

### Model Vacation

by Freida Theant

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At Last!

That first day of vacation at the beach and Rachel wears her promiscuously tight bikini in this intense sunlight. The solar glare favors her medium-length blond hair as it glints golden-accent-streaked in caramel brown.

Her skin: urban-pasty-white: she will use more sunscreen than the others. Rachel brought three bottles of tanning oil in the canvas gym bag which she flung on the sand just before snapping open the rented beach umbrella and spreading out her just-bought-for-this-day over-sized beach towel. Within her gym bag she stores her cigarettes, lighter and keys and she also packs a cooler loaded with ice and cold sodas so that into that first hour, when the heat of the sun and the drying of the beach breeze creates a thirst that demands a drink, Rachel can tear off the tab and slug down her first gulps on-demand. That's followed by the overwhelming urge to accompany it with a cigarette.

She tears away the top strip, of the virgin pack, pulls off the wrapping to uncover a mosaic of white filters all arrayed in a tight geometric pattern like tile-work. She wastes no time in flaming the waiting tip to burn in the 'lift-off'. With a tug of her cheeks, her pull rewards her with smoke she expels through her pursed lips. The non-stop sea breeze grabs the plume of white and smears it out to full dilution in seconds. Its steady blowing runs Rachel's cigarette a faster burn than usual.

She drinks her soda, enjoying her leisurely smoke and notices young adults just down the shore. Way too soon her mercurial cigarette gets to its final drag where Rachel shoves the butt straight into a sand mound and shoots out that final puff which streaks away in the sea breeze.

What catches her attention is that the far-off crowd seems to be dancing but from this distance,

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that wasn't really clear.

"I wish I had binoculars," Rachel says "to see what's going on there. Maybe I'll get down that way and see for myself."

By midday, there were more bathers but not the guys Rachel was waiting for. She wanted to meet 'hunks' who were equally interested in women. Perhaps she had chosen a week too early in the season?

But at least the guys she would meet this week were mature; not the noisy, drunken spring breakers from the crowds of last month. She thought, "True, there are more guys amongst the spring breakers, but they're so immature and rowdy."

By midafternoon Rachel has had enough time sunning. She refreshes her over-heated body in a soothing shower in her hotel room, drapes herself with a towel, and walks out onto her fourth floor balcony. From this elevation she sees 2 miles up and down the beach. She checks where she had seen that group of young adults earlier and they appear to be there still.

Changing into street clothing, Rachel drives south to see if she can get closer to where the intriguing party was being held. The parking spot she chose accessed that portion of the beach very well so she now hears the music they dance to, infectious, and exciting.

Rachel felt she might be able to 'crash'.

Descending the stairs from the boardwalk delicately, she's greeted by a bronzed Apollo with golden hair. "Why did you get here so late," this Adonis asks taking her hand to shepherd her into the midst of the revelers.

"I didn't know about this until this noon," she lies. "I just dropped by to see what's goin' on."

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The Greek God continues, "Get you something to drink?"

A quick survey of the party-goers reveals that bottled water and fruit flavored sugar-free sparkling waters are the order of the day; beer, wine and soda aren't.

"Sparkling water would do it for me, thanks," she chuckles.

"Any particular flavor?" he said, disappearing into the center of the dancers and swimsuit-clad models.

"You choose," she shouts over the music. At a second glance, she sees the honey-skinned hyper-trim women at various stages with their accompanying cigarettes, which like name tags; every woman had. Rachel understood that lighting up here was a sign of mutual accord, and her fears about anti-smoking amongst this crowd were groundless. To blend in, Rachel gets out her fresh pack, taps the tight packet against her hand and plucks out a cigarette by the filter with her fingernails. By the time she has the filter bedded between her glossy lips, the new partner is back, thrusting her drink towards her.

She grasps it with her left hand, and goes to retrieve her lighter, but her male companion intercedes, "No, let me." Pulling a Bic from his pocket, he cups his free hand around the protruding edge of her cigarette before radiating the flame's burn onto the face.

Rachel draws resolutely for the rewarding cloud of flavor that had strains its way thru the filter. This draw she jets out, but the next thoughtful, prolonged pull gets more loving attention. As smoke from the young cigarette is milder, she takes deeper drags and cradles them within her breast more profoundly. Being the prime puff, she releases the amorphous haze in a deliberate, ambling exhale that rolls out her oval pout to billow gently into the nocturnal on-shore breeze.

"Sexy," the male companion critiques her.

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"The women here all smoke?" she asked.

"They starve themselves every day to keep even the shadow of a calorie from depositing on those million-dollar figures," the Adonis said. "So cigarettes help with that kinda stress."

"Those are models?" her voice rises slightly.

Yeah, the 'Caribbean Tan Lotion' girls. This is their annual photo shoot/beach party," he explains. "I thought you were one of 'em."

"No, I'm just vacationing. I'm not a model....at least not since high school," she apologized. "I just came by to see what kinda party was goin' down!"

"Well, glad ya did," he smiles warmly, "lemme take ya to meet Douglas Enders. Over there, on the boardwalk overlooking the party. He's the inventor of Caribbean Tan Lotion; the one who started this company."

