings before coming down, and we're inviting you to the second one...with Claudia."

Monique nods with understanding, "Our surprise attendees?"

Jessica announces, "Robert, Jacqui, Lilith and Luc."

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It's nine o'clock and the bar is hopping, but on cruising night the Landing has more of a family feel to it because there are always children and teens here until they get booted out at ten. With four bar tables pulled together, Jessica, Monique and Carlos are each nursing a dry martini at one end with their underage charges sitting around the tables fighting over baskets of onion rings and fries.

From the Smaks carhops, the two deep-fried dishes that they endlessly bring to the Landing are the Kerplunk and the Birds Nest. One is a basket of French Fries jumbled up with fried mushrooms, and the other is a basket of onion rings with the mushrooms nestled in the

center of them.

Carlos is pitching to Jessica, "Yea, we took what we could gleam from Dedede and our crew from John Hopkins came up with the new Xeno. Got rid of all that nonsensical silica and acid blood crap."

Jessica goes, "I haven't see it but I hear it can still spit acid."

"Yes, but now the chemistry and life cycle makes sense. It needs iron and has to eat big to hibernate and shed its skin. It takes twelve weeks for it to grow to full size. With this, and correcting the esthetic sins of the past, we have a winner on our hands! Everything that followed the second original is non cannon so we trashed it all."

Jessica shakes her head, "I loved the two originals."

"Yea, but with our Aliens we're going back a century and use a Force Recon blue-platoon of U.S. Marines they pulled out of action."

"Awww, no pulse rifle! Gives me a frowny face."

Carlos points out, "M-Ten-Seventy-Nine, Chattergun?"

Jessica nods big and, "Now, THAT puts that a smile back on!"

"Thought it would!"

Jessica asks, "I'm curious, why are you bringing this up?"

Monique says, "I'd rather he wait until Christmas but Carlos will burst his seams and soil himself if he doesn't get this out."

Jessica then shrugs at Carlos, so he comes at her with the big sell, "Brittney...Brittney want's to recast a part and she thinks that Angela's Newt would be the perfect balance to her Ripley."

Jessica blinks and shakes her head, "And you agree with her?"

"And fix the problems with the previous two Newts, yea!"

Jessica protests, "The first one was awesome!"

"Yea, but character consistency would be a nice touch? We also want a less screechy, more gutsy Newt! And you gotta admit that the reboot, with her shrieking and making the xeno's flinch was just fucking moronic the way they played it out!"

Jessica huffs a laugh, "It was funny!"

"When funny becomes a stupid, lame-ass weaponized plot device like how they did it...that's when it becomes fucking moronic."

"Okay, you got me there, but why ask me?"

Carlos looks at her and goes, "d'uh?"

"Okay, you got me there too!"

"So, you're okay with it?"

"Scott will be, but it is up to her. You gotta ask her."

With Lucia's Hellcat and Tyrol's Huracan rolling out of the vault, Carlos asks, "So, you *are* okay with it?"

Jessica just looks at him then says, "d'ur." She then huffs, "Angela adores Brittney so I'm sure she'll agree to it."

"That's good to hear, because I'll have Brittney come ask her herself on Christmas morning. It'll be a hell of a Christmas present!"

"Yea..." She looks at Monique who comically rolls her eyes when Jessica says, "Both barrels." Back to Carlos she asks, "Since we have no cannon to speak of, what are your plans after this shoot?"

"We're not killing her off if that's what you're wondering."

"Didn't think so..." With Tyrol hopping out of the Lamborghini and shouting for everyone's attention, Jessica mumbles privately to herself, "Thank God it wasn't a sitcom." She again looks up at Carlos, "Isn't Rufie cast in this one?"

"We offered him Hicks but he wanted Hudson. Says Hudson is a better character, so we're gonna offer Hicks to Mikhail Popov."

"Isn't Mikey a little past the expiration date for a corporal?"

"Picture it, a grizzled staff-sergeant busted back to corporal? Not uncommon then and, since he and Brittney are an item, he'd be perfect for the role! The audience will lap that shit up."

Jessica notices Angela at the far end of the table, oblivious to their conversation, and throws her hands up, "Fuck it, okay!" She then points to Carlos, "But, Peanuts or Eight will be on set."

"Ooooh, make it Eight! I can use her as a Marine!"

Jessica can see in the mirror of the bar that Tyrol is two tables behind her, and calling out, "I need a purdy lady to drop the flag!"

With all the young women and ladies in the bar hopping up and down vying for his attention, Jessica shakes her head and says to Monique and Carlos, "Fucking idiots are gonna race."

