

A Model Student

February 2024 – Commission

Chapter One

Thanks to our new Gold-Tier patron RubberDiaperBoy for commissioning this new series! :-)

"Whaddya think, Abby? Ready for another year of paying these folks to make us work our butts off? By which I mean... college?"

The tone was bantering, and the wry smile on Jalisa's dark face was nothing if not good-natured. Her addressee, Abigail, took it as such, and laughed back, her own dark eyes dancing merrily along underneath the bobbing fringe of her nut-brown bangs. "Hey, Jalisa – you really gotta put it like that? We do get something out of it, you know. Ever hear of something called a diploma?"

Jalisa let out a sigh and hitched her grocery-stuffed backpack. "Yeah, yeah, I know," she agreed reluctantly. "It's just... you know. Not gonna lie, it's a heck of a lot of work and money for what it is. Don't ya think? A dumb piece of paper that tells folks... what? That you and your folks paid stupid amounts of money to have you sit in rooms for four years and have a bunch of white geezers talk at you for hours?"

Abigail's brow furrowed, as much at Jalisa's uncannily accurate statement as at the bright August sun around them. Her eyes flitted momentarily past her roommate... over to a group of loudly laughing guys hard at work with their spikeball game... and then back once more. Though even as she responded, her hands were subconsciously slipping back as if to check the taut, skin-tight fabric of her favorite jeggings.

Because there was no harm in making sure that she – and her ass – was looking as good as possible. And definitely not when guys were around.

"There's more to it than that, I'm sure," she assured her friend, and now they were walking more slowly, laboring up the steep incline that led to the social sciences complex, across a busy road, and beyond to their dorm. "We get chances to work with some of the profs, right? Like you did in one of your labs last spring? And we get, you know... shots at internships in the summers, and..."

She trailed off momentarily, short of breath, then resumed as they approached the top of the

incline. "Besides, isn't college all about what we make of it? Like, you know... there's meaning in the experience itself? Getting to know what it's like, and having the same experiences as others. Constructing our own meaning..."

"Hey, girl! That anthro side of yours is showing again," Jalisa panted back, laughing and shaking her head in amusement. "Look, I'm just a bio major! I don't get all that stuff about finding meaning in the journey and shit. I jus' wanna get a good job and pay back these damn loans is all."

"Yeah. Don't we all," Abigail agreed once more, with a self-conscious sigh. They had reached the edge of the busy road now, and she walked over and reached for the pedestrian crossing button. *Beep-boop. WAIT.*

"Hey, you sure you got all that stuff?," she inquired, glancing at the heavy back that Jalisa had now slung down to the ground momentarily. "I can carry something the rest of the way if you want..."

But Jalisa wasn't listening. "Hang on," she called, and a moment later was trotting back from the nearby electric pole, her phone in her hand. "D'you see that flyer over there? Something about a modeling job. Here, take a look-"

"Beep. WALK SIGN IS ON TO CROSS PLYMOUTH AVENUE. WALK SIGN IS ON TO-"

"Dangit! Here, lemme text it to you-" And as the duo hurried across the large intersection, Jalisa was simultaneously hefting her backpack and hurriedly stabbing at her screen. "Looks kinda interesting? Hang on, lemme... oh, wait. Oh, no... Never mind-"

But Abigail was already peering into her own phone screen, screwing up her eyes and scrunching her freckled nose as she tried to decipher the text in the photo that had just arrived. "Models wanted," she read aloud. "No experience required. Flexible hours, competitive pay. No references required. Must be 21 years or older." She glanced up from the screen, puzzled by the suddenly unimpressed look on her friend's face. "Wait, what's wrong?"

"Sounds shady as fuck," Jalisa sighed, shaking her head ruefully. "It's like they say – if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. A flyer asking for 21+ models? Outside a college campus? Nailed up to a fucking pole like a lost *cat* poster?" She shrugged apologetically. "Hey, I dunno. I'm just saying. Now that I think about it, doesn't it sound like something a pervert or a- a- I dunno, a freaking *serial* killer would do?!"

Abigail laughed, half uneasily and half in genuine mirth at her roommate's wild speculations. "Oh, I don't know about that. And hey! Weren't we just talking about needing a good job? I'm not saying this would pay tuition. But a bit of extra grocery money wouldn't hurt, right?" She glanced ruefully down over her modest curves and petite frame. "And sure, I know I'm not exactly a supermodel. But we *are* both twenty-one..."

"I dunno," Jalisa maintained, her expression still skeptical as they made their way up the stairs to their dorm. "Look, I ain't gonna tell you what to do, girl. I'm just saying – if you end up dead in a ditch somewhere, I don' wanna be the best friend having to tell your folks how it's all my fault – you know, 'cause of showing you that ad or whatever."

Jalisa sighed and swung the door open, and Abigail followed her into the cool, darkened interior. "Yeah, yeah, I know," she laughingly assured her friend, and now her eyes were drifting back down to the intriguing ad on her screen. "But it doesn't hurt to call, right? And I promise – if it sounds even the tiniest bit sketchy, I'll let you know and I won't do it. Deal?"

"Suit yourself, I guess. Just count me out, okay?"

Which is how it happened that not fifteen minutes later, Abigail was sitting on the edge of her bunk, her heart thumping with rising excitement as she pressed the cool surface of her phone to her ear. *Bddddd. Bddddd. Bddddd...*

"Hello, Neverland Enterprises, Margaret speaking. How may I help you today, sweetie?"

"Um- I, um-" Abigail fumbled, momentarily caught off guard by the effusive tone and oddly maternal voice that had just answered. "I, um. I'm Abigail Buxton. I saw your ad, you know... about models? And I was calling to see, you know, if you still needed one..."

"Oh! Oh, why of course!" The voice on the other end seemed genuinely delighted to hear her, and she could feel her inner tension begin to dissolve amid such warm enthusiasm. "Well, sweetie, I'd be *delighted* to schedule a time for you to come in. We'd just need to have a nice little chat, you see: explain what kind of work you'd be doing, and check your ID, and give you a chance to ask questions, and so forth. But before that – you *are* twenty-one, I suppose...?"

"Yes- yes, of course. Twenty-one last February." Abigail's heart was racing, a smile on her face as Margaret's voice bubbled delightedly into her ear. "Aww, perfect – that's the same month as my *husband*! Well then, sweetie, what day would work best for you? How about Saturday morning,

10:30? Is that okay with you?"

It was. And after she'd fumbled her way through a string of more-or-less coherent thanks and acknowledgements and goodbyes, Abigail dropped her suddenly-silent phone to the bed. She flopped backward in relief and delight. And as she stared up at the ceiling, she couldn't help the idiotic smile that now lit up her face.

A model, huh? If this worked out, she just might be a model. And why ever not?

She still wasn't quite sure what all the gig involved. But that didn't matter, not really. In this moment, all she knew was that she couldn't wait for Saturday to arrive.

(To be continued!)