

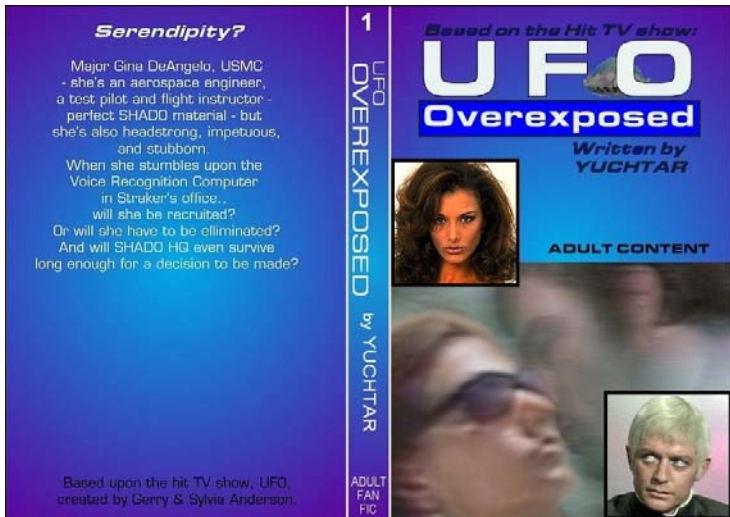
Overexposed (1996) [ADULT CONTENT] NC-17: AS, AL, GV, EX, Het, M/M, M/F/M

A UFO Story in which we meet Major Gina DeAngelo, who inadvertently stumbles upon the Voice Recognition Computer in Straker's office. Will she be recruited? Or will she have to be eliminated? And will SHADO HQ even survive long enough for a decision to be made?

"OVEREXPOSED"

An original UFO story by Yuchtar

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Commander Ed Straker looked somewhat weary as he studied the data sheets before him. His platinum blond hair -- a little too long for a proper military cut, but quite in keeping with his cover as a film producer -- hung haphazardly over his furrowed brow. His clear, blue eyes were beginning to glaze over and when he found himself reading the same segment of data for the third time, he pushed the papers away from him on the desk and sat back with a heavy sigh.

It was late. He glanced at his watch -- 8:30 pm. He had only slept 4 hours the night before and had arrived early that morning as well: he'd been at it now for almost 15 hours! As Commander of S.H.A.D.O. (Supreme Headquarters, Alien Defence Organisation), he had become accustomed to the long hours; but had this really become a way of life for him now? His marriage had failed because of it and since then he'd latched onto the job as an excuse not to have to dwell on his personal life.

His eyes fell upon the well-stocked bar in the corner of his office and he considered pouring himself a good stiff scotch. He dismissed the thought almost immediately, however -- wishing, as he did, to remain in complete control at all times.

A wry grin tugged at his lips as he recalled a time many years earlier -- could it really have been 20 years? It must have been about that. He had been a young USAF Major in Europe for the first time and had befriended an RAF pilot named Major Alec Freeman, who had suggested they engage in that stalwart English tradition called a pub crawl. Straker had been no where near as accustomed to heavy drinking as his English counterpart, and to this day, he had no real memory of that night. He and his new friend had awakened, bruised and battered, in a local jail house. Supposedly, they had accosted a constable who had tried to quieten the two inebriates. Freeman distinctly remembered having taken a swing at the man, but he had missed wildly and had passed out. It had allegedly taken three MP's to pull Straker off the poor unfortunate man -- and they were none too gentle about it either. He absently felt of the scar on his lip as he recalled the incident he sometimes wished he could actually recall. If General Henderson hadn't intervened, Straker could very well have been court martialed!

With another sigh, he dismissed the memory and pushed himself out of his chair. He unconsciously smoothed over the already perfectly smooth front of his tight, sleeveless jumpsuit and

stretched his aching muscles before piling the unread data sheets into his briefcase. He was just snapping it shut when Colonel Paul Foster -- having knocked once -- entered the office at a brisk pace.

Agitation showed clearly in the younger man's eyes and the set of his mouth told Straker he was just aching to become very pig-headed indeed about something or other. Foster tossed a folder onto the desk and said, "Take a look at this, Commander!"

Oh, yes; the clipped British tone of voice was familiar enough, and wreaked of stubbornness. Foster was expecting a fight and was prepared to stand his ground; but what was the fight about, Straker wondered. Only one way to find out. With a weary tug at the collar of his turtle neck sweater, Straker glanced down at the folder. It was not an official S.H.A.D.O. file with its typically transparent cover and S.H.A.D.O. insignia. Instead, this was an ordinary manila folder sporting the insignia of the United States Marine Corps. Straker sat back down and sighed again as he opened the file.

It was a report concerning an American Marine Corps pilot named Major Gina DeAngelo. She was a top flight instructor stationed at Caldwell, the US Air base in Northern Scotland. Yes, Straker recalled this woman's involvement in a

Ufoe Incident about a week before. One of her students had been killed when his plane was destroyed by a UFO. Major DeAngelo had actually managed to destroy the alien craft, but not before her plane and the one piloted by her other student had been badly damaged.

According to this report, the other student had now died of his injuries as well, and Major DeAngelo continued to insist that an alien vessel had attacked them. She stubbornly denied the very idea that the crash had been caused by pilot error when the first student lost control of his aircraft and crashed into the other two. She had suffered little more than a sprained wrist in the ordeal, but the military authorities were trying to keep her hospitalized until they could hold an official inquest ...

