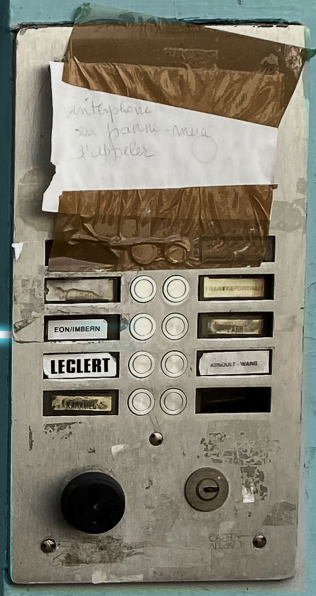


the model apartment

a 30 minute series by

Skinner Malinky

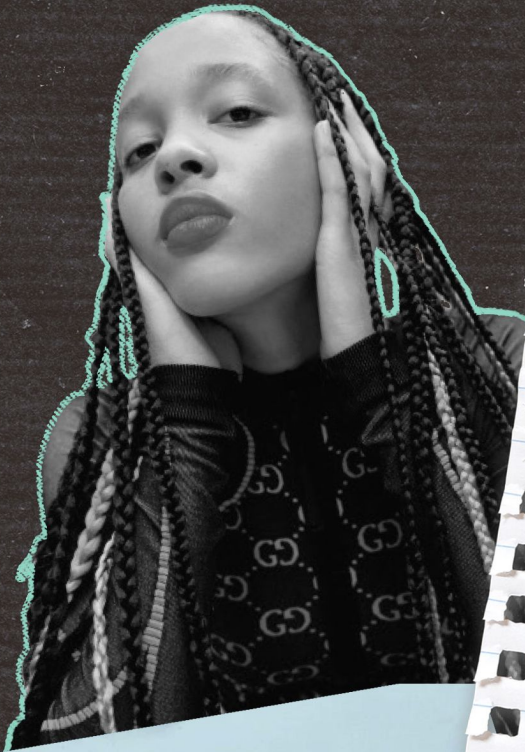




Models,
friends,
migrants

Living the dream.
Fighting the reality.
Forgetting to clean the apartment.

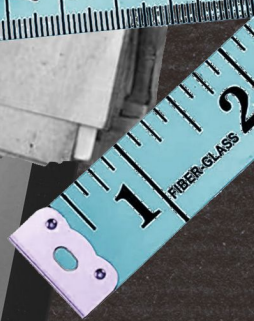
concept



The Model Apartment is a story set in the fashion world, revealing the grit beneath the glamour. The glittering stages of fashion shows left as the girls take a bus home to go sleep in cramped bunk beds. This is a tale of contrasts. A tale of friendships forged in foreign lands, big dreams and resisting the system. Four young models from different corners of the globe are thrust together in a squalid apartment. Together they learn to navigate a foreign world of beauty and glorified exploitation. In this industry, migrants come in all shapes and sizes. (But make that a sample size 0.)



VEN CHINA 20
7/17/08



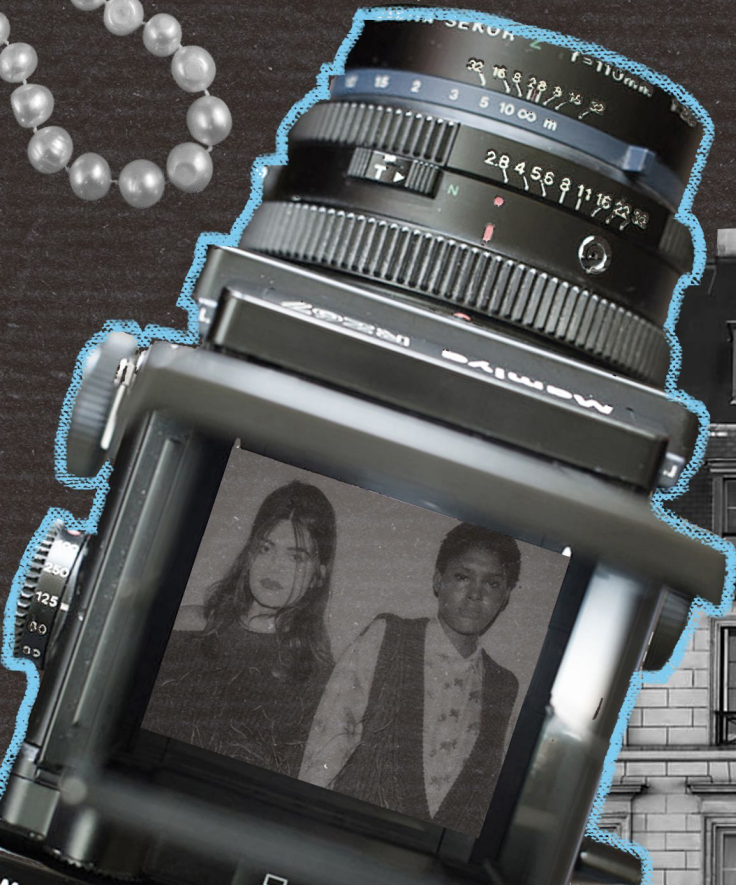
Agencies own or rent apartments in the fashion capitals: London, Paris, New York, Milan. They bring young girls over for an average of 3 months. This is called being "on stay."

