The Princess

And The

Abyss Diver

**By**

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1. Middle School

School was created to make suitable   
workers for the workforce,   
but does the world still need flesh robots?

Thursday, September 2

Luke and his best friend Ripper stepped out of the tour bus and onto the school grounds of the Albert Einstein Academy for Gifted Children.

At a glance you wouldn’t think the two would be friends. One was a tall, muscular jock who was both handsome and popular. The other was a short, socially awkward, overweight kid with acne and thick glasses.

The excess weight, acne and myopia were curable. However, his parents were the crazy types who thought vaccines caused autism, reduced lifespans, and corroded souls. Several of Luke’s relatives died from perfectly curable diseases. He knew that because he overheard his parents talk of relatives he never knew about.

The only protection Luke had from diseases such as COVID was lack of social contact, and the high quality ventilation found in modern schools.

As a result Luke was forced to rely on home cures, which were mostly useless, and occasionally dangerous.

Luke stepped to the edge of the growing crowd of students and took in the scenery. All about them rose the magnificent mountains of Switzerland.

“I can’t believe we are both going to this crazy school,” Ripper said. “You maybe, but I’m just a dumb jock.”

“Nonsense,” Luke said. “You are smart. You’re problem is motivation. Besides, you’re here on a sports scholarship.”

“Maybe so,” Ripper said. “However, without your tutoring I couldn’t have obtained the minimum grades. Why did you sign up as a tutor?”

“My mum insisted I make friends. She was the one who suggested I tutor,” Luke said. “Although very soon all tutoring will be done by AI agents.”

“I’m glad my career is safe,” Ripper said. “Robot sports never took off. People want to see real people battling and bleeding for their entertainment.”

“My aunt had a live band for her June wedding, even though it was more expensive,” Luke said. “And the rich never use robots, preferring humans to serve them.”

The last of the teens exited the busses and a woman called out, “Attention kids.” She paused until everyone quieted down. “My name is Mrs. Bertrand. Welcome to the Albert Einstein Academy for Gifted Children.

“Please follow me to the auditorium for your orientation ceremony.”

Over a thousand kids followed the woman to a large building. Luke and Ripper chatted as they walked.

“Hey look, they have human gardeners,” a girl next to Luke said.

“I wonder why,” another girl said.

Stepping in, Luke found himself inside an auditorium seating thousands. However, only half the space was used.

After a long wait, everyone was seated.

A man in a business suit walked on stage and said, “Greetings everyone. My name is Dr. Everson Thornville and I am your principle.

“Welcome to the Albert Einstein Academy for Gifted Children.

“You are all here because we believe you are the shining future of our tiny blue star. Over the next few years you will learn the skills needed to handle the terrifying changes that will befall the planet.”

That ominous statement caused some murmurs from the students.

“That’s diabolical,” Ripper said.

“In this school, you will not learn to become a worker at an office, factory or what not. AI can do that easily,” the principle said. “Our goal is to teach each of you to become masters of your own destinies. Only then may you overcome the monsters surrounding us and gain true strength.”

“Monsters?” Ripper asked.

“Either it’s a metaphor or the principle is crazy,” Luke said.

The principle smiled at the confused students and said, “Annie Winfield, please enter.”

From offstage a teenage girl entered, wearing the school uniform.

The auditorium broke out in murmuring. That wasn’t surprising.

“Damn, she looks like an elfin princess,” Luke said as he almost drooled. He had the urge jump on stage and…

Luke wouldn’t do that in real life. He wasn’t that stupid. However, nothing prevented him from ravaging her in his mind.

All about, the other teens had the same desire, even many of the ladies.

“Annie Winfield is the youngest daughter of Edward Winfield, chairman and founder of this school,” Principle Bertrand said. “And yes, I’m talking about Winfield Energy.

“Although not the first company to commercialize fusion energy, their product is by far the most compact, safe and dependable. And yes, we do have a Winfield reactor.”

The Winfield reactor was said to capture fast neutrons from the fusion process and convert the energy directly into electricity. The process was propriety but the results were undeniable.

It wasn’t surprising that Edward Winfield, Annie’s father soon became a trillionaire.

“However, that is not why she is here,” the principle said. “Yes, many of you here exceed her in terms of physical fitness and problem solving, to name a few. However, her combined scores exceed everyone here, and that’s saying something.

“Ms. Winfield, please speak to your cohort.”

Annie stepped up to the mike and took a breath.

“Thank you Principle Thornville,” Annie said. “6 years ago my father founded this academy using his considerable wealth. The purpose is to gather all the best and brightest kids of the world in order to forge a better world for everyone.

“Sad to say the world is full of monsters. They live just below the surface, hungry to come out and slaughter. The environmental contamination, desecration of sacred lands, polarization of the world and quantum technologies are making things worse.

“Our goal here is simple. Become strong and never place our fate on so-called saviors.

“I look forward to growing ever stronger with all of you.”

With that Annie stepped off from the podium.

“Thank you Ms. Winfield,” the principle said.

“School starts on Monday. That will give you 4 days to get over any jet lag.

“Your luggage will be in your dormitory rooms. Also, you will find your school issued cell phones, uniforms, and everything else you will need to attend classes.

“Go to your dormitories and settle in.

“After that, I encourage you to spend time getting to know your fellow students and exploring the local town. Also, the hiking trails are amazing, with rivers, waterfalls and canyons to explore.”

The principle paused and then said, “I do need to warn you. Please avoid leaving school grounds after dark. This is especially true of the surrounding forests.

“And if you are stuck in the town, go to the city hall. They will find you a bed for the night. Then at sunrise, return. We don’t you to miss school. More importantly, we want you to be safe.”

By now half the students were more than a little uneasy.

“Principle Thornville, please don’t scare the kids,” a woman said.

“This is vice-principle Eliot Drew,” the principle said. He turned to the vice-principle and said, “Fear is essential if one is to stay safe. You know what is out there.”

The principle turned back to the audience and said, “The boundary of the school grounds are well marked. You are not allowed off campus grounds after dusk and before dawn. Those rules are there for a reason. We don’t want tragedies. Dismissed.”

The auditorium burst into a cacophony as everyone tried to understand the dire warning.

“Damn, that was weird,” Ripper said. “Why not just say we will get into trouble?”

“Maybe there are wild animals,” Luke said. “No that doesn’t make sense. The principle said we should explore during the day.”

After a long wait the two exited and followed the crowd to the apartments.

According to the school web site, the residential area consisted of multiple apartment buildings and a commercial area with several multi-cultural restaurants and stores.

In short, there was no need to leave school grounds.