

# Welcome to LA

an *Agent Carter* fanfic

by **Rodo**

“YOU SURE THIS is it, Miss?” the cab driver asked with a raised eyebrow and a nod towards the cast iron gates and the lavish gardens beyond.

Angie looked at the address she’d scribbled on a cocktail napkin, then leaned forward and showed it to him. The man frowned.

“That’s here, alright.”

Angie sighed. Peggy’s friend Stark sure was something else. She got out of the cab to admire the estate—mansion—whatever. She didn’t have the faintest clue what the difference was; for a girl from a tiny apartment, everything that had a garden big enough to go on forever was a palace. Angie couldn’t even see the neighbor’s fence, only a lot of foreign-looking shrubs and a life-sized statue of a dozing flamingo.

“You want me to wait, Miss?” the cab driver asked her when he put her luggage down next to her. The two small suitcases looked even tinier here than they had back in New York.

Angie shook her head and handed him his money. Then she took her suitcases and walked up the neat gravel path to where she presumed the door was located. She didn’t like LA. She hadn’t wanted to come either, but Peggy had talked her into it. She had a job lined up and all, not that Angie was all that enthusiastic about the movies. She’d wanted to make it on Broadway, and it felt a little like giving up, no matter how big Hollywood was. Still, back in New York, she’d not managed to land a role yet, so it wasn’t as if she could afford to be choosy. She sighed dramatically, and the statue of the flamingo turned its head. Then it blinked.

“Jeez,” she muttered. “What did Peggy talk me into now?”

The doorbell was all gold and looked just as extravagant as Stark’s place in New York. Angie would bet there was a telephone in every room in this place too, and who knew what else. She pressed the button and tried to keep an eye on

the flamingo. Who thought keeping one on their lawn was a smart idea? Pigeons and seagulls were bad enough. This thing was the size of a dog.

The door opened and a beautiful woman appeared. She looked just like the image of one of those model housewives from the ads Angie had (unsuccessfully) auditioned for. A bright smile was plastered onto her face when she saw her, and Angie responded in kind a split second too late. She'd expected Mr. Fancy. This woman was a surprise.

"You must be Miss Martinelli!" she women exclaimed as she drew Angie close and hugged her. "I'm Ana Jarvis. Miss Carter told me so much about you. Come in. I'll show you to your room. I'm sorry Mr. Jarvis couldn't come and get you. I'm afraid he's helping Miss Carter with work right now. I hope taking a cab wasn't too much of an imposition?"

Angie shook her head. It really hadn't been. Ana kept her pleasant chatter up as she led Angie past more rooms than any house needed. "This is the dining room—Mr. Jarvis or I will call you for meals. If you go down that corridor, you'll find the leisure area with the gym and the pool. Down that way is Mr. Stark's library."

"And your room?"

"Oh, Mr Jarvis and I have our own suite in the west wing, along with Mr Stark. I doubt you'll be seeing much of him, since he spends most of his time at work or in his lab—it's the second door to the left of the dining room, as a warning. Mr Stark doesn't like it if people go down there uninvited. We've had too much trouble with industrial espionage. There are traps."

"Sure thing," Angie murmured.

"And this," Ana said with a flourish as she came to a halt, "is where you stay. Your suite is the one on the left, and Peggy is staying on the right. Shall I leave now? I'm sure you'd like to freshen up after the flight."

She'd almost disappeared when it occurred to Angie that she had no idea where the bathroom was.

"In the suite!" Ana called back. There really was one. Angie found it when she poked around her rooms—plural. There was a living room with a desk, a couch, and a coffee table, and a bedroom with an overly large portrait on the wall. And then there was the bathroom. It had a huge tub, like the place in New York, *and* an extra shower. And this was just where Stark put his *guests*.

"I think I'm not in Kansas anymore," Angie mumbled to herself.

“—and then I looked out of the window and there she was, standing on this narrow ledge next to the window. What was I supposed to do when suddenly these secret agents knocked on my door? I told them I hadn’t seen her in ages, of course, but then one of them went to the window. So I put on a show, started crying about Peggy’s granny and my own, as if the woman has ever cared about what I get up to, and they actually bought it. I am just that good.”

Ana Jarvis’s laughter sounded like bells. She really was that perfect, and Angie couldn’t even feel jealous. Ana was just too nice for that. She’d set the table in a shady alcove by the pool and made cocktails for them! If only she knew how to swim, but it felt great to pretend to be rich all the same. They were just lounging in their chairs, exchanging stories about Peggy, who had yet to show her face. Bernard the flamingo was watching from a distance.

“I’m sure you are,” Ana told her. “Peggy recommended you to Mr. Stark, after all.”

“And she completely forgot to tell me anything about the role, can you believe it? Just sent me the plane ticket and told me I’d have no problem with it. Then she had to go work. I swear, that woman doesn’t know how to relax. She’s always on the clock.”

“Ah, there you are, Ana, I was—well, hello there. And who might you be?” a male voice interrupted. It belonged to a familiar man with a cheeky grin on his face. He entered the patio and stared at Angie like she was a prime piece of horseflesh at the races.

“Can I help you, Mr. Stark?” Ana asked.

“You can introduce me to this lovely lady, Ana.”

“This is Miss Angela Martinelli. Peggy’s friend whom she recommended for the role in the Kid Colt movie.”