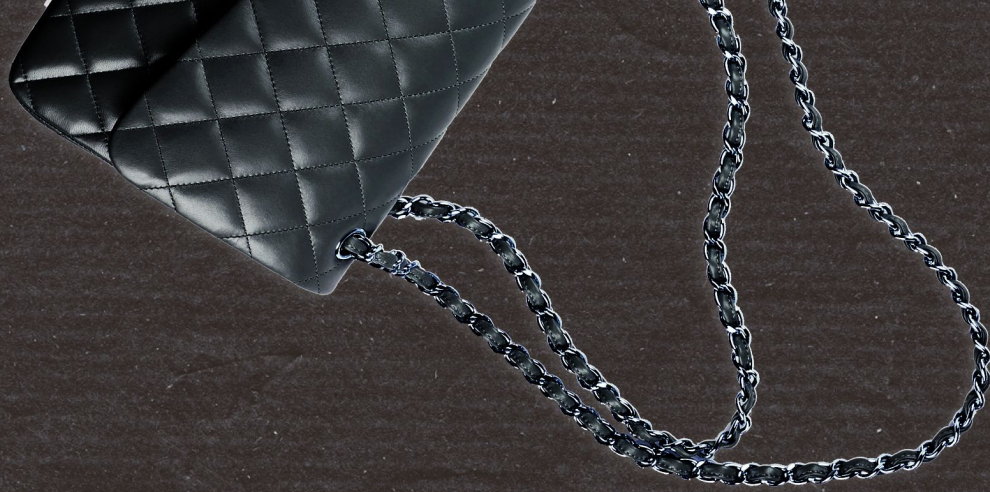
BOARDING PASS

The apartments are crammed with models sleeping on bunk beds. The cost is around €1800 p/m each. There can be 8 people sharing 40 square metres and always with just one grotty toilet. In Paris especially, the apartments are far from downtown and the models learn to love the RER. (It's a toxic love that never arrives on time). The flight and accommodation are covered by the agency - as a loan. The models usually have never travelled abroad before. They come from poor countries and backgrounds. They arrive with nothing. The agency offers "pocket money" to cover the bare essentials. 10% interest is charged.