Well, this was all quite intriguing, but not all that unusual and Straker was about to ask why Foster had brought this to his attention when he saw the notes added by the S.H.A.D.O. psychiatrist. Dr. Jackson planned to pay a visit to this young woman to see if he could not "persuade" her to accept the "truth" of the incident. Hmmm, the good doctor would undoubtedly like to try out some of his new brainwashing techniques ...

The situation suddenly became crystal clear to Straker. "So, Paul ..." he began carefully. "Am I correct in assuming that you've come in here fighting mad because you can't stand the thought of this girl being put through the same grilling Dr. Jackson put you through before you were recruited into S.H.A.D.O.?"

"Oh, you've got that right, Commander!" Foster was pacing the floor like a caged animal -- never a good sign. Straker would have to tread softly around this one. Paul Foster had been a test pilot involved in a similar Ufoe Incident a few years before. He had pursued the matter with such bull-headedness that it had come down to two options -- either silence him to protect the security of S.H.A.D.O., or accept him into the fold. There were times when Straker wondered if he had made the right decision. He watched the younger man now and grinned: yes, this one would make a fine S.H.A.D.O. Commander some day, if his impetuous nature could be tempered just a bit more ...

"Why are you grinning at me like that?!" Foster suddenly demanded.

"Was I grinning?" Straker asked with a frown. "Must be fatigue. Look, Colonel, I understand your concern."

Foster opened his mouth to speak, but Straker cut him off. "No, I really do. Contrary to popular belief, I'm not an unfeeling, cold hearted, calculating machine."

Foster tried to speak again, but was no more successful than before. "No use denying it, Paul; I know what people think of me around here and I don't mind -- it suits my purposes sometimes; but I do understand your concern for this woman as well as your feelings of mistrust toward Dr. Jackson ..."

Foster didn't even bother trying to speak now; he merely sat down.

"Now," Straker continued. "This woman is a Major in the United States Marine Corps -- she can probably take care of herself. But, according to this report, she is scheduled to appear before an official inquiry board -- headed by General Henderson himself, I see -- on Fryday. I'll tell Dr. Jackson to stand down for now and the three of us will go up there on Fryday together. We'll assess the damage done at that time."

Foster considered a moment and Straker could see the physical effort the other man was putting forth to calm himself down. "So," Foster said evenly. "Jackson won't be approaching her -- at least not until AFTER the inquiry?"

"Right, Paul," Straker said as he rose from his chair once more. Briefcase in hand, he dropped the folder onto Foster's lap as he headed out the door. "You're in command, Colonel -- I'll see you in the morning."

"Right, sir," Foster nodded absently as Straker walked out. He remained seated for a while longer, contemplating the situation and trying to decide how he really felt about it all. Why was he so upset? Was it because he too had gone through all the agony of self-doubt, anger, frustration -- and fear -- as well? Did it seem worse because she was a woman? Or was it more because she was a woman he admired -- perhaps even liked? They had met once, but he doubted she would even remember. She had struck him then as a very strong-willed, capable woman ...

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At the base hospital in the Scottish Highlands, Major Gina DeAngelo was arguing with the ward nurse -- again.

"I'm putting on my uniform because I'm leaving, nurse RATCHET," she was saying.

"And will you PLEASE stop calling me that," the ward nurse replied. "Even in drag, I don't look like her at all!"

"Look," --DeAngelo glanced at the name tag on his chest -- "Carl, I don't recall being restricted in any way. I'm feeling fine and I'm leaving. I have things to do before the inquest and I'm going to do them; so go do ... whatever you have to do to sign me out."

Lieutenant Carl Wilder pouted a moment.

"Now, LIEUTENANT!" the Major ordered.

The young nurse pouted a moment longer, and then turned on his heel with a 'harumph'. "Yes, SIR!" he exclaimed as he stormed out of the private room.

Moments later, Major DeAngelo was mounting her Harley, determined to slip past the security lock-out some bone-headed General named Henderson had imposed around her aircraft.

The security was lax. Evidently, no one expected an attempted breach. It was simplicity itself to creep past the one dozing guard and yank out the small digital camera from it's housing in the nose cone of her plane. Afterward, she stood before the guard for a few moments before she kicked him in the boot. His eyes snapped open, but he made no

other movement. Smart kid, she thought. "Nice day for a nap, Corporal," she said.

"Yes, Ma'am, it sure is," the man replied.

"Well," -- she looked at his name tag -- "Corporal Jensen, have a nice one."

"Yes, Ma'am."

Major DeAngelo turned on her heel and left as the young man resumed his nap. Hell, he thought, if they didn't want me to nap, they shouldn't have left me out here alone for 46 hours straight!

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The inquest itself was a private affair. General Henderson, head of the International Astrophysical Commission; Colonel William Shelly, Company Commander; legal consul and the accused were the only people allowed in the room throughout the entire proceedings. In an adjacent room, watching through one way glass, were Commander Ed Straker, head of S.H.A.D.O., once again wearing the uniform of a US Air Force Colonel; Colonel Paul Foster, his assistant; Dr. Jackson, S.H.A.D.O. psychiatrist; and several other high ranking members of the IAC.

