

# Rejected Scene

(cf. page 95)

by

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First a brief note of explanation. Some long time ago I sent a book to Ace called THE WEAPONS OF XXX. It was just barely rejected, but on the strength of it I was invited to try an U.N.C.L.E. novel. The rest of *that* is history. After the U.N.C.L.E. books started selling well, they thought there might've been something they missed about WEAPONS and asked to see it again. This time they just barely accepted it, with a few changes--like the addition of 20,000 words of expansion, and the deletion of one particular scene. I liked this scene; tho it didn't do much to advance the plot. I thought it was kind of fun. But the editor said either you can take it out and heal the breach as best you can, or you can leave it in and I'll take it out. So I clipped it. But I still like it. And I would like to see it gets some kind of audience, so here it is.

The situation is as follows:

Ginger is a Terran girl who has fallen in with our heroes en route to a planet where the natives are generally unfriendly to Terrans. Tho of Terrestrial stock themselves, a severe cultural break several hundred years in the past has left the planet at a comparatively primitive level and they have blamed Terra for it. The plot thus far doesn't especially matter; just that Ginger has had a morning to kill in the main city before they leave for another part of the planet.

Ginger wandered from shop to shop, checking her time once in a while, and working in the general direction of the restaurant where she was supposed to meet Lance and Alexander for lunch. Then it was almost noon, and she looked around. Her landmark, the tower of the central government building, was not in sight. She stepped into the next shop, a dressmaker's, and asked, "Pardon me, could you tell me the way to the Countryman Restaurant?"

The proprietor ignored her, and she repeated the question. Then he looked up angrily. "We're closed for lunch. Flutter out."

"Don't be rude, you ape. All I want is a point in the right direction, and I'll be glad to take my business elsewhere."

"Get out of here, Terran. You'll stink up my shop."

"Any scent I could add to this foul-smelling place would be an improvement. You stench-mouthed barbarian, I'm trying to ask politely for a simple direction. The least you could do is pretend to a minimum of intelligence and tell me where to go."

He told her, shortly and succinctly, and added a suggestion as to what she could do when she got there.

Ginger yelped in shock and anger. "You sub-human inter-bred throwback! Your mother mated with a mule! Anybody who used language like that to a lady should have his tail tied in a knot and his ears clipped, and if there aren't any gentlemen on this planet to protect me I'll blasting well do it myself!"

The proprietor started back, disconcerted, as a slender brown-haired fury advanced menacingly, green fire shooting from her eyes and blue flames from her tongue. "I tried being polite to you, you moldy spawn of a dungheap, and if you don't understand it when a lady addresses you, I'll try to communicate on your level. Where in the noun is the adjective Countryman Restaurant, you sniveling evolutionary accident?"

In general, Ginger considered it bad policy to shout. But her temper got the better of her usual good nature, and her voice did rise a little. The proprietor lost his nerve about this point, and in sudden panic he reached for a weapon. The first thing his hand touched was the arm of a clothing display dummy, and he seized it by the round end.

"Now look, lady," he said, holding the bare wooden arm defensively before him, "I'm a peaceful man. If you'll just go quietly on your way I'll forget those things you said. Otherwise I'll have to call for the police."

"You adjective adjective coward," Ginger spat. "Call the police because I stopped and politely asked directions? Is there a law in this adjective city against getting lost? Tell -- me -- how -- to -- get -- to -- the -- Countryman -- Restaurant -- and I will leave here immediately and pray I never see your sinful bloated face again!"

She took another step forward, and the man, finding himself backed to the wall, thrust out defensively with the arm he held. Ginger grabbed it, and found herself in a wooden handshake at twice arm's length from her opponent. "Attack me, will you!" she flared, and poked him in the stomach with the shoulder end.

He yelped, caught his breath, and started to shout, "Police! Help!"

Ginger shoved the wooden arm at the man again, and he grabbed it as she let go. She pulled the scarf from her hair, and started screaming as she tore the sleeve of her blouse and dove for the floor. "Police!" she screamed. "Police!"

Two burly men burst in the door of the shop and before the proprietor could speak she wailed, "This man is a sex maniac! I just stopped to ask directions, and he attacked me! Look, he tore my blouse! And she burst into hysterical tears."

The policemen scowled at her, and looked at the little man who stood, opening and closing his mouth helplessly, with a wooden arm clutched in his hand like a club. "Willy, what the fout came over you? You're a happily married man -- and she's a Terran! Didn't you recognize her as one?"

"But I....I didn't do anything...."

"He's insane," sobbed Ginger. "I thought he was going to...to...And you came in and saved me," she finished, looking up at the slightly senior of the two officers. He softened just a little, against his will, and knelt beside her.

"Look, lady. We don't especially like Terrans here, but we have to protect them too. Now, this looks kind of funny, so let's not let it go any farther. Willy, give the Terran a couple shells for the damage to her blouse, and that'll be the end of it. And lady, I suggest you stay out of trouble in the future. Some of the boys aren't as easy-going as me."

Ginger looked up at him with big, wet, grey eyes full of pain and frightened innocence. "Yes, sir," she said. "And could...could you help me get to the Countryman Restaurant? I'm supposed to meet my brother there."

"Countryman? Why, that's only a couple of streets away from here. We can drop you off there. Come on."

Will counted off two small bills and watched her depart thankfully. Now he knew why he'd always been afraid of Terrans.

The police car stopped beside the Countryman, and Ginger stepped out. "By the way, lady, we'd appreciate it if you didn't start an incident about this. If you've got to tell your brother, keep it kind of quiet."

"Oh, I will, officer. And thank you so much. With police like you protecting me, I'll always feel safe in this city."

He frowned slightly. "Please don't, lady. You won't be." And the car pulled away. Ginger waved after it, then permitted herself a secret and terribly smug smile as she turned and went into the restaurant.

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That's the scene. Understand, Ginger isn't usually that bad; she was just sort of edgy under the circumstances. And incidentally, it is not true that I got the idea for this from the method of fighting used by a femme-fan of similar disposition: it was purely coincidental.