so let's talk about

the setting





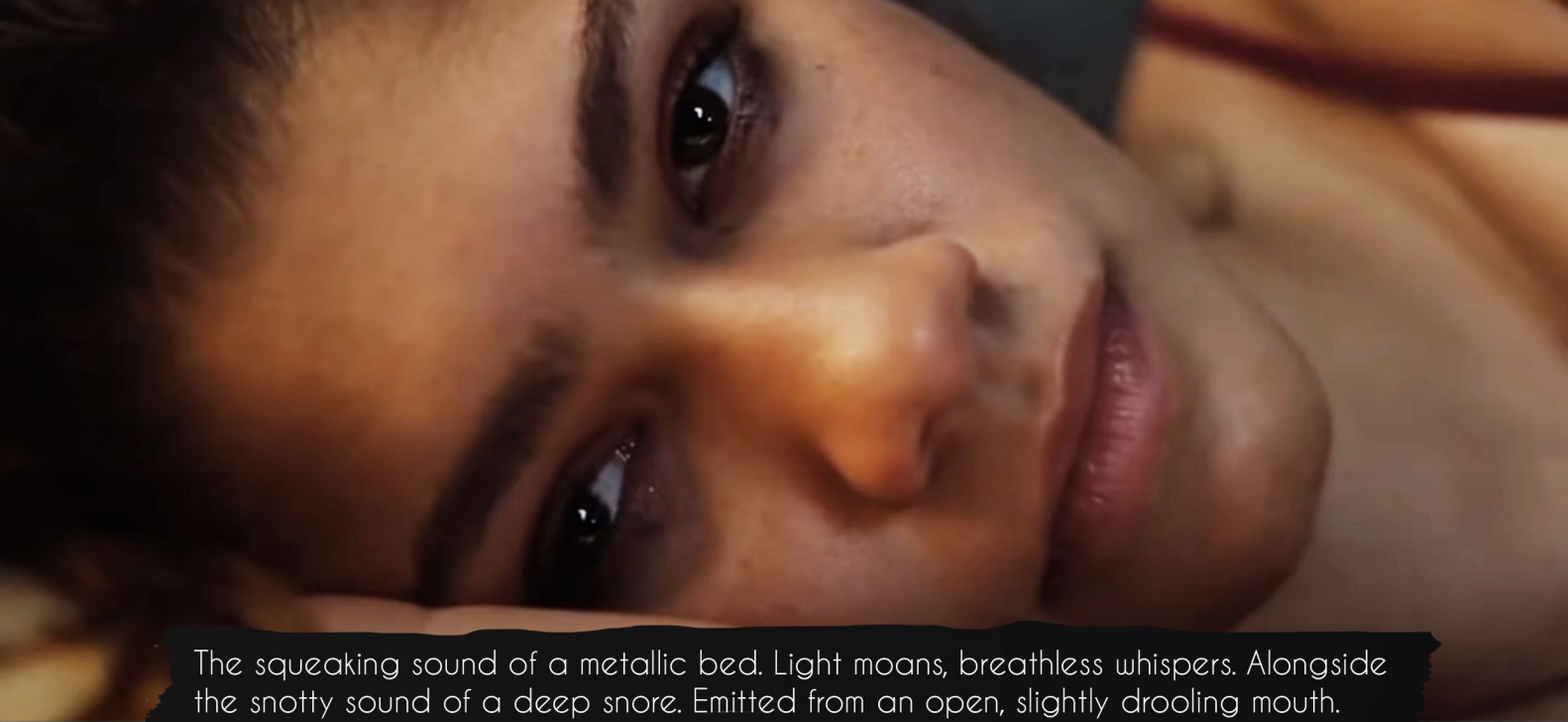
Then there is their commission...

In Paris, London, and New York, the agencies take 40%. Occasionally they slip up with another 4-5% extra. Whoopsie!

The girls barely break-even by the time they are sent home. The agencies, of course, make a profit.

Welcome.





The squeaking sound of a metallic bed. Light moans, breathless whispers. Alongside the snotty sound of a deep snore. Emitted from an open, slightly drooling mouth.



"Ah shit Bella! Gross!"