Straker was impressed with the woman's calm demeanor. The decision to appear in full USMC dress uniform was a stroke of genius, for she did cut quite an imposing figure. She had a rock hard body with curves in all the right places, and when the penetrating gaze of her big brown eyes drifted toward the one way glass behind which he sat, Straker had the unsettling feeling that she was staring right through him. He was not the only one, either, for one of the other officials present was heard to mutter, "She can't see us, can she?"

They heard from witnesses who testified as to the Major's character -- she was not prone to flights of fancy, as it were, but she had reported a strange sighting once before. The training mission was not an unusual one -- there was nothing out of the ordinary going on during the day in question. It was revealed that the Major did, in fact, always have live ammunition aboard her craft; Colonel Shelly confirmed a standing order to destroy any training flight should a student lose control and head for a populated area. Footage from the onboard video camera showed absolutely nothing and radar operators on duty at the time reported no unusual anomalies.

The Major, however, requested to testify herself. With her, she had a tape of her own -- high

speed stills, taken with a digital camera she had installed herself into her plane, had been transposed onto a video tape. The motion was a little choppy, but it clearly showed the entire Ufoe attack.

"You can very well claim that I've doctored this tape -- I certainly have the knowledge and skill to do so, but the fact remains that me and my students were attacked by a hostile force -- alien or not. I understand the implications, and you can put it down to equipment failure if you want to, but you will NOT malign the character and skill of a man who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of his country. You won't put his family through that in order to maintain your smoke screen; because you can make all the claims you want as to the authenticity of this tape, but if I make it public there will be enough hoopla to screw up whatever program you've got going here -- and make no mistake, gentlemen -- I WILL make it public if I have to ..."

There was silence before she added: "So, is this sham of an inquest over now, or what?"

There was another long pause, during which General Henderson looked as if his blood pressure was about to shoot through the roof. He managed to speak with a semblance of control, however,

when he said, " That'll be all for now, Major. Wait in the next room, if you will, please."

Major DeAngelo stood at attention, saluted smartly and walked out. She was ushered into the room which stood on the other side of the one from which Straker and the others were watching the proceedings. It too had a wall of mirrored glass through which the group could view her actions. She merely sat demurely, an air of complete confidence surrounding her.

Foster glanced at Straker for some cue as to what his own reaction should be, and was rather shocked to see his Commander with a huge grin on his normally very somber face. Dr. Jackson frowned, as did the other officials present in the room. Foster suppressed his own grin and sat back with a feeling of satisfaction. Straker had been right -- she COULD take care of herself, after all.

There was another long pause in the inquest room as everyone waited for Henderson's reaction. The General looked toward Colonel Shelly, who had a slightly smug look about him. "I told you she was good, General," he said with a shake of his head.

"Yes, well," General Henderson said. "I think that ends this inquiry. The crash was caused by equipment failure. The Major has Top Secret

clearance, I trust we can be assured of no further trouble from her, Colonel?"

"I'll see to it, General."

"You realize the most likely consequences if she pursues the matter further?"

"Yes, Sir; and I'm sure she does as well, Sir."

"Good. I'll want Dr. Jackson to have a talk with her, but other than that; I'd say the matter is closed, Gentlemen." The General arose and hastily exited the room.

In the observation room, Dr. Jackson leaned over to speak to Straker. "If you don't mind, Commander, I would like to confer with some of my other colleagues here after the interview. I can find my own way back to London."

"Fine, Doctor," Straker said. To Foster, he added, "I don't think we need to stick around for the interview, do we, Foster?"

"No, Sir -- does it ever become tiresome, Commander? Being right all the time, I mean?"

Straker grinned and said, "No," as the three men rose to leave.

A couple MP's were escorting the Major to a private room for the interview with Dr. Jackson when the three S.H.A.D.O. men emerged into the hall. She only got a brief look at them, but something stuck in her mind. As she waited for the

Doctor to arrive, she went through the endless files of memories in her mind. Gifted with Total Recall, she never actually forgot anything, but she had to compartmentalize memories in order of priority so as not to overload her system. She had to go back a few years to remember Paul Foster.

He had been the test pilot who had test flown the prototype of a transport jet she had helped design. The putz had baled out just moments before the craft smacked into the side of a mountain. He had blamed the design of the new gyrostabilizer – her design; and they had engaged in a rather outrageous bout of name-calling. As it was, the entire aerodynamic design of the craft was crap and the project was scrapped, but she had always wondered just what the heck a "bubble-brained, two-faced gyte" was ... She grinned to herself now as she recalled the incident. Hmmmmm, he is a handsome devil, isn't he? she thought.

The other man with him, though -- the one in uniform ... something was familiar -- and somehow not right about him ... She quickly realized that what wasn't right was that his hair was too long for the uniform, and that got her thinking - - back further. Yes, Eaker Air Force Base ... one of her first assignments after OCS was to guard a

captured Russian MIG brought in for testing. The craft had been flown in by a visually stunning Air Force Intelligence officer -- who's blond hair had been slightly too long then as well. But that wasn't the first time she had seen him, either ... Back still further -- during her undergrad studies at MIT ... she had gone to Dr. Bishop's office to drop off some papers and had met a man doing some post grad research -- Straker was his name. Ed Straker ... What was he doing here now? And what was his interest in her? She would look into that later. For now, she had to speak with this Dr. Jackson who was just now entering the room. Egads! She thought -- he looks like the living dead! She would have to end this soon, for she had a test flight scheduled in another twenty minutes and she wasn't about to miss it and let another officer take over for her ...