In her mind she hears Seth say, <"You're on!">

Jessica wonders what he meant as she reaches for the last mushroom in a bird's nest, and beating Hermosa to it her smile fades as Tyrol calls out, "Jessica, I choose you!"

Monique and Carlos start laughing at her, so Jessica looks up at them, "Fuck you guys."

Carlos laughs, "Smile for the camera!"

Monique nods, "A lady like smile if you please?"

Seeing Tyrol in the mirror, she flicks the mushroom over her shoulder at him, and noticing the food item flying towards him from Jessica he opens his mouth and catches it to the cheers of the crowd.

Jessica slams her drink, brushes her hands off on her blouse, then spins around towards them and the cameras with contempt on her face. She slides off the bar chair, cups her breasts and hoists them up into position, and slowly weaves her way through the crowd to the open door of the Huracan. With Tyrol holding it for her she bares her teeth with a slight snarl of the lip and drops on in.

Exactly what Lucia and Tyrol were banking on.

On Hollywood Blvd, just past Wilcox, they set the starting point of the race with people at each intersection up to Highland to block traffic when needed. A bunch of octodroid cameras are stationed along the run out to the Chinese Theatre, with several there and at the quarter mile point where Paula is demarking the finish line.

Syleste is always the judge for these things—because nobody here will defy her. Vestments on or not, she is a priest. Syleste starts the event by giving a quick prayer, blessings and the Sign of the Cross over each car. That done, Agatha hauls her up to the finish line.

Jessica turns to Lucia and Tyrol asking, "On three?"

Lucia goes, "Count down, three-two-one, then you drop."

"On zero." Jessica shakes her head, "You guys are stupid."

Tyrol laughs as Lucia hands Jessica one of their signature checkered bandanas they use for a flag, "Make a good show of it!"

They hop in their cars as Jessica steps out into the street to the chalk marking the starting line. Because Tyrol has music blasting out of his Huracan she wiggles her hips and rocks her shoulders to the time of the beat. She's not the best of dancers but, with those hips and that tight hourglass figure, nobody gives a damn.

They line the two cars up by Jessica, who motions for them to scoot up little by little, all the while giving a little belly dance for the crowd and the camera—and these moves she has perfected.

With the music now cut, Jessica twirls her hands to get them to rev their engines for show, and with Lucia and Tyrol knuckling down and nodding yes, Jessica gives the countdown and drops the bandana.

Torque and horsepower matters in a race, and the old saying 'those who shifts best wins' is a truism, yes, but tread grip is what really counts here—and Lucia has it clinched right off the line when the Huracan's tires spin for a fraction of a second before they bite into the

pavement. If it would have been a half-mile Tyrol could maybe have taken her, in a mile guaranteed, but he didn't have a chance in hell to catch her in a quarter which is the domain of the Hellcat variants.

With everyone at the starting line jumping into their own cars, the Metropolitan screeches to a stop and Monique shouts, "Get in!"

They pull up to the Grauman's Chinese Theatre who, like the Egyptian Theatre, is one of the few landmarks that have survived the many years since their twentieth-century heyday. Yea, it took a billion and a quarter to renovate it to its former glory, but what else was Monique going to do with her spare change?

Oh yea, rebuild the Egyptian.

Anyway, Jessica and Monique slither out of the Metropolitan and step up past a cop just as Tyrol is handing Lucia a dollar bill, all the while grumbling, "I'll have my car back, thank you very much."

Lucia tosses him the fob and, "It's a pleasure doing business!"

The cop interrupts them, "Look, I've never written a moving violation so I'll cut you two a deal. If you don't broadcast this then no harm no foul. If you do the City of LA will process serve it."

Tyrol laughs as Lucia motions for the cop to, "Write it up."

Jessica points out to them, "You guys are a couple of retards."

With that said, Jessica notices a father and son who've been driving around tonight in an ultra-stylish rat-fink mod, and by the way they've been pointing at people all night they are obviously unaware of SoCal decorum and etiquette and are not from around these parts.

Jessica doesn't know why she picked up the bandana, after it got pulled under the Huracan's wheels and torn up as it shot out the back of the car, but she did and here it is in her hand. Jessica looks up at the thirteen-year-old boy who has pointed at her twice this evening, so she says to herself, "Why not?"

Stepping up to the father and son, she holds the bandana out for the teenager and says, "Try not to nut on it."

They laugh as he takes it, "You're on that *Cubinaza* show!"

"Eeeeh, not really by choice."