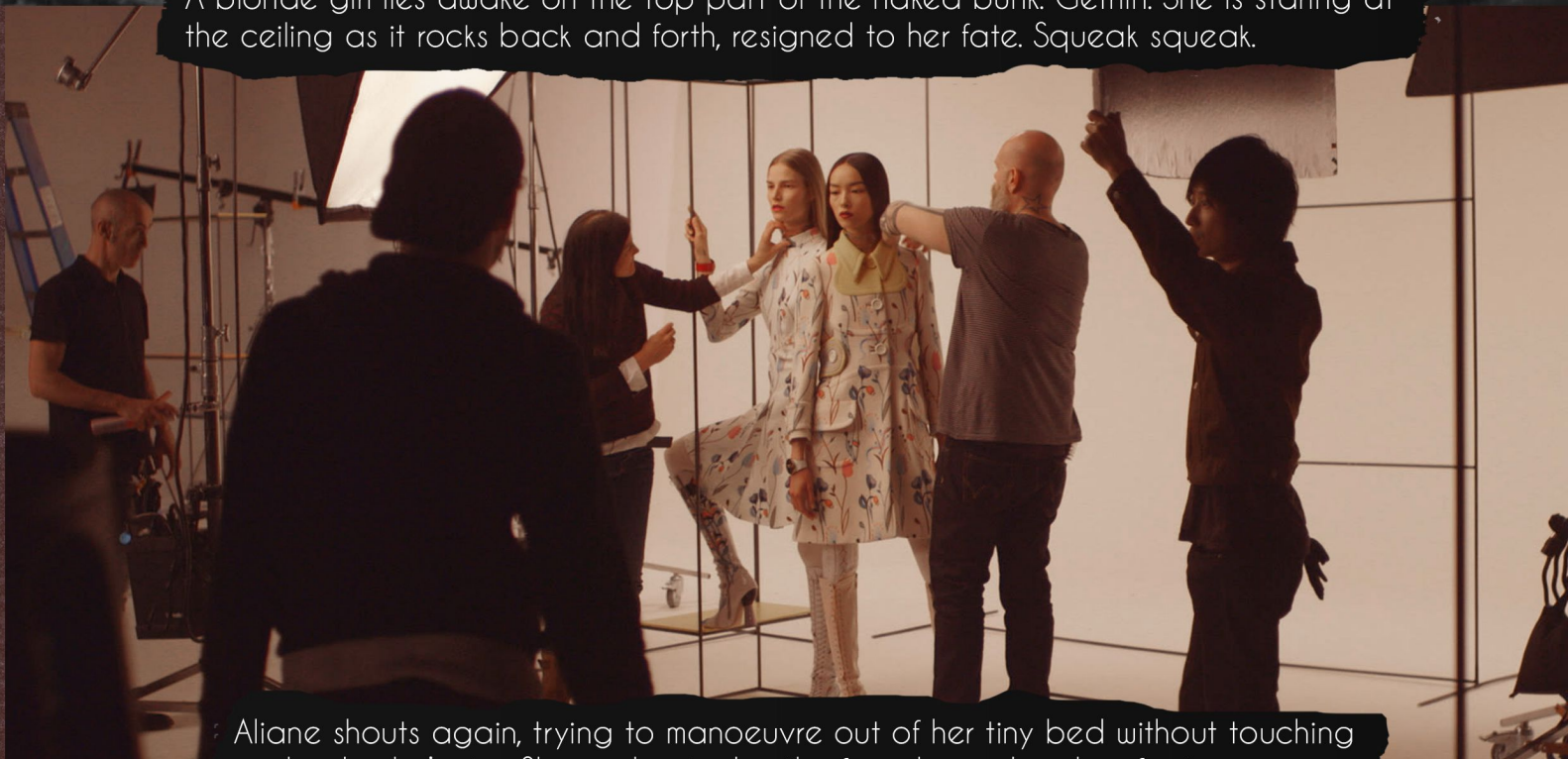
We realise Aliane is sharing a tiny, packed room with 3 other girls, all in bunk beds. And the bunk closest to hers- directly in her eyeline- is occupied by two sweaty naked bodies. Basically, there's a bum right in her face. Good morning.





“Jesus! Guys, come on!”

A blonde girl lies awake on the top part of the naked bunk. Getriin. She is staring at the ceiling as it rocks back and forth, resigned to her fate. Squeak squeak.



Aliane shouts again, trying to manoeuvre out of her tiny bed without touching anybody else's skin. She is whacked in the face by a dangling foot. Better than the alternative.





Bella, in the sex bunk, starts giggling. Her partner mutters an apology under the covers before the giggling escalates in a different way. Remnants of the night before: a slender Russian girl, Yulia, oblivious in a coma-like sleep. She cuddles a toasted sandwich.



Threadbare sheets tangled around limbs, clothes strewn across the shared single bedroom. There are congealed liquid lumps on the floor, browning apple cores, empty wine bottles interspersed with dirty underwear. Coca cola zero cans used as ashtrays. What is this dump?





Zombie-like forms emerge from the IKEA bunk beds. Stringy nests of hair stick to oily skin: the undead head as one for the bathroom. Flurried ablutions as they come to life.



"HURRY UP IT'S MY TURN"

A frenzy of activity - clothes thrown on (all black), hair combed, apple-cider vinegar downed, four girls simultaneously reach for their portfolio books.



