

# She Outgrew Stardom

By  
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**H**OW would you like to have two or three inches of superfluous height stand between you and stardom?

That, in a manner of speaking, is exactly what happened to Gertrude Astor.

Gertrude Astor has beauty, acting ability and experience. Time and again, since she went into motion pictures back in 1913, she has been considered for great rôles to which she seemed eminently suited. She has made tests for all sorts of pictures. And in Hollywood they consider her one of the best troupers who ever put on a make-up. She has a big following among the fans.

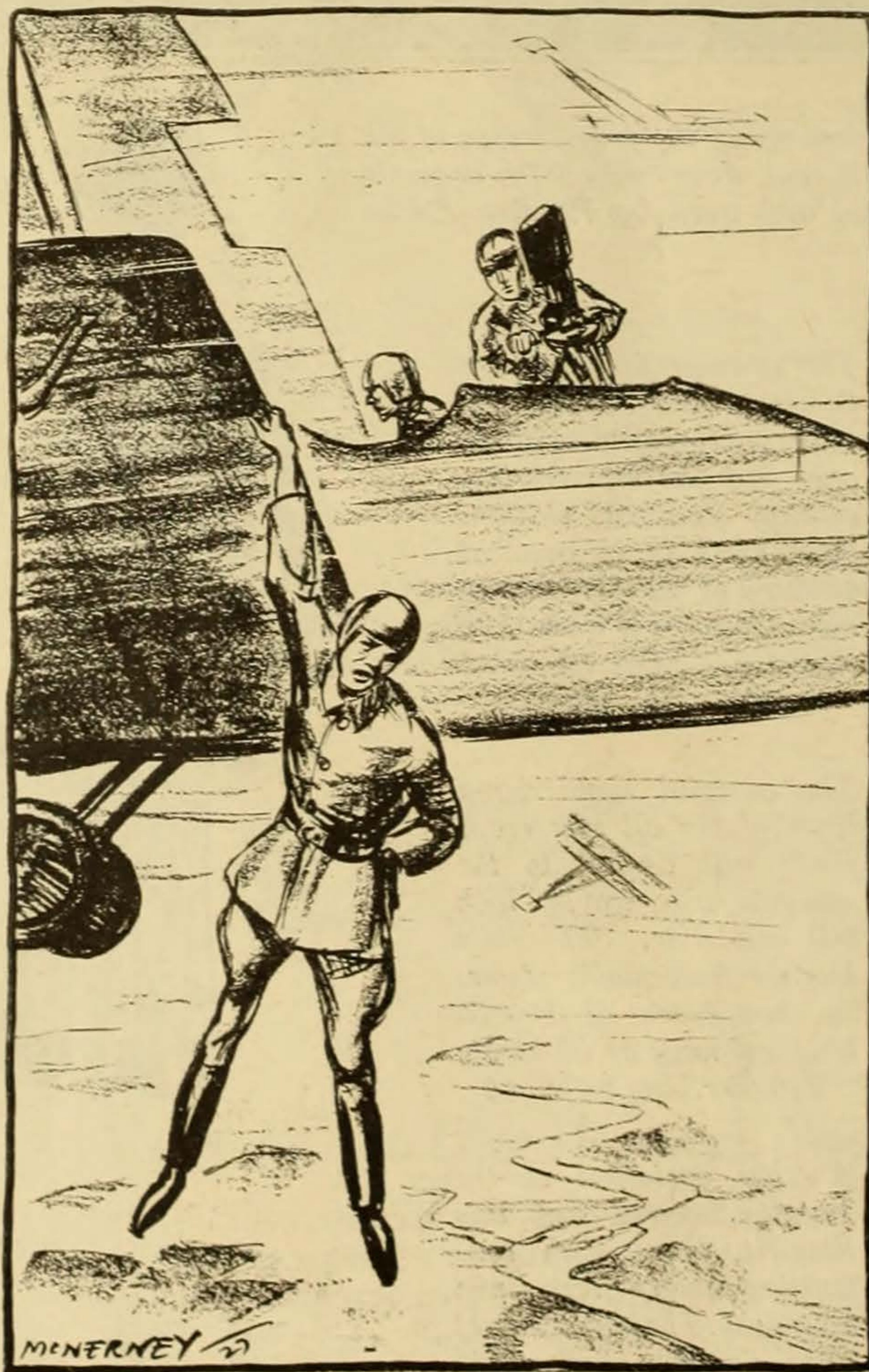
So you see in many ways she has been qualified for a chance at stardom. During the six years she was with Universal, she was featured in serials and in comedies and she played a few leads. But that was all.

Of course I didn't understand about all this. I had always admired her work and her statuesque blonde beauty. Once in a while when I'd see her at an opening or a party, I'd sort of say to myself, "I wonder why she never got to be a star."

Then a few nights ago, me and the girl friend happened in to see a picture called "The Taxi Dancer." Joan Crawford was the star, dainty and alluring, but the great performance of the piece was that given by Gertrude Astor. She was cast as a contrast for Joan, with an ugly make-up and a hard-boiled characterization, and yet for all that her work stood out as vivid and clean-cut as a pine tree against a mountain top.