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Back at S.H.A.D.O. HQ, Colonel Alec Freeman was responding to a Ufoe sighting. The Moonbase Interceptors had been launched, but three "spinners" had slipped past them and were heading for Earth.

"S.H.A.D.O. HQ to SkyDiver 3," Freeman said into the com link.

"SkyDiver 3 here, Sir." came the reply.

"Captain Waterman, launch Sky 3 and prepare to intercept."

"Yes, Colonel."

"Where are SkyDivers 1 and 2? Are they close enough to help?"

"No, Sir," Lieutenant Ford said. "they're both too far away." His consol began beeping and he added, "Trajectory reports coming in, Colonel. If they maintain current heading, splash down will be at grid reference ... H4, Sir."

"That's Northern Scotland."

"Yes, Sir."

"Damn! Get a line to Commander Straker, any way you can ... Warn him he may have company very soon!"

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"Commander!" Foster called over the intercom to Straker who was lounging in the back of the small, unmarked S.H.A.D.O. jet.

"Yes, Colonel?" Straker answered.

"Colonel Freeman just radioed, Sir -- there may be a Ufoe headed our way!"

"What ...?" Straker never finished his question because a blast ripped through the side of the plane, tossing him across the cabin like a throw pillow.

"Damn!" Foster muttered to himself. He didn't have time to worry about Straker at the moment, as the blast had torn apart the starboard wing, taking with it flap control, fuel tank and hydraulic systems -- it was all he could do to keep it's nose up as they glided in for a very rough landing on rocky Highland terrain. Once he got the craft settled down, however, Foster yanked his flight helmet off and ran back to check on him.

Straker was unconscious -- a jagged wound in his right side. There was a lot of blood, but he moaned when Foster turned him over, so at least he was still alive.

Foster tried the radio -- hoping the transmitter still worked. "MayDay, MayDay! This is Victor-Able-One-Four-Seven -- We're down approximately 12 miles south of Caldwell Air Force Base! I have a wounded man here -- require immediate assistance! Repeat, this is Victor-Able-One-Four-Seven, forced down about 12 miles south of Caldwell Air Force Base -- require immediate medical assistance!"

He sat back listening to the static, hoping his message got through to someone -- someone other than the Aliens ... Straker moaned again and Foster jumped up to find the First Aid kit. He applied a pressure bandage to the wound, but it was a bad one and that wouldn't hold for long. Straker needed professional medical assistance quickly or he would bleed to death -- and that UFO just might come round for another shot. He went in search for some weapon to use if it did -- but there was nothing but a couple S.H.A.D.O. issue hand guns ...

He felt a quick stab of panic when he heard the familiar whistling sound of a UFO, but he swallowed it down -- determined to fight it off with the bloody pistols if he had to! Luckily, he didn't have to. An unfamiliar jet screamed by in a strafing run and distracted the UFO, which retreated to assess the new situation.

Through the static on his radio, Foster could now hear a familiar voice, and he grinned. "One-Four-Seven, this is PK-Five; I'm coming down -- be prepared to board as soon as I land; I don't want to hang around any longer than I have to. Acknowledge."

"Yes, PK-Five -- we're ready -- I've got a wounded man here, though -- it'll take a moment to get him aboard."

"I copy -- coming down."

As the odd looking craft began a vertical descent -- it was obviously a jump jet -- another voice came over the radio. "PK-Five, this is Caldwell Control; what are your intentions please? Over."

"My intentions are to answer a MayDay distress call, Control. Over."

The plane landed and the aft ramp came down before it even touched ground. Foster carried Straker over his shoulder and ran -- it wasn't the most comfortable way for Straker to travel, but it was the quickest. The plane was in the air again before Foster had Straker settled down and the ramp pulled up. The run had opened Straker's wound again and Foster applied a fresh pressure bandage.

Over the intercom, Foster heard, "Will he make it if I go after this bastard, or is he really bad off?"

"I think he'll hold on for a while longer," Foster answered.

"Right!" Into her radio, Major Gina DeAngelo said, "PK-Five to Control; I'm in pursuit of hostile craft -- heading 293."

"Negative, Major!" came Colonel Shelly's agitated voice. "Break off pursuit and return to base immediately!"

"I'm sorry, Sir -- you can damn well court martial me if you want, but I'm not letting this son of a bitch go now!" The UFO fired, but DeAngelo swerved out of the way. "I've been fired upon, Colonel -- I am now engaging the enemy ... Arming forward missile launcher ... On target ... Firing ... Indirect hit, he's coming around - - - Shit!"

Another UFO appeared to port and scored a hit that took out flap control and pushed the plane into a nose dive. DeAngelo was slammed into the wall of the cockpit and blood began to trickle down the left side of her face. She shook her head a couple times to try to clear her vision and followed the dive for a moment -- effectively getting the heck out of the enemies way. When her eyes had refocused, she pulled the nose back up and leveled off.

"I'm hit," she said into her radio. "Another craft. Damage minimal. Reengaging." Over the intercom, she said, "How's your friend, Paul?"

"He's holding on, but he's badly hurt." He hadn't yet realized that she had called him by name.