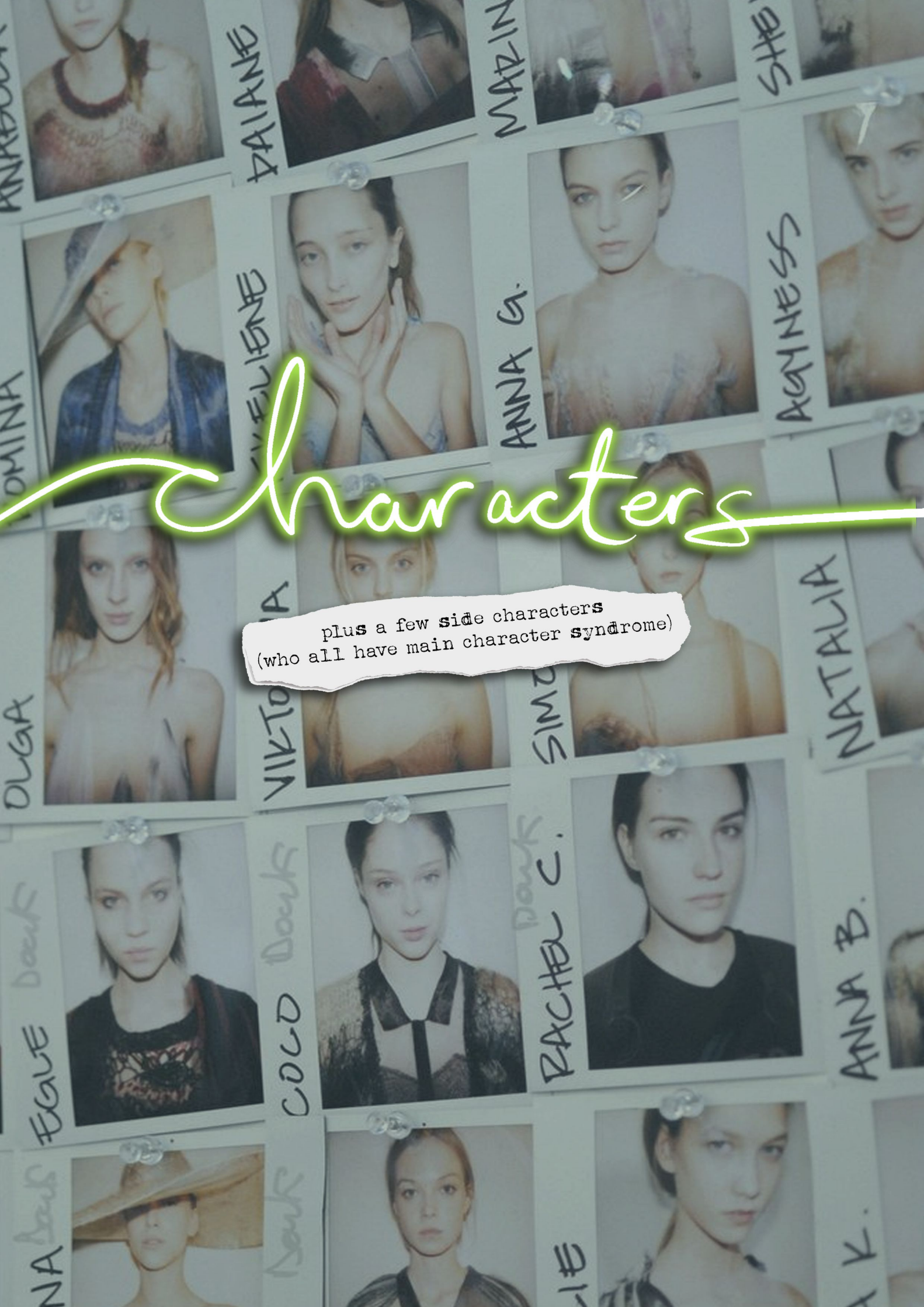
"TELL YOUR BOY TO BUGGER OFF!"



We see them clearly now:
their faces matching the
glossy cards they are holding.

They are gorgeous.
Glamorous. Elegant.

How is it possible that they are the
same gnarly creatures who were
wallowing in squalor just moments ago?



Characters

plus a few **side characters**
(who all have main character **syndrome**)

ALIANE: Our hero. Well, one of them. South African, travelling for the first time. In Paris to achieve her goal of success, adventure and a way out from a tough childhood. Aliane is mixed race and was scouted for modelling in her hometown of Polokwane. In Sesotho, the name means "Sanctuary". How ironic. Now she is in Paris to fulfill her wildest dreams. **Her main goal: earn enough money to stay and to support her family back home.** Her 9 year old brother, who she adores, is paraplegic. It's a long sad story better saved for another time. Not to be cliché but public healthcare in South Africa is rubbish.



She longs to help him with better options. This, combined with personal ambition form the background and fuel the woman she becomes. **Aliane's main problem: the industry is more brutal than she imagined** and it's not as simple as that. Her other issue is her own self-sabotage. Not an ideal combination. She falls into a cycle of bad habits - parties, drugs, everything that's suddenly available to her sends her further away from herself and her goals. As well as a guy who may not be bad but who is definitely bad for her. She hits a point where she knows she has to crawl her way out or be sent back home, having failed her family and herself. Visas are easily revoked, and as the agency politely reminds her -models are easily replaced. She focuses on cleaning up her act in order to achieve her goals. In doing this she goes too far (we are learning this is kind of her thing) and she causes a deep betrayal. Ok fine...let's be honest. More than one. She can be ruthless too. **Aliane is learning that success comes at a cost.** As her mother says: if something seems too good to be true, it usually is. Thanks mum. Way to kill the vibe.





