

Community

by Kyle Eggleston

Jessica stood on the dock. She enjoyed watching boats come in and out of port. She felt the need to feel the fresh air on her face. It was something Jessica did to calm herself before a big assignment. Jessica was in advertising, and her latest pitch was to a car manufacturing company. She didn't feel ready for such a big project, but knew she could make it work.

Walking along the dock, Jessica admired the boats moored to the pier. She wouldn't ever step foot on one of the boats, that was out of her range of comfort. No, she would simply look at them and admire them from afar.

"Life seems a bit simpler out here, doesn't it." A woman's voice said from behind.

Jessica turned to see a woman standing there on the dock with her. She was dressed in a wetsuit like she had just gotten off a jet ski.

"Excuse me?" Jessica asked.

The woman gestured to the boats. "Come on, don't tell me you don't see it." She said. "I saw you admiring the boats here. They're beautiful. So many different designs to take in, so many different characters to try and figure out." The woman said.

Jessica nodded. "That's true." She said. "I suppose I just got carried away and wasn't paying attention to the rest of the world around me. So sue me."

The woman laughed. "I think we're going to be best of friends." She said. "What are you doing tonight around seven o'clock?"

Jessica shrugged. "Not much." She said. She was in fact lying, she needed to get her head int the game on this new ad campaign. But Jessica didn't feel like doing it. There would be enough time to worry about that later, now she just wanted to have a bit of fun. "What do you have in mind?"

The woman smiled. "Oh a few of my friends and I are going out on a boat. Just to enjoy the moonlight and relax in the water. You're more than welcome to come along if you'd like. I think you would enjoy it."

Jessica thought about it for a moment. She had just moved into town, and was in need of some friends. *Why not* she figured. *What could possibly go wrong?* It was just a group of friends wanting to get together. No harm there.

"I would love to." She said. "My name is Jessica." She held out her hand.

The woman extended her own hand and shook Jessica's. "Alice." She said. "My name is Alice. I will see you here at seven o'clock sharp then." She added. "Don't be late, we don't wait for stragglers."

Jessica smiled. "I'll be here."

"Good." Alice said as she walked away.

Jessica watched the woman leave. She walked with determination, purpose, and grace. Jessica wished she would be so confident but that didn't seem to be in the cards for her. Leaving the dock herself, she headed home to get changed. *What does one wear to a boat party?* She wondered.

Moments later, Jessica was home going through her clothes. Most of her clothes were still in boxes from the move. Finally settling on a dress she liked, Jessica was ready. She wondered if she should bring something, perhaps a bottle of wine? Walking to the cellar, she picked out a very favorable bottle of wine. It was from 1926, a very good year for wine in her opinion.

A few hours passed and it was close to seven o'clock. Jessica took the wine and left her apartment. It was time to meet up with her new friend. Traveling to the dock, Jessica wondered what she would find on the boat. Who she would find, would they be friendly people like Alice was? Would they be rude at a new comer to the group? She knew how some friends groups could be, they didn't like new comers. Well she wasn't about to not be liked. Jessica planned on putting her best foot forward.

Reaching the dock, she found the boat with Alice on it. There were a handful of Alice's friends aboard the boat as well. As Jessica arrived, Alice pointed her out. "Oh Oh! There she is! I told you she was real!" She helped Jessica climb the ladder to the boat. It was a small boat, but it did float and served them well.

"Jessica, I want you to meet everyone." Alice said. Then pointing around she gestured. "Everyone, meet Jessica."

They took turns introducing themselves, there were seven of them in total. Jessica was sure she wouldn't remember any of their names, but that didn't matter. She planned on having a good night out away from the worries and stresses of work.

Alice sat down and patted the seat next to her. "Jessica, come sit by me." She said.

Jessica walked over and sat down next to Alice. Handing her the bottle of wine, Jessica smiled. "I wasn't sure if you would like this, but I figured I would bring it along anyways. You just never know these days what people like or don't like."

Alice smiled back. "That is so thoughtful." She said. "I don't drink personally, but there are those in our group who do. I'll make sure it gets passed around." She handed the bottle to Jim, another one of the party goers. He popped the cork and poured a glass of wine for himself before passing the bottle on.

"Right on Jessica!" Jim said. "Nice taste in wine, thank you!"

Jessica nodded. "You're welcome Jim. I hope you enjoy it."

Fake grabbing the bottle back, Jim laughed. "Maybe I'll keep this for myself." He gave the bottle back. "I'm kidding of course. More than one glass of this, and I'm passed out. I can't hold my liquor." He laughed. "You're pretty chill in my book." He said. "I like you."

Jessica blushed. "Thank you Jim, that's sweet of you to say."

They drank and partied into the night. Jim and Jessica had a long conversation about life, the after life, what it was like to live in one and eventually pass onto the next. Jessica was really enjoying Jim's company.

"See, it's all about community." Jim said. "There used to be eight of us, but one guy Todd decided to leave the group. We've been searching for an eighth ever since."

Jessica took in what he was saying. "And you think I might be your missing person? To fill up your community?" She asked. Jessica was interested in being part of a group of friends, or community or whatever they wanted to call it. The naming didn't matter as long as she was accepted. It was something she had been longing for ever since she moved there.

Jim pulled out some fireworks. "It's time." He said lighting one up and watching it soar into the night sky. It exploded in a bright flash of green and blue colors. A star pattern. He continued to fire off the fireworks each one was a star pattern but different colors from each other.

"Soon." Jim said. "Anytime now."

Jessica looked to Jim confused. "What? What's happening anytime now?"

Jim smiled. "You'll see."

"There they are." Another member of the group said.

Above them, an alien spacecraft descended slowly.

"They got our message." Jim said. "Finally, we can go home."

Jessica looked up at the craft in amazement. It was circular in shape. It came and hovered next to the boat extending a platform on which the other aliens and Jessica could enter the craft from. She didn't know what to make of it. Jessica didn't believe in alien life forms, not that they existed or anything of the sort. This was something strange.

"So uh." Jessica said. "You're an ... al... al..."

"Alien?" Jim finished her sentence. "Yeah, we're not from this planet. We crashed about seven of your years ago. There were eight of us. One of our people decided to go off and explore the country side, they never returned. We've been looking for an eighth to go back with us for over three years now." He explained. "We believe you to be the one."

Jessica couldn't believe her ears. They wanted her to go into space with them. Her life was a dead end as it was, what possibly could go wrong with that plan? She didn't like her job, it wasn't really going anywhere. She didn't have any friends except for these aliens that she literally just met. So she figured why the hell not?

"Okay, yeah I'll go with you. As long as you promise not to eat me or some weird thing. I've seen 'To Serve Man', I know what could happen." Jessica said.

Jim smiled. "No, nothing like that. Great flick though." He stood up and offered his hand. "Come on, let's go."

Jessica took Jim's hand and they stepped onto the platform. Walking into the ship, it flew up into the night sky leaving the small boat all alone on the water.

The End