

Michelle Thorn

“Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good.
Luckily, this is not difficult.”

-Charlotte Whitton

San Inguon, Arizona. Home to the Fort Lucas Rita Research Labs. This is where they produce the huge projects that will turn into huge weapons over the next decade. This is where the future of the country will be shaped. This is where the news will happen.

And you’re stuck covering the Inguanafest.

Michelle Thorn, journalist extraordinaire for the Phoenix *Sun*, here to watch people celebrate their town’s history by making fools of themselves. It disgusts you. You’re so much better than that. You should be out there finding out about the *real* news in this town, the seamy undercurrent of events, the way reality truly stands for those people who call this place home. You should be exposing dangerous business practices, horrible military experiments, the pathos of everyday life in this all-but-left-by-the-wayside town. You should be cataloguing the dreams and aspirations of these people, their hopes and wishes.

Instead, you’re writing a fluff piece about how nice the Iguanafest is. Something nice and frilly that gives a look at some real common people having fun, something that lends itself to a catchy headline and a silly picture, preferably one that well-educated people will snicker at before breakfast.

It’s because you’re female that you get stuck with this sort of thing. Abigail Frapp went on a three county killing spree, leaving a trail of mutilated corpses behind her. Every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the newsroom got sent off to try and find her, talk to the police, make a huge national headline out of it. You were sent to interview her mother and find out what she had been like as a child. Oh, joy. Investigative journalism at its finest.

And all because you’re a woman. Your editor, Dane Smilley, feels that sending a woman out to cover major issues would be just too uncomfortable. “Come on, Micky,” he said to you once, “what politician is gonna treat you seriously? They’ll think you’re writing for Women’s Home Quarterly or some such fluff, and you’ll never get the information you need.” You despise him. It’s not just that he doesn’t think women are up to the job; he knows that most men think women aren’t up to the job, and therefore wouldn’t be allowed to do the job even if they tried.

Well, you’ll show them. You’ve got most of that fluff piece on the Iguanafest written already. After all, it’s the same thing as countless other little town fairs, so you wrote a story on the drive here of what you knew it would be like, and as it turned out,

you were perfectly correct. You just need to talk with the mayor a bit, get a few interesting quotes from the townspeople, and send it off to Phoenix.

But until the fest ends tonight, you're still supposed to be covering it. Which is fine; it gives you a reason to stay on in town. And you know that you can come up with some sort of scoop on a big story here in town. That's what you need to do. Find something big, something dangerous, and write it up before any other reporters turn in a story on it. And if Smilley won't take it, you'll have to scout around for another paper that will. You're sure that some paper in this state would be willing to work with a female lead journalist. All you need is the breakthrough story, the one that shows your investigative skills, the one that shows everyone that Michelle Thorn knows news when she sees it, and that she can write a damn fine piece about it.

So far, you haven't really gotten any breakthroughs. Dr. Angela Bailey is here to do an archaeological dig on the Indian ruins down near the south of town. If she finds something important, that could be a great story. But so far, all you've gotten is a couple of interviews with Indian workers who don't know what she might find, and Harvey (the photographer that Smilley sent to take a few pictures of the Iguanafest) has gotten a few nice shots of the area. But you still have to talk to Dr. Bailey and find out what she's looking for here, what she'll do when she finds it, and what makes her tick. If she finds something big, something important, you'll have the scoop.

And there are other things going on here in town, you just know it. Ivan Kerensky, the gas station owner, was railing about the impending Communist uprising in town, ranting about how the mayor and the governor and the President are all ignoring the incredible threat to national security that he is sure will start here in San Inguon. He might be just a crackpot, another John Bircher railing against an unseen enemy, but maybe he has something. Even a blind dog finds a bone once in a while.

And then there are the Research Labs. Military technology is being created here even as we speak. They're constantly working upon the latest ways for kids to kill each other. They're giving a presentation tonight about what they've been working on, but you're sure the information in that is worthless, candy-apple terms for dangerous weapons, and probably has been sent to every paper in the state, if not the nation. But what they're talking about is certainly not all that they've been working on. There has to be some project in there that no one knows about except a few important scientists. There has to be a huge secret that the Labs are trying to keep a lid on. You're sure of it. And if anyone's going to blow the lid off of it, it's you.

You'll show Smiley what journalism is really all about.

Stock quote: "Strictly off the record, what do you think about...."

Mannerisms: Michelle is the standard cynical reporter, doing her best to compete in a male-dominated industry. Brusque and harsh when she needs to be, she'll let nothing stand in the way of a good story.

People You Know:

General Hiram Cork: Commander of Ft. Lucas Rita and the adjoining Research Labs. You've got to find a way to get him to spill some information your way.

Mayor Cunningham: Mayor of San Inguon. The standard boring small-time politician. You've had to interview him a couple of times for information about the Iguanafest. He seems overly concerned with his own image- while you expect that of politicians, he's a little overboard on this count.

Sheriff Ward Barnes: Standard country sheriff. Patronizing and provincial. Still, if something big does happen, you'll need him on your side to get the information you need. Maybe you should interview him and find out what kind of things you could do to get on his good side.

Dr. Angela Bailey: Archaeologist. Another woman trying to get by in a field that women "shouldn't" be in. You should definitely talk to her and see what she's working on. A story about her exploits here in San Inguon would definitely help both you and her.

Harvey Patrick: Photographer for the Phoenix *Sun*. He's supposed to be out in the field, taking pictures of the town and the Labs to help you with your stories. You have no idea where he is, though. He was supposed to meet you this morning, but never showed up. Well, you'll get the story you need without him.

Goals:

1. Find the big stories. You're sure that something big is happening, whether it be at the dig site or at the Research Labs. Somewhere out there is the story of a lifetime, just waiting for you to pick up on it.