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**O**LGA KURYLENKO LEARNED TO conquer her fears as new Bond girl Camille in *Quantum Of Solace*. “In my life, I’m scared,” she admits, eyes like planets. “I just don’t go to places where I am afraid. But here you have no choice.”

So the svelte, 28-year-old, Ukrainian-born model-turned-actress found herself stumbling out of her first spell in a wind tunnel for a skydiving sequence shaking like a leaf (“My hands were like cotton! I said, ‘I can’t go in again, I don’t feel my body!’”). For a ramped-up boat chase in Panama, she was petrified she was going to fall out of the speeding vessel (“Daniel [Craig] kept asking if I was OK and helping me get up if I fell on the floor because it was very bumpy”). And for *Solace*’s climactic scene in a blazing eco-hotel in Bolivia, she had her first too-close-for-comfort encounter with fire.

“I’ve never been so close to fire — it was everywhere and we just had to go through!” she shivers. “They light it up and it really burns your skin even if you’re not in the fire. We were covered in this gel. Ugh! It was gel that cools you down so I was freezing. I kept screaming, ‘Light the fire!’ I couldn’t wait to go in. It was so weird. And then in a second you’re hot — it burns you.”

In each case, the headstrong stunner called on the determination that’s helped her overcome adversity at a young age (only-child Kurylenko grew up poor on a Ukrainian housing estate, raised by her mother and grandmother). It’s something that marks her out — she couldn’t care less about what fight techniques she was taught to portray Camille (“I don’t know,” she shrugs. “Like kind of martial arts, just punching and kicking —

nothing crazy”) but she’s still proud of herself for every 007 hurdle she leaped over.

“I did feel very impressed when I was very high up and I had to jump from the roof to the balcony. *I did it!*” she stresses. “It’s impressive how you can work with your fear. We think we can’t do things but we can do anything. We can make anything out of ourselves.”

*Total Film* meets up with Kurylenko twice — first in the lakeside opera house in Bregenz, Austria, where she’s been brought over despite not featuring in any scenes (“You don’t get breaks when you’re on a Bond film,” she sighs) and the second time at Pinewood Studios, where she greets us with a cheeky grin: “You again!” Following in the footsteps of *Casino Royale*’s Vesper Lynd (Eva Green), new Bond lady Kurylenko knows she has her work cut out to make as strong an impression. “She was so smart and classy. She wasn’t just there to look pretty. I think people have had enough of watching the silly ones.”

Kurylenko’s Camille is a Bolivian woman on an extreme mission of revenge against those responsible for the brutal slaying of her family in her youth, which left her with a huge scar on her back. “She’s a fighter,” she says, her face set and determined. “She’s a strong woman and very physical — she’s in good shape. She’s on her mission, she wants revenge. That’s all she cares about. She’s not afraid to get bruised or hurt...”

Who Camille’s revenge is aimed at Kurylenko isn’t about to reveal. “You’re a very sneaky guy,” grins the Paris-based actress, wagging her finger as we try to wrangle more *Solace* sauce from her. Does she give 007 a whipping? At least tell us that... “There are other guys, too. I might beat up *all* of them, for fun.” OK. >>

**Meet Bond girl #83.  
No silly name  
and no pushover.  
Smart, dangerous  
and very, very sexy,  
Olga Kurylenko  
is the woman who  
turns Bond bad...**

WORDS **MATT MUELLER**  
PORTRAIT **LORENZO AGIUS**



**‘She’s a fighter. She wants revenge. That’s all she cares about. She’s not afraid to get bruised or hurt...’**



And do she and Craig get jiggy? “Mmm... maybe we’re more comfortable with each other in the end.”

Kurylenko got the call from her agent telling her she’d bagged *Solace*’s Bond-girl gig on Christmas Eve while she was having dinner with friends. “I was like, ‘It’s not a joke? Are you sure they’re not going to change their mind?’ It was the perfect Christmas present,” she beams. It was also a turn of events that she wasn’t expecting, for she was convinced Forster didn’t like her after her audition. But the director’s frosty demeanour turned out to be a manifestation of something she’s always suffered from herself.

“I told Marc I thought he was cold at the audition,” she confesses. “He said, ‘That’s what I thought about you.’ Isn’t that funny? A lot of people think I am, but I’m anything but cold. I’m actually very kind of Mediterranean in personality. But it’s a reflection – what people project on you I automatically project back. If someone’s blank, I become blank right away. I can be very cold but it’s just a mask... I realise we’re both shy. Marc can hide feelings very well.”

And so can Kurylenko – most of the time, she’s fun, giggly, smiling, but if she senses a negative vibe she’ll flip to icy reserve in a second.

**G**rowing up in the Ukrainian mud-bath resort of Berdyansk, Kurylenko’s mother couldn’t afford new clothes for her and taught her to darn the ones she had. She studied ballet and piano, but it was acting that helped her overcome her chronic shyness.

“Once I started taking acting classes as a kid, it really changed me. Before, I was very different, I was more... I don’t know. Insular. I saw those kids playing on stage and I told my mom, ‘I want to do that.’”

On a trip to Moscow when she was 13, she was approached by a modelling scout. Three years later, in

1996, a French modelling agency sent her a ticket to Paris, the city she’s called home ever since. Today, she claims she actually feels more French than Ukrainian and, until now, most of her movie work has come in France. Last year’s *Hitman* launched her on the global stage. As an assassinated politician’s spiky concubine, Kurylenko gave the sterile videogame adap its only ray of verve, humour and emotion. It marked her out as much more than just a stunning face.

Probably because of her exotic beauty and Soviet-bloc heritage, Kurylenko has played her share of victimised women (in the 2006 thriller *The Serpent*, she’s an illegal sex captive who ends up murdered). Camille is another victim, albeit one seeking deadly vengeance. Having learned to strip a gun and put it back together in eight seconds flat, Kurylenko says she could always be a contract killer if the acting doesn’t work out.

“That’s a joke,” she adds, saying she’s started explaining herself more after she was quoted as saying she had a nude scene in *Solace*. “I never said that! People put words in my mouth.”

Playing Camille, however, is already reaping benefits. She’s about to head off to Israel to shoot a hit woman thriller called *Kirot* with fledgling director Danny Lerner. “I believe in him,” she explains. “I think he’s got something.” She feels the same about Forster. Once they’d worked through their communication issues, Kurylenko found another side to him (the chatter on set was that the two are an item, although neither will confirm it). “I found this incredibly sensitive person. He’s very touching and that’s what he goes for. That’s why I think it’s amazing he’s directing an action movie because he’s not like an action movie director. With this, I think there will be soul.” **TF**

**Quantum Of Solace opens on 31 October and will be reviewed in a future issue of Total Film.**