Howard Stark’s eyes lit up. “The new actress! Pleased to meet you, I am—”

“Howard Stark,” Angie finished. “I’ve seen your picture.”

“On the cover of Time magazine?”

“On the wall of the guest bedroom.”

“It’s part of a set, you know? There’s one in every room.”

“Howard!” Ana half-scolded him. “What did you want?”

“Ah,” he answered. “Nothing much. Just to tell you that I’ll be out this

evening. Dinner with Muller from the production company. He'll be glad to know that we'll be able to continue filming according to plan soon, now that our wonderful replacement actress is here. How can you film in a saloon without a waitress? Do you want to come along?"

Angie shook her head. "I only just arrived."

"Later, then," Stark said, and strode back into the building with an air of confidence that only millions of dollars could buy. A waitress? Well, that wouldn't be much of a challenge for her artistic ability, but it was work.

"Be wary of that one," Ana advised her when he was gone. "He likes to play, but there's always a new toy that catches his eye."

Angie scoffed. "I met his type twice an hour at the *Automat*. Trust me, I won't fall for a nice smile and empty promises."

"That is good to know. So few women seem resistant to his charms. The only other one I can think of is Peggy."

"And you?"

"Oh, I have my Edwin," Ana explained, and followed it up with a list of praises that *did* make Angie a tiny bit jealous. Mr. Jarvis was a lucky man.

\*

The wine bottle on the table was half-empty. There was still some in Angie's glass when she stood up and planted her hands on the polished wood of the bar. She leaned forward suggestively with a charming smile on her face and cocked her head. "And what will it be for you, sugar?"

Ana raised an amused eyebrow and looked down at the script. "Bourbon. Make it a double."

The door fell open and their heads turned towards it. A man's backside waddled inside, followed by the legs of another. Finally, Peggy came, carrying the unconscious man's shoulders. When she was inside, she kicked the door closed with her foot. Then she looked up and noticed them. "Angie!" she exclaimed. "It's good to see you."

"Edwin, who is that?" Ana asked pointedly.

Mr. Fancy blushed and exchanged a look with Peggy. They'd clearly hoped they wouldn't still be up when they returned from their little adventure.

"My brother," Peggy explained.

“I thought he was dead,” Angie countered.

“So did I.”

“Why is the poor man unconscious?” Ana asked. Her eyes were fixed on the man’s face. He was breathing, alright, but there was a trickle of blood in his hair. He looked nothing like Peggy.

“Well—” Jarvis began.

“It’s a long story,” Peggy cut him off. “And we really should be getting him into the boiler room before he wakes up. We’ll be back in a jiffy.”

And with that, they shuffled off.

“Oh dear,” Ana said, then she emptied her glass and poured herself another.

“Why the boiler room?”

“Very sturdy pipes, nothing lying around. They mean to tie him up.”

Angie emptied her own glass and went straight to the bottle. What had Peggy gotten herself into now? The script lay abandoned on the countertop and all thoughts on preparing for tomorrow’s shoot had fled her mind. No time to be nervous about being in front of a camera for the first time. As soon as they heard a heavy door fall shut, Ana went to fetch two more glasses and another bottle, leaving Angie alone when Peggy came back. She awkwardly took a seat opposite Angie and sighed.

“Sounds like you had a long day, English.”

“A long week. A long year. A long decade, truth be told.”

“Here,” Angie said, offering her the bottle.

“Thank you,” Peggy said. She took the bottle and drank the rest in one go. “It really is complicated.”

“No need to explain. I think I might be better off not knowing in any case.”

For a moment, they just sat together in companionable silence, as they had in their New York apartment. On so many occasions, they had both been bone-tired in the evenings and just enjoyed the fact that they had company that didn’t feel the need to talk their ears off.

“I really am glad you’re here, Angie.”

Angie snorted. “I’m not, but it’s work.”

“Jarvis assures me this city grows on you. And you’ll be great in the role. They hired Arlene French, can you believe it? When Howard told me she wasn’t working out, I thought of you immediately.”

For a beat, Angie said nothing. Then: “You should have led with that. Stealing her role is definitely worth coming to LA for.”

\*

“To a job well done!” Ana toasted her. She was in a good mood, Angie thought, and not just because Angie had finished her part in Howard Stark’s movie. Playing the dumb, helpless barmaid that needed saving by the hero hadn’t been a challenge in the least—that’s the role that got you the biggest tips. Stark and his production staff had seemed happy with her too. Angie still didn’t like the blinding lights and lack of an audience, but if it paid...

“To a job well done,” she echoed. They were alone in the house again. Howard was out partying with some of the other actresses and “production assistants,” and Peggy and Jarvis were doing whatever it was they did when Peggy put on her sensible, dark clothes as opposed to the brightly colored pant suits. Even their unwilling house guest had decided to join forces with his sister a week before.

“Will you stay a while?” Ana asked her. The hopeful tone in her voice was clear as day, and her doe eyes were hard to resist.

Angie shrugged. “I need to find a job.”

“I have thought about that,” Ana told her with a glint in her eye. “I listened around a bit, and I heard of this role you would be perfect for. I even convinced someone at the production company to give me the script so that we can rehearse a bit before the audition and I have just the dress for the occasion.”

Well, Angie thought. Another movie wouldn’t hurt.

“I’m in.”

*Fin*