



Emmanuelle Vaugier

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For a Catholic mother, it would seem a blessing for her daughter to appear in a film based on observing Lent. Of course, Canadian actress Emmanuelle Vaugier never showed her mother the script for what became *40 Days and 40 Nights*.

"My mother went to see the film with my boyfriend at the time and his mother," laughs Vaugier, whose character romps with an orgasm-faking Josh Hartnett. "You can imagine the phone call after that! My mom said, 'You don't need to do that. Why did you do that?' She's a very religious French mom, and that just doesn't fit into her world. Plus, she didn't like the men in the audience hooting and hollering. I tried to explain that was a good thing because it meant they liked me."

While the film sent her mother off on a Hail Mary bender, Vaugier's brother got calls of his own. "My brother didn't know what I did either, and he told all his friends to go see the film," she laughs. "He couldn't believe that I didn't warn him. After it came out, all his friends at work were like, 'Dude, I saw your sister in that movie!' He loved the attention!"

Fortunately, the prayer vigils for Emmanuelle can cease. Her newest film, New Line Cinema's *Secondhand Lions*, casts the sexy star as a Persian princess named Jasmine whose sultan father disallows a relationship with what's supposed to be a young Robert Duvall.

"In the film, my father forbids our relationship because of the difference in our (social) status," says Vaugier, whose character appears in a series of flashbacks recounted by Duvall and Michael Caine to Haley Joel Osment. "Instead, my father wants me to marry this evil sheik to whom I'm already promised. The story is an adventure about two young people in love running away from the bad guys. The flashbacks are definitely action-packed, while the rest is heartfelt and sweet. I remember laughing and crying when I read the script, which doesn't happen often."

Previous to her feature film breakthroughs, Vaugier vied for fans with a string of small screen appearances. Following her first lead in Showtime's 1996 film *The Halfback of Notre Dame*, Vaugier popped up in *Charmed*, *Highlander*, *Outer Limits*, *Higher Ground* (opposite Hayden Christensen) and other shows that shot in her native Vancouver, British Columbia. The actress eventually landed a television lead as a DJ in WB's short-lived *My Guide to Becoming a Rock Star*, and though that didn't pan out, the Frog network found her a place on *Smallville* where she plays Lex Luthor love interest Dr. Helen Bryce. With opportunities continuing to roll in, it's clear that momentum is on her side.

Vaugier, who modeled in Japan before her big acting breaks, attributes much of her success to attitude. She explains, "Whatever is meant to be, will happen. You can only do your best work and hope people respect what you do. If acting is a competition, it's a competition with myself to see how I can make myself better for each project."

Written by David Jenison