

Real Beauty

Jessica and I had known each other for about a month. We had been on two dates, and after the third I felt it was time to invite her up to my apartment.

“Nice apartment.” Jessica said. It was a standard small apartment in a two hundred story building. There was a living room, just big enough to get my couch and coffee table into, a kitchen that could only fit one person at a time, a bedroom with the bed taking up three quarters of the room, and a bathroom. In my apartment all the walls were covered with paintings. My wall screen-saver showed an aquarium with tropical fish.

“Thanks.... Drink?” I said.

“Vodka?” she asked. I nodded.

“Then yes,” she said.

I poured both of us a drink while she looked over my artwork in the living room. I dropped two ice cubes in each glass and walked around the kitchen counter to where she was admiring my favorite piece. I handed her the drink; she took the glass without taking her eyes off the painting. It was a beautiful masterpiece, abstract. There were yellows, reds and blues swirling all around a purple background. It was entitled “Love”. “Destante, painted in 2063.” Jessica said.

“You have a good eye for art. Are you a fan?”

“Of Destante or art?” She said with a smile. She didn’t wait for an answer saying, “I like Destante, but I’m more a fan of scenery. I have a small collection of my own.”

“I have some beautiful landscapes in the bedroom.”

“Trying to get me in the bedroom already? I haven’t even finished my drink; you don’t waste any time.” She was laughing as she followed me. Jessica was beautiful with long wavy

blonde hair, deep blue eyes, a perfect nose, a perfect body, long slender legs, 36-C breasts, and about 5'9". She looked just like everyone else. Literally. Man had discovered mind over matter in a true sense. Women, and men, could use their minds to project whatever physical appearance they desired. So of course every woman was a tall, blue-eyed blonde with a "perfect" body. Most of them even adopted similar personalities. They were afraid if they tried anything else, they would never find a date. I hated it. It was like going to an ice cream shop and having your only choice being chocolate. Even if you always get chocolate, you still resent not having the choice.

Of course my favorite was vanilla, not chocolate. I was a fan of the twentieth century. My grandfather used to tell me stories about what it was like, and how every person looked different. I was fascinated by it, so I started studying the time period. The first time I saw a red haired woman in the files on the net, I fell in love. She was so exotic and beautiful, and nothing like the women in my time. I began to crave red hair and despise blonde. I wanted to see eyes other than blue. I wanted someone unique, instead of boringly identical. So, I searched for women who were different. Even a blonde haired blue-eyed woman would be great if she was real.

Jessica was different somehow than most of the women I had met. She was a little more outgoing, less afraid to show her own opinion. If I could convince anyone to put away the mask, it would be her.

I led Jessica into the bedroom and proceeded to show her the rest of my collections: sunsets, ocean scenes, cities by moonlight, mountain retreats, and tropical forests.

The last piece I showed her was a nude of Marilyn Monroe, an actress from the twentieth century. It was my most valuable painting as it was the only antique. Jessica was a very forward woman, and I knew the response she would give, which is why I showed her that painting last.

With a slightly condescending tone, Jessica said, “So, is this a hint? Are you too shy to say it out loud? You want me to take my clothes off?” She pulled her shirt over her head. “Should I keep going?” I just smiled and said nothing, so she did. She slowly unbuttoned her pants and slid them off. Then came the socks, and she was standing there in her bra and panties. I pulled off my shirt, walked over to her and kissed her. By the time the kiss was finished, she had unbuttoned my pants and they slipped down to my ankles. I stepped out of them and pulled my socks off. She had taken her bra off, and I kissed her again pressing my body hard against hers.

“I want to see you.” I said. Jessica took off her panties. “That’s not what I meant. I want to see *you*.” She looked puzzled for a moment and then a look of fear flashed across her face. She turned her head to disguise her blush.

“I can’t,” she said.

“I really like you Jessica. I want to make love to you, but not with this identical-to-everyone-else lie. I want to touch *your* skin. I want to look into *your* eyes. I want to run my hands through *your* hair. I want to feel *your* body under me.”

“You wouldn’t like me if I showed you the real me.”

“Jessica, I’ll like you more. You think this is real beauty? The so-called ‘perfect’ body, blonde hair, blue eyes. Yes, it’s beautiful, but it’s too perfect. It seems fake. Real beauty lies in imperfection, not perfection. Real beauty lies in difference and uniqueness, not in being identical.”

“What about you? You do the same thing. Why don’t you show me your true self!”

Then Jessica noticed for the first time the imperfections and blemishes on my skin, the not so perfect body, my eyes being a lighter shade of blue, my hair being more dirty-blond than blonde, my nose being a little too large for my face, and she realized that I had always looked that way. I had the luxury of being close enough to the mask, that nobody noticed I wasn’t wearing it unless they actually looked for it, and nobody had any reason to look. Understanding crossed her face as she acknowledged why she had been attracted to me in the beginning. I wasn’t perfect. I wasn’t the same as everybody else. I was unique, and that in itself made me beautiful.

“I love you Jessica. Let me love *you*.”

“I love you too Michael, but I’m afraid.”

“Jessica, you can trust me. Aren’t you tired of everybody looking the same? Aren’t you tired of looking exactly like every other woman? Don’t you want to be yourself for a change? Do this for me Jessica. I need to see you.”

“For you.” With that, her appearance changed. She was only 5’4”. Her breasts were about the same, but the left one was a little larger than the right. Her body wasn’t “perfect. Her eyes were an amazing shade of green, not blue, and her hair was a fiery red. She looked somewhat like an elf. She was so nervous, vulnerable and afraid I had to smile.

“You Jessica are the most beautiful woman in the world.” And she was. I walked over to her, picked her up, laid her down on the bed, and made love to her with a passion I had not felt in years. Jessica was my dream girl. Neither of us wore the mask again. We were the first, but many followed. Now, there are only a few left who still project the perfect look, but they are shunned.