"Understood." Back into her radio link she continued: "Arming guns and heading for craft One ... Firing. He's on the run. Craft Two coming up aft - - arming forward and aft missile launchers ...

Targeting ... Firing. Direct hit! Both craft are down! Repeat, BOTH craft are down! This is PK-Five, Control; I'm heading for home. Please have medical assistance standing by. DeAngelo out."

She switched off her radio and pulled off her flight helmet, which was so smeared with blood, she couldn't see out of it anyway. That didn't help. She called back to Foster over the intercom. "Would you mind coming up here, Foster?" she said.

This time he realized she had used his name, but she sounded fatigued. Well, who wouldn't after a display like that? "Mr. Straker is pretty bad off, I really should stay with him, Major."

"As I recall, Paul, you're a pretty fair pilot -- I need your help." There was a pause before she added, "I'm blind."

Foster squeezed into the cockpit and saw the damage done. "Bloody Hell," he whispered.

"Sit down, Paul. I know it's a little cramped -- not really built for two. I don't expect you to fly an unfamiliar aircraft -- I just want you to tell me where the Hell I'm going."

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Colonel Shelly was spitting mad by the time the prototype aircraft Major DeAngelo was flying

touched down. He was very well tempted to actually court martial her this time! He would have chewed her out royally then and there, had she not collapsed into his arms. She and the mysterious Colonel Straker were both taken to the infirmary for treatment, which that strange Dr. Jackson insisted upon overseeing himself.

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Straker opened his eyes slowly, half expecting to find a couple of green-skinned aliens glaring down at him. Instead, it was only Dr. Jackson. Hmmmmm, almost as bad. He groaned loudly and turned his head, which hurt and made him wince and groan again. He was back at S.H.A.D.O. HQ.

"You'll be sore for a while, Commander," Jackson said. "But you're lucky; the wound was not as bad as it looked and should leave only a small scar."

"The girls love scars," came a familiar voice from the doorway. "Think they're sexy."

Straker turned his head toward the voice, which hurt, but not as much as the first time and he didn't groan this time. "Alec," he said with what he

hoped was a grin, but wasn't. "Thanks for the warning."

"Yeah, well -- could've come a bit sooner, I know ... Sorry."

"No, couldn't be helped. Paul?"

"He was uninjured, Commander," Jackson answered.

"The Ufoe?"

"There were three of them," Freeman said as he came all the way into the room. "Sky 3 took out one before being shot down by one of the others. Captain Waterman is okay -- a little water logged, but otherwise uninjured. Your plane was forced down in the Highlands. That, uh ... girl -- DeAngelo picked you and Foster up and then, uh ... she shot down the other two Ufoes."

"She what?"

"Both at once, in fact," Foster said as he sauntered into the room. "Fore and aft missiles fired at once."

"DeAngelo?"

"She was injured in the ordeal as well, Commander," Dr Jackson offered. "Severe head trauma -- temporary blindness, but she should recover completely."

"Henderson insisted upon the amnesia procedure," Freeman added.

"I explained to him that it might not work at all, considering the nature of her injuries," Jackson said. "But then, she may not recall anything anyway."

"I think we should recruit her into S.H.A.D.O.," Foster said.

"Henderson doesn't like her," Straker observed.

"All the more reason," Freeman said, which made them all smile wryly.

"That's a decision I won't make from a hospital bed," Straker said. "Now, all of you, get out so I can think."

The three men headed for the door. Before they could get all the way out, Straker called to Foster.

"Paul," he said, which made all three men stop and look back. "Thanks for getting me out of there."

"Wasn't me -- Major DeAngelo got us both out of there, Commander."

"None-the-less, I have a feeling you were ready to hold them off with your pistol if you had to."

Foster grinned despite himself. Straker knew him so bloody well! "Yeah, well, luckily for both of us, I didn't have to. Take care, Sir."

Straker nodded as the three men departed. Straker had a lot to think over, and the pain in his side wouldn't help ...

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Several days later, Straker was in his office at Harlington-Straker Film Studios, London; but he still hadn't made a decision regarding Major Gina DeAngelo. She certainly seemed an ideal candidate for S.H.A.D.O. recruitment and would be a real asset wherever she was placed, but he had a feeling Paul Foster had become rather attached to her. If she returned the affection, there could be a conflict of interest should they find themselves serving in the same location; and if she did not return the affection ... well, there would be conflict. The fact that he himself felt a certain ... attraction for the girl was all the more troubling to him.

He sat back in his chair and ran his hands through his hair, frustrated. He knew he'd left the hospital too soon. He ached all over and was in real danger of contracting pneumonia. It was stubborn pride that had prompted him to check himself out. Have I been spending too much time with Paul Foster lately? He wondered. He was thinking of going on home to bed when his intercom buzzed.

"You've got a visitor, Mr. Straker," Miss Ealand said. "A Major DeAngelo, Sir."

Now what the Hell did she want? And what was she doing out of the hospital? Perhaps she too was cursed with a stubborn pride as well, he mused. He was certainly in no shape to handle a scene like the one he'd enacted when Paul Foster had confronted him years before. But, then, it was possible she hadn't come to confront him. The amnesia procedure hadn't worked, he knew that; but there was still no reason to believe she would suspect he was anything more than a film producer.

