

INTER SECTION

MAN
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PLUS: 50 PAGES OF FAST FORWARD FASHION

ELON ASKED ME TO GO TO MARS. I'M THINKING ABOUT IT. TALULAH RILEY

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It's a hot day in Venice Beach, the hippy stalwart, faux-bohemian enclave sitting on Los Angeles' coast. We're gathered in this magazine's American headquarters preparing to photograph the subject, Talulah Riley, along the Venice canals. As the makeup artist curls her eyelashes and paints her nails, Talulah broaches a discussion of dreams.

The actress, who stars in the recent Richard Curtis film *Pirate Radio*, is undoubtedly a dreamer. Playing the under-aged temptress aboard an offshore pirate radio station, Riley snatches scenes away from her heavyweight co-stars Phillip Seymour Hoffman, Bill Nighy, and Kenneth Branagh with effortless magnetism. Charming not only the film's protagonist but also his veteran mentors, Riley manages to blend an ingénue's wide-eyed innocence with a seductress' sizzle. It's clear, she knows what she wants and more often than not, she knows how to get it. But for those things still left undone, she has a list (in descending order): 1. Climb to the top of Macchu Picchu and ride a horse at sunset. 2. Sleep in a bed of caribou fur at Sweden's Ice Hotel. 3. Swim in a bioluminescent bay at midnight.

Riley may not have experienced the glowing micro-organisms (*Pyrodinium bahamense*) of Puerto Rico, but the 23-year-old actress has already checked off some impressive tasks on her to-do list. Star as the lead in the successful redux of U.K. film series, *St. Trinian's*? Check. Sign on for Christopher Nolan's next film, *Inception*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Marion Cotillard, and Michael Caine? Been there. Get engaged to Paypal founder and multimillionaire Elon Musk, owner of commercial spaceflight and rocket company Space X, and visionary





electric car company Tesla? Done that. In comparison, my dreams seem much more modest. I tell her of my dream to visit the Creation Museum in Kentucky, where plastic Biblical figures mingle with pterodactyls, mastodons, and other animals anachronistically coexisting in the seven days of creation. She gets excited and says that she may make an addendum to her list, while looking at the ceiling as the makeup artist draws a thin line under blue eyes.

I tell my vision of Jesus wielding a blow torch and a machine gun, firing indiscriminately in the air while riding the back of a reared up brontosaurus. She imagines Jesus nestled against the bosom (if they have one) of a T-Rex, held lovingly in those good-for-nothing, limp little dino arms. Riley, it seems, is the quintessential 21st century British girl: she's quick with a joke, holds her own with the boys, and drops names of philosophers easier than shout-outs to Jay-Z. She's smart, and witty; a girl to share afternoon tea or to get a book recommendation, and as she leaves the room to change into her dress, I think she may just be one of us, a regular person. But when she returns, she stands tall in the doorway in a gorgeous black dress, all leg and long slender arms, backlit blond air glowing in the daylight, the room goes quiet.

Talulah Riley is far from ordinary.

Riley entered the world's stage as Mary in *Pride and Prejudice*, having been snatched up almost directly after high school. Her career progressed quickly, jumping from project to project, including stage adaptations with Kevin Spacey at the Old Vic, cameos and starring roles on British television.

"I don't feel like I'm that great of an actress; all I get to play are British school girls, which, essentially is me." But in every constrained motion, in those breath-stealing moments before a kiss in *Pirate Radio*, and sassy quips in *St. Trinians*, she is a woman in control, an actress on the verge.

A week later we meet for afternoon tea at Musk's Bel Air estate (Elon is parasailing in Egypt for the weekend), perched upon a hill from which the ocean is a thick

blue line scrawled on the horizon. "Sorry for this look," she says, "I'm auditioning as a slutty secretary in a little bit." She's wearing a tight ray skirt and a pinstriped shirt buttoned pretty far down. From where I'm sitting on the couch, catching glimpses of her between sips of tea from a "Late Night with David Letterman" mug, Riley radiates charm. She has an infectious laugh that seems to start somewhere deep inside her, bubbling up long before you ever see or hear it, a slow tsunami that washes over her as she scrunches her nose and as laughter dances out from her coy smile.

Then she talks of dreams again. She was always a dreamer, she says, with her face buried in books or in conversations with the animals at her Gloucestershire family farm. "I've always wanted to drive up the coast to Big Sur," she says, holding the mug tightly. "If you're going to drive through Europe, you need a VW camper with a mattress in the back; you want to do it old school. America's big and you want to do it in a big way, in a Winnebago," she pauses, cracks that slow smile again, and suggests, "or a Tesla."

We seem to have the same idea, and moments later we head to the garage, past her father, who is reading Harry Potter in the kitchen. "It'll leave your heart and kidneys behind!" he says about the Tesla Roadster's rocketlike acceleration while Riley grabs the keys and walks barefoot down the stairs. "Here's the Batmobile," Riley says of her future car ("We're getting another one soon, so this one will be mine"), unplugs the cable and starts it up not with a rumble but a whisper. Riley tears through the Bel Air curves, and I laugh uncontrollably; only on rollercoasters have I felt this velocity. As she presses the gas with her bare foot, and her hair flies wildly, I begin to wonder — she has her dream job, a dream car, and her dream guy, so if all your dreams come true, what do you have left to dream about?

For Riley, the well of dreams is bottomless.

"Elon asked me to go to Mars. I'm thinking about it." ●