And the old question revived in my mind.

So when I bumped into her a few days later in the



What they say while the camera grinds:  
"My God, my flask!"

Gertrude Astor—beautiful and clever, but just three inches too tall to be a star

Hollywood Plaza, which is the equivalent for the famous Algonquin in New York, I decided I'd ask her about it. We got off in a corner of the lobby all by ourselves—like the Algonquin, the Hollywood Plaza will eventually show you at least half the interesting people in town—and I asked her.

"Why haven't you ever had a chance to star?" I said. "Or at least why haven't you had a real chance at some big parts?"

She got right up off the day-entertainment and stood erect, very haughty and dignified, and gave me a glance that seemed half indignant and half reproachful.

I thought she was going to walk out on me without any further explanation. But she didn't, she just stood, looking at me.

I didn't know exactly what to say, so I got up, too, and then she laughed.

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"I was just trying to show you why," she said. "It's my height. I'm too tall. I'm five feet seven and a half inches tall. And that is just three inches too tall to play opposite almost any star in this business.

"If I were a star there aren't two leading men I could get to play opposite me.

"Of course I don't say I could have been a star. But I'm sure I could have had a chance at it if it hadn't been for my height.

"Sometimes I wish I hadn't 'grewed' quite so much. I outgrew stardom, I guess."

Of course there isn't really anything to feel exactly sorry for Gertrude Astor about. She is one of the props of the

industry. She's one of the people you always see playing the difficult rôles, the big character parts. And her salary is as big or bigger than many leading women's. She has an assured position, and as a matter of fact it may last longer than that of lots of the pretty, fluffy little girls who star for a day and then wither away. Gertrude Astor can go on indefinitely, because she has brains and ability.

But—but I don't know. I got a tear out of it, somehow. I just had a feeling that there were a lot of nights when she'd heard the old verdict of, "Sorry, Miss Astor. We did want you, but you're too tall," that Gertrude Astor cried into her pillow.

## The Love Hunch

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### FAMOUS SCREEN ARTIST AT HOME

*Elaine Gardner Caught by the Camera Man in the Doorway of Her New Bungalow in Hollywood.*

"Lying there in bed a few minutes ago I looked at that picture and had a hunch," Craig said earnestly. "You know how I am about those things, George. I never had a real hunch that was wrong. The one I just got is that that's the girl I'm going to marry. I'm thirty-two and I never had that sort of a hunch before. Never! I'm going to follow it and see what happens."

"What do you mean 'follow it'?" Mason asked.

"I'm beating it back to the U. S. by the first boat I can get booked on," Craig explained. "There I'll find out where this girl is now and go to her. I'll tell her frankly just what—"

"Bob, you're crazy!" Mason wailed. "Spoil our chance for a party in Morocco to follow a crazy hangover hunch about a movie star you never met? Aw, Bob! Nix! All our old gang are down there now flying for the French. We can get our commissions if you'll stick around for another couple of weeks. It'll be just like old times before that darned old armistice made the world safe for democrats and deadly dull for guys like us who want a little flavoring in our fun. Be good, Bob! I wouldn't have come abroad this year if we hadn't planned getting in on this party with the French. Have another drink and forget it."

Bob Craig shook his head stubbornly. "My mind's made up," he insisted.

"Your what?" Mason asked insultingly. "Of all the prize idiots! Oh, well—"

LOUISE HUBBARD had a plentiful store of patience and tact. Her job demanded an abundance of both. She was Elaine Gardner's secretary and it was her duty to humor and serve her temperamental employer on the one

hand and on the other to variously pacify, repel or encourage, according to their means, methods and motives, the many who sought personal audience with the blonde screen favorite.

Louise had a gift for the delicate business of refusing a request and making the disappointed applicant like it. She seemed so genuinely sorry when she voiced a negative that many of those with whom she dealt thus—particularly the men—felt obligated to minimize their concern in the matter to allay the pangs of regret that so evidently distressed her. Her hair was dark and soft and wavy, her eyes were blue and large and tender and her mouth was a blood rose red and of young rose texture and much too big to be beautiful—or mean. Her beauty was of a sort that a camera lens can't catch, a loveliness of expression and coloring rather than perfection of feature outline, and so, at twenty-four in Hollywood, she was a secretary instead of a screen star.

TO her, seated behind a desk in a little office on the Sedgewick-Scallan lot in Hollywood, came Bob Craig, seeking audience with Elaine Gardner.

"It's personal," Bob assured her in answer to the stock request for the nature of his business.

Louise smiled. "I'm afraid I'll have to give Miss Gardner a little more information than that to arrange an interview," she explained.

"I suppose so," Bob agreed reluctantly. "Well, you see, it's like this."

Following which preamble he seated himself, lit a cigarette and told his tale.

"Well!" Louise exclaimed when he had done. "I'll say it's personal."

"Um!" Bob grunted, eyeing her uneasily. "Sounds balmy, doesn't it?"

The expression in her blue eyes embarrassed and irritated him. There was something of amusement there and a hint of contempt and the suggestion of an accusation. Her look made him feel that



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