

Notes on Model's Assistant by Alissa Nutting

The story "Model's Assistant" by Alissa Nutting illustrates the desolate truth of how the modern world praises beauty, wealth, and vanity. Nutting triumphs in portraying the contrast between "normal" people in society and those who are glorified because of fame, attractiveness and wealth. Nutting demonstrates the desire our culture has with living up to an unrealistic perfectness. She creates an improbable friendship between two people, the narrator and Garla, who symbolize each of these individuals in society.

Garla is a fundamental example of a foil character in the story. Garla's character contrasts that of the narrator's in various ways. The two characters acquire opposing lifestyles, personalities, and beauty. Garla is a beautiful, exotic model; she is mysterious in a very appealing kind of way. This mystery makes the narrator find Garla even more interesting. The narrator describes herself as average and often compares herself to not so appealing attributes. In the story she goes as far to compare herself to a "turd" in comparison to the beauty that is Garla. The narrator is directly exposing her low self image.

The two "friends" met at a party in Chelsea, the not so popular narrator gushes over Garla's attractiveness, fast paced life, desirable qualities, and admirable persona. Their relationship began after Garla invites the narrator to a fashion show: "Since that night my life has changed in a myriad of ways. I'm still no one, unless I am with Garla, and then I become with Garla, a new and exciting identity that makes nearly everything possible, except being a model myself. And except being someone when I am not with Garla" (Nutting 224). Nutting is demonstrating how the narrator sees herself in relation to Garla; She is living vicariously through Garla to feel satisfied as a human being. The narrator is praising this system that she is outside of. Merely, being with Garla makes the narrator sense as though she can do and be anything. Except for becoming a beautiful model, and that feeling only transpires when she is with Garla. Other than being in Garla's presence she sees herself as nothing at all, she is back to her mediocre existence that she believes to be true.

Nutting makes it clear that they are not technically real friends. The narrator is Garla's "assistant", their relationship is not genuine. Nevertheless the narrator does not seem to care. The narrator is using Garla to gain fulfillment within herself. She even attempt's to transform through Garla but fails. The narrator may feel invincible with Garla; but that never progresses outside of physically being with her.

"Model's Assistant" connects to the modern culture today and offers insight to the world at large. I feel as though beautiful models like Kendall Jenner and Victoria Secret model Adriana Lima are representations of an unrealistic perfectness that no one could ever live up to. When I was young, I did not understand how these women were so flawless. I thought my beauty could never come close to that of a beautiful model. I believe that all women at one point in their lives might feel unhappy with themselves or insecure in relation to famous models. The truth is no one is perfect, everyone has their flaws. I believe girls and women could learn from the narrator's actions and feelings toward Garla. At a young age I resembled Garla I believed in unrealistic perfectness and materialistic glam. I came to the conclusion that beauty can be portrayed in more ways than one; being who you are is enough.

Members of society in our day and age are guilty of unconsciously placing famous models, actors/actresses, and icons on extremely elevated pedestals that we believe we could never live

up to. Most individuals have insecurities at some point in their lives just like the narrator. We are human, which means we are not perfect, occasionally we might feel as if we are “nothing”. But the reality is Garla was far from perfect herself. I believe parents should emphasize to their children what should count in their lives. Especially young girls since they fall victim to the praise and moralities from the mass culture. Parents should be instilling values in their children that will make them feel adequate with who they are.