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## A Pretty Gamble

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# A Pretty Gamble

They sat beside each other, in one room of many within the Reventa skyscraper. Both women knew that the other was sizing them up and both pretended to be comfortable waiting in the lab; where grey floors and impeccable white walls lined with light green chairs surrounded the large open space. One woman was tall and dark haired with olive skin, a sharp contrast to the woman next to her, petite with curls. The petite one examined her immaculate cuticles. They were each the prettiest woman the other had ever seen. Both were visibly uncomfortable in the presence of a rival.

“So, I’m guessin we’re here for the same time slot.”

The petite redhead drawled in a voice that stuck like syrup at the bottom of a sweet tea. She didn’t bother to move her eyes up from her nails.

“I suppose.”

“Well if we’re just sittin here waitin, I wanna say that I absolutely love your-”

“If you continue, you’ll sound like a creep. We both know why we are here, so don’t bother.” The dark-haired girl spat. She stood up from the waiting bench and walked with long strides to lean against the wall on the other side of the room. The tall potted plant next to her complemented her height and olive-toned skin.

“Rude,” muttered Red. She went back to picking at her perfect nails. It wasn’t much longer before the room was filled by women, each one more beautiful. Each one hoping the others’ luck would run out.

Without wanting to make it too obvious, everyone in the room watched each other; lionesses choosing the long-necked gazelle. A high cheek-boned brunette looked around unabashed. She wanted to know what she had just bought.

A bubbly woman was chattering to the dark-skinned trust-fund baby on her left, not noticing that she was bringing attention to herself. “So, my boyfriend actually paid for my ticket, like I had told him how much I wished that I could go, I was like, baby I know it could be addicting or whatever but I don’t have enough money for that to be a problem, you know? Like yeah maybe if I could afford to go multiple times, I might be worried about wanting to come back, but I know I can’t. But maybe if my boyfriend likes the changes, he’ll give me another ticket, he said this time that a better nose was worth the couple thousand and the risk. Did I tell you how gorgeous you are? I mean I’m not really scared that I’ll be picked but....”

“Stop talking newbie.” Her neighbor leaned back with her eyes closed.

“Like I know even if I come back a couple times I’m so not going to be as pretty as some of these girls, I mean just look at that blonde-”

“Shut-up or people might pick you out of annoyance.” The trust-fund baby hissed. She sat up and looked straight into the bubbly woman’s deep green eyes.

The quiet hum of machinery notified the gamblers that it was time to cast their vote. From the empty space in the middle of the room rose clear pristine tubes that they all quietly stepped into. Most did it with ease and little fear, but there were a couple first timers that hesitated for just a breath before stepping in and closing the door.

“Welcome to Reventa! We are here to make your time with us as memorable as possible,” an automated voice chimed through the tubes. Now everyone openly stared at the women around them hungrily, like they were picking out the plumpest turkey. The tall girl who was first to arrive couldn’t decide if she liked the chatty girls’ eyes or the redhead’s long fingernail beds better.

“Please cast your vote now. Remember, your personal desires are valued at Reventa.” A screen popped up on the clear glass in front of each woman. The petite redhead voted for the bubbly girl who voted for the blonde that she couldn’t stop staring at. The dark-skinned heiress voted for the tall olive-skinned girl who voted for the bubbly girl, wishing her own eyes were more green and less hazel.

“The votes have been calculated. Please stay in your cylinders.” The room was full of a static energy. These women had all just pulled a trigger and were now holding their breath to see who caught the bullet.

“No, no, no...?” The tall olive-skinned girl clasped her perfect hands together as her tube was bathed in a calming pink light.

Everyone watched, some with little smiles as the tall girl screamed, the sound muted by spa music and the glass around her. She slammed her fists into the glass as liver spots appeared on her hands and her knuckles went bony. Her clothes all became baggier as she lost her curves and became loose skin on bones. She had always thought her dark shiny hair was her best feature but now it was rapidly losing its glimmer, becoming stringy, greasy, and flat. Her sobs moved through her thinning body and she was forced to watch as her teeth fell out of her mouth and bounced on the now blood-spattered floor. One caught on her lip and when she sucked in for a sobbing breath it was pulled down her throat.

Red had to look away before she saw the olive-skinned woman die ugly. She sat her eyes down, watching the pink rose scented mist fill her tube, which made her complexion shine. Her wrists were too fat, and she was very pleased as this time they finally slimmed out. Red had tried to compliment the tall woman’s thin wrists earlier; that girl should’ve listened.

“Please exit the room,” the voice chimed, and all the women stepped out of the tubes confidently with slimmer arms, clearer skin, and smoother, shinier hair. All the cylinders were pulled back into the floor. There was a cleaner bot already sweeping up the dust and clothes pile in the middle of the room. The bubbly girl glanced back at the pile right before she exited. She then looked at her reflection in the mirrored hallway. Her hair was extra glossy and skin tighter. How soon could she get her boyfriend to buy her another ticket? She still wasn’t very pretty compared to those women and

knew she could be better. She wasn't picked this time, what were the odds that she'd be picked the next time?

## About Jasmine Duran

Jasmine Duran is a sophomore currently studying Philosophy and Psychology. Creative writing has become a way for her to express herself and grow as a student. A fun fact is that she has never been very good at writing interesting bios or "tell me about yourself pieces."