Whatever the reason for her visit, he'd may as well get it over with. "Show her in, Miss Ealand," he said into his intercom.

The inner door of his studio office/lift silently opened just seconds before the outer door slid open with a slight hiss. Once again, Straker found himself slightly taken aback at the sight of this woman in the dress uniform of the US Marine Corps. It was a man's cut, but the body that filled it was unmistakably feminine.

As DeAngelo stepped through the doorway, she took in the man behind the desk with a glance. Oh, yes, this was definitely the man she had seen in uniform at her inquest. And it was the same man she had seen at MIT and again at Eaker Air Force

Base years later. Colonel Edward Straker -- Air Force Intelligence officer turned film producer? It didn't add up.

Hmmmmm, she suddenly found herself thinking. Those eyes could melt an iceberg ...

"Major DeAngelo," Straker said as he rose and held out his hand. "I haven't had the chance to thank you for saving my life."

DeAngelo took his hand in a warm, firm handshake and replied in a mock southern drawl: "Mah pleashah, suh." Her attempted levity was rewarded with a genuine smile that lit up the man's face. She grinned at the lovely sight.

Straker gestured toward a chair as he sat and said, "What can I do for you, Major?" His eyes were drawn momentarily to the large bruise on the side of her face...

DeAngelo sat down and explained. "Well, Mr. Straker, I am scheduled to face an official Military Inquiry Board on Thursday and I was wondering if you had seen whatever it was that attacked us ..."

"Ah, I see. I really didn't, I'm afraid. As you may know, I was injured and was unconscious during the entire ordeal."

"I understand, Sir. I don't suppose that ... your pilot -- Paul Foster is available, is he?"

"No, unfortunately not. I am sorry, Major."

"Oh, no, that's all right, Sir. I'll manage." She settled back in the chair and grinned. "So what's your story, Mr. Straker?"

"I'm sorry?"

"Well, I can see by your, uh ... naked finger there that you're unattached; and yet there are NO photos of pretty young starlets adorning your walls." She sifted through her purse and pulled out a hair brush while Straker fumbled for a reply.

"I like the decor simple," he said as he watched her stand and walk toward him, wondering what she had in mind now.

"Simple?" she said. "Stark is more like it. Nothing much in this office to reveal the man who occupies it. Do you mind?"

She had walked around the desk and was standing beside him now. "What?" He was beginning to feel confused and that suggested an impending loss of control -- something he detested more than anything else.

She stepped behind him and began brushing his hair. He frowned, unsure of how to react to this unexpected behavior. "What are you doing, Major?" he asked as he tried to turn his head to see her.

She gently moved his head back and continued. "I'm brushing your hair -- I'd of thought that was fairly obvious."

"Yes, but why?"

"Because it's beautiful and you obviously do nothing to style it."

He fell silent as he began to actually enjoy the sensation of her brush strokes.

"You know, Mr. Straker, you are VERY tense."

"I ... have a stressful job."

"Your neck muscles are like steel cords." She put the brush down and began messaging his neck and shoulders.

He groaned and shut his eyes as the firm pressure of her fingers seemed to ease away his tension bit by tiny bit.

She got closer to him and inhaled deeply. "Hmmm," she said. "You smell good, Ed."

"You smell like jet fuel," he replied.

"Do I?" she chuckled softly. "Sorry."

"No," Straker said, his eyes still closed. "It brings back memories."

Hmmm, she thought. I bet it does, Colonel. She leaned in closer and whispered into his ear as she continued to message his tense muscles.

"It's been a while since I've felt a man's arms around me."

"A little lower, please."

"Most men seem to have a problem dealing with a strong woman."

"Hmmm," he moaned absently. "Strong hands."

"It's been a while for you too, hasn't it?"

"Hmmm, a while," he agreed.

"You're a strong man, Ed -- I think you could handle me."

Her hands had begun traveling down his body and were now just inside his thighs; her arms around him and her head resting on his shoulder. As her hands crept closer to his groin, he realized what she'd been saying and stood abruptly, which caused him to wince slightly from the pain in his side.

She stood with him and they faced each other.

"What are you doing, Major?"

"I believe it's called foreplay, Colonel."

Straker was too distracted to notice her use of his Air Force rank. "No ... this isn't right -- I think you should go now."

"Come on, Ed," she said as she slowly moved toward him. "We're both adults and we've both gone without companionship for too long."

He backed away from her approach and mumbled, "I ... find that uniform a bit ... intimidating ..." Oh God, he thought. Was that really the best I could come up with?!

But she stopped in her tracks. "Really?" she said, somewhat surprised. "I wouldn't have thought so."

It was astounding how quickly she was able to get out of it. Straker was amazed. And she was obviously a body builder -- exquisite muscle tone.

"If you can look me squarely in the eye and tell me that you don't feel anything and that you want me to leave; I'll leave, no questions asked."

His back was almost to the wall now. It was a monumental effort to force his eyes to focus on her face; standing, as she was, naked before him; but Straker had always prided himself on his will power, and he did manage it. He noticed the small scar on her chin, the perfectly shaped lips, and then the wispy tufts of hair on her upper lip and the angle of her nose, which wasn't quite even somehow. His gaze then shifted up to notice, once again, the bruise on the left side of her face, then across to the scar over her right eye, which raised

the eyebrow and opened the eye a little wider than the left, and then settled upon the eyes themselves - - deep, rootbeer coloured eyes which mirrored his own longing and desire with precision.