"Oh no!" she was startled.

"Oh Yeah! Come on," her companion proposed, "He so enjoys meeting lovely women like you. And why not? It's his party?"

"But I just....well, you know....crashed," she protests. She drops her cigarette into the sand and crushes it out with her sandal.

His manner was so persuasive; Rachel acquiesces to meet the emperor of sunscreen. Douglas

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himself greets them, "Kevin, what a delightful woman you've brought us here tonight. I don't recognize her. What's your name, Ms.?"

"Rachel.... Gunnar. Nice to meet ya," she shook hands nervously.

Douglas laughs and sips his sparkling water. "So Rachel, where are you modeling?"

"I haven't done that since high school; five years ago," Rachel affirms. "Since college, I've been in retail; business administration."

"You ever thought about getting back into modeling?" the sun tan oil king asks.

"I prefer a job that pays steady. Making it by modeling depends too much on getting jobs consistently and I couldn't afford to go long periods of time without pay," she countered.

"You're right. That's why all my girls work under three-year contracts." Douglas sets his drink down, and offers her a cigarette. Charmed, she selects one from the pack extended towards her, seats it within her moistened lips, as the corporate magnate passes the lighter's flame toward her. She pulls the light-up puff of smoke quickly in and out of her mouth, giving her time to withdraw the filter from her mouth. She anchors the cigarette between her first two fingers with her hand at a right angle to her arm, and the lit end of the cigarette pointing toward the night sky. She watches as his eyes follow the path of her hand descending.

"Our girls can count on a steady income for as long as they wish to remain as Caribbean Tan Lotion girls. And there are other benefits to working here, too, like sports cars, beachfront apartments, travel and vacations worldwide, especially on the beaches of the Ritz, Malibu, or Miami to name just a few," he continued. "And the connections my girls make sets them up for life in the world of high fashion."

Rachel lifts her cigarette to her mouth and draws long and ponderously, illuminating their faces

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from the ember's fierce glare. Channeling the captive smoke up through her nostrils, she sends the exhale outwards in a pair of feathery plumes that widen the further they flow. "Are you inviting me to become a model?" she asked, surprised. Once more, Douglas follows her every action like a hawk surveying its prey.

"You'd hafta go through the usual auditioning and paperwork, but you'll come out a winner," he responds. "I'm pulling for you and that's gotta count for something around here," he adds with a knowing laugh.

"So, how do I get this audition started?" she probes.

"Kevin, can you have her in the studio tomorrow by noon?" he asked. Kevin responds with a vigorous nod. "Is that soon enough?" Doug returns.

This unexpected drama shot a surge of emotion through her breast that demanded a calming, full length draw on her cigarette. She pulls the smoke into a compact cloud, separates her lips and lets the white mass bulge outward for but a second, and then retrieves it as an inhaled snap. Again she notices Douglas' eyes; they follow every gesture. She realizes he's been scrutinizing her since he lit her cigarette. There was no mistaking it; Doug Enders vision rivets on such action.

"I'm so excited, I just wanna thank you, Mr. Enders," Rachel whooshes out the exhale; her lower lip deflecting the stream up and overhead in a spray. "I wanna be a good addition to your team."

"You're gonna fit in here just fine," he reassures her while his eyes sweep the full length of her figure. "I look forward to a mutually rewarding relationship between you and Caribbean Tan Lotion, one I am pleased to promote, personally."

From the darkness of the beach, giggling, chattering Caribbean Tan Lotion beauties surround Douglas playfully, hauling him back into the darkened beach, leaving Rachel the opportunity to exit with Kevin.

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"Wow," she exclaims, "Who would've thought that I'd get a job offer modeling on my vacation! It doesn't make sense, though!"

"No? And why is that?" Kevin asks, amused.

"Look at me! I'm the perfect paleface. I look like the 'before' photo of a 'before-and-after' Caribbean Tan Lotion ad. How does he know what I'm gonna look like after time in the sun?"

"From years of working with models, he knows how things turn out," Kevin slides his arm around her slender waist and draws her near to his rippling, muscular, bronzed body.

"He seemed sure I'd be a good fit," she continues. "Of course, he did check me out pretty thoroughly after he offered me a cigarette," she mused.

"You noticed that, did you?" Kevin said, pulling her chest up against his, and looking down into her glistening eyes. "That's part of how come he's so certain you would work out."

"Cigarette?"

"Your smoking," Kevin corrected her. "He hires the girls with the sexiest smoking techniques. There are thousands of gorgeous women out there who could easily sit for Caribbean Tan Lotion commercial photo shoots, so there's gotta be some criterion as to who gets hired and who doesn't. For Doug Enders, he picks the women with the most attractive smoking style."

Rachel spent a moment pressed up against Kevin with his arms encircling her shapely body, and just when he thought she was feeling the mood, she burst out laughing instead.

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“What is it?” Kevin asks, amused.

“People get fired from their jobs if they don’t agree to quit smoking but here I am on vacation, lookin for ‘hunks’, and I get a dream job offer, all because I smoke!”