He straightened his back and said, "I don't feel anything for you and I want you to leave now."

"Wow," she said. "You're good." She grinned at him and stepped a little closer. He stood his ground -- he knew where the wall was and that he had no where else to run. "You actually said that with a certain measure of sincerity, Mr. Straker, but this bulge in your pants suggests otherwise."

As her fingers closed around his crotch, he groaned, slumped against the wall and said, "Oh God."

He couldn't say anything else because her mouth was over his and their tongues were entwined. After a moment, Straker pushed her back and stood his ground once again. "This isn't right, Major," he stammered, breathless.

With what seemed like one fluid motion, she had his jump suit unzipped and off his shoulders and was tossing his turtle neck sweater onto the floor.

"Now look, " he said, struggling for some argument – ANY argument, but he just couldn't

think of one. He was VERY rapidly losing control of this situation!

"Your chest is perfectly bare!" she marveled as she ran her hands over his finely formed chest.

"I have hair," he protested. "It's just blond. Ouch!" he added as she yanked several of them out.

"Oh, they're WHITE."

"PLATINUM!"

"Okay, PLATINUM -- jeesh ... Are your pubic hairs like this too?"

Before he could respond verbally to that, she had his shorts down around his ankles and her lips, teeth, and tongue had found a plaything between his legs. "Oh God," he moaned loudly and slumped back against the wall again.

After several moments of this, Straker decided it was time to reassert his authority and regain some semblance of control over this situation. "I know I'll probably regret this," he mumbled as he stepped out of his shoes, jumpsuit and shorts and scooped her up into his arms.

"Oh!" she exclaimed as he carried her to the desk. "You're stronger than you look."

"Oh, yeah," he replied, slightly winded. "And I think I popped a few stitches." He set her down on top of the desk.

She glanced at his side, which was badly bruised around the bandage. A spot of blood had appeared through the bandage. "Yes, you did," she said. "But I can sew you up again afterwards."

"Oh?"

"I'm a fully qualified field medic."

"Why does that not surprise me?" He grinned, which was radiant.

She pushed everything off the desk top as Straker mounted her. For one so reluctant to begin, he had certainly become one passionate animal! Together, they rode the wave of their desires until they lay spent, side by side on the floor -- having at some point fallen off the desk (luckily hitting the chair first).

Straker was in visible distress. His side ached terribly and was still slowly oozing, but he couldn't honestly say he regretted the experience. He needed to rest for a while now.

DeAngelo, however, wasn't satisfied yet. If her head hurt, she wasn't showing it as she rolled over and began to arouse Straker all over again.

"Oh, no," he groaned. "I don't think I can take it again now!"

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Outside the office, Paul Foster had entered the reception area and was exchanging casual banter with Miss Ealand.

"So, can I see the Big White Chief?" he asked.

"Well, Major DeAngelo went in there some time ago," Miss Ealand said, glancing up at the light above the door. "But the green light is on, so I guess it's okay to go in." She pushed the door release button at the side of her desk which opened the electronically sealed doors of Straker's office.

Paul walked in and first saw the mess on the floor where everything had been pushed off the desk. As the doors slid closed behind him, however, he noticed Straker and DeAngelo on the floor.

"Oh," he said, startled. For a very brief moment, Foster didn't know what to do. Here was his straight-laced Commander, who never lost control of any situation at any time, rolling around naked on the floor with a woman Foster liked and admired. He wasn't sure how he felt about this, but he quickly decided the immediate thing to do was to make a hasty exit.

He turned and pushed the door release button on the wall, but that split second of indecision on Foster's part had given Straker enough time to reach up and push the door lock

button on his desk, so Foster was stuck. "Bloody Hell," he mumbled.

"Take your clothes off, Paul."

Foster couldn't quite believe he had heard that. "What?" he said to the locked door.

"You heard me -- that's an order -- take your clothes off."

Foster turned and glared incredulously at the both of them. "You can't order me to do that!"

"I just did, Foster. I'm in pain, she's not satisfied, and I don't think I can handle her alone right now. Take your clothes off."

DeAngelo looked at Straker questioningly, considered a moment and then shrugged. She got up with a grin and sauntered over to Foster. The poor boy had no idea how he should react in this most bizarre situation and was plastered against the door like a specimen on a slide!

DeAngelo slowly pulled his shirt off over his head and studied his broad, well developed chest. She nodded in approval. "Now THIS is chest hair," she said to Straker as she ran her fingers through the thick dark hair that covered Foster's chest and belly.

"Oh sure," Straker said from the floor where he had propped himself up on one elbow. "Poke fun at the old man's chest hair!"

DeAngelo laughed at that -- a hearty, deep-throated laugh. Straker couldn't recall the last time he had made a woman laugh and he grinned at the sound.

Foster was beginning to wonder if the two of them hadn't gone completely insane, when DeAngelo removed his shoes and began lowering his trousers. He closed his eyes and pressed his back harder against the door -- perhaps hoping to slip right through and disappear.

She got him out of his trousers and his very cute neon purple briefs and was pleased to find he was very well endowed. Straker was longer, but Foster was thicker, and already rock-hard. She was wise enough to know that, while chest hair was a viable source of levity, penis size was not; so she said nothing more as she studied Foster's physique.

When she looked at Straker, the word 'sinewy' came to mind. He had a swimmer's build: long and lean -- the effortless grace of the cat. He probably ate poorly, slept poorly, smoked too much, drank too much, worked too much; and yet STILL he looked exquisite. People like her, on the other hand, really had to work at it. Foster looked like a man who really worked at it -- diligently.

She planted small kisses on his well muscled leg and began working her way up. He moaned

softly and tried harder to press his way through the door. By the time her lips reached the inside of his upper thigh, he had decided to throw caution to the wind. "Bloody Hell," he said as he lifted her face to his and kissed her passionately. It was her turn to be breathless now. "I've wanted to do this since the first time we met," he said when he broke the embrace and turned her around. He caressed her ample breasts from behind and kissed the nape of her neck as she moaned with pleasure and desire.

He was grinding his erection against her backside and she squirmed against him while his hands moved down to find the wetness between her legs. She tilted her head back and tried to kiss him, but he was too tall. Softly, he whispered in her ear, "Ready, luv?"

"Oh, yeah,' she panted.

With one quick thrust, he entered her fully from behind. They groaned in unison and she tilted her head back once more. This time, he bent over and kissed her waiting lips. Foster caught a faint whiff of what smelled like jet fuel, which he wondered about briefly, but then dismissed as he somehow twisted himself in such a way that DeAngelo suddenly found herself suspended in mid air. With a startled shriek and a slight giggle, she planted her feet against the wall for support.

Straker observed this from his position on the floor with his usual cool detachment; and wondered vaguely about the English penchant for vertical sex. As he became more rested, however, he found himself becoming aroused once again. He decided to rejoin the fray.

"Is this what they call a 'menage a' trois'?" he asked as he joined the couple by the door.

"I think so," DeAngelo giggled, and the three laughed as they experimented with new and unusual positions.

=====

Some time had now passed and the threesome were lounging on the floor: Straker and DeAngelo resting against Foster's chest, while Foster lay with his hands cupped beneath his head. He had a heavy-lidded, satisfied look on his face as he said, "This is not the way I had expected to spend my afternoon."

"No," DeAngelo agreed. "Believe me, I hadn't planned this either, but I can't think of anything I'd rather have done ..."

There was a slight pause as the two waited for Straker's comment. "I'd never had sex with another man before," he finally said.

"Really?" Foster said in a decidedly incredulous way.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Straker demanded as he propped himself on one elbow and glared at Foster.

"Errrrr," Foster stammered. "Nothing ... Just that ... well ... you're an attractive guy and I ..."

"What? I suppose this is an everyday occurrence for you, Paul?"

"Well, no ... I mean ... well, you've obviously never attended a British public school."

"No, I attended an American public school -- what's that got to do with anything?"

"While you two debate the finer points of public education, I'm gonna go have a smoke." DeAngelo got up and went to the pile of stuff she had shoved off the desk. She had noticed a cigarette box ...

"It's not the same, Ed ... Look ... when a boy comes of age and there's nothing but other boys around ... uhhhhh ..."

"Did she say smoke?"

"What?"

"Gina. Is she --?"

"Cigarette, anyone?" DeAngelo asked as she held the open cigarette box in her hand.

Straker winced as the deep, resonant voice of the Voice Print Computer boomed into life. "Identification positive," It said. "Major Gina Marie DeAngelo, United States Marine Corps. Access denied."

A total silence befell the room for several moments once the box had finished. Eventually, DeAngelo spoke. "Well, it's obvious what this is ... and basically what it's used for ... but as I see it, I've already had access to the two most important things in this room, so ... what am I being denied here?"

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After the threesome had dressed and straightened the office, Straker spoke into the cigarette box, which once again activated the Voice Print Computer. "Identification positive," it said. "Commander Edward Straker, S.H.A.D.O. Access confirmed." Straker then pushed another button on the desk and the entire office began to sink.

"Hey," DeAngelo said as she went to the window and looked out. "This is cool! The whole office is an elevator! But wouldn't it be wise to keep the window blinds closed? Anyone looking in from

outside would think it a bit odd, watching the office move around this way ..."

Straker and Foster glanced at each other and then Foster spoke. "The, uh, outside glass is mirrored ..."

"Oh, clever ..."

When the office/lift had reached bottom, the doors slid open and Major Gina DeAngelo was introduced to the underground world of S.H.A.D.O. HQ.

"How the devil did she 'accidentally' find the voice print recorder?" Colonel Freeman whispered tetchily at Straker.

"Never mind how, Alec, " Straker replied. "Just -- "

He was interrupted by Lieutenant Ford. "Ufoe sighting, Commander! Already in Earth's atmosphere and heading ... our way, Sir."

"SkyDiver?"

"No time, Sir."

"A new PK-3 was delivered this morning -- not five miles away," Freeman offered.

"Foster -- are you qualified to pilot a PK-3?" Straker asked.

"No."

"I am," DeAngelo said emphatically. Everyone looked to her. "I designed it."

Now everyone looked to Straker. "Go!" he ordered.

Colonel Paul Foster and Major Gina DeAngelo hurried out of the complex.

"Does this mean we have a new S.H.A.D.O. recruit, Commander?" Freeman asked.

"If she survives, Alec." Straker said wearily. "If we survive."

THE END