YULIA



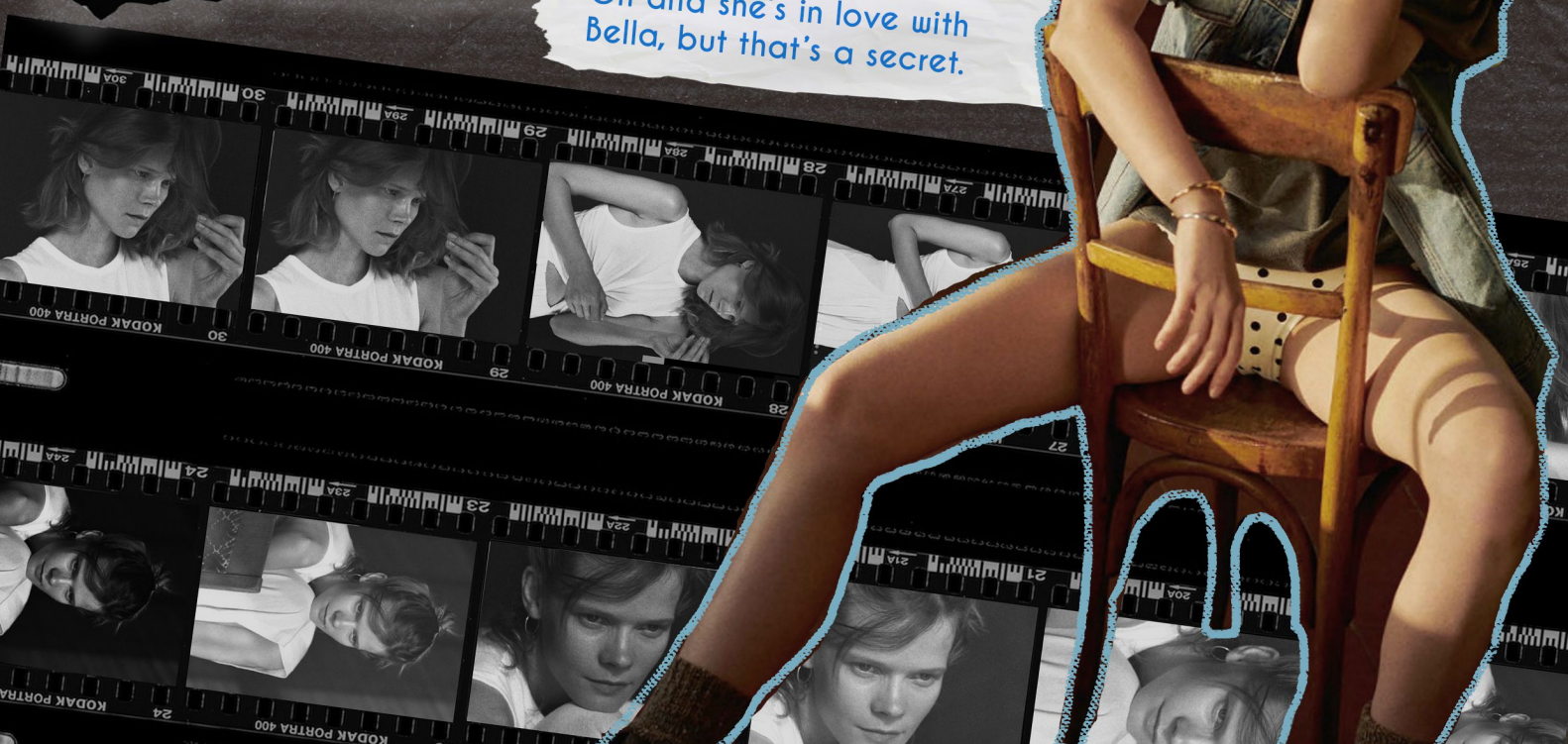
YULIA: Russian. "From a poor village blah blah blah." She, too, is a woman on a mission. With a penchant for maths and a disdain towards the fashion industry, she is searching for a way out while everyone else is trying to find a way in.

Her dreams lie elsewhere.

She has modelled since forever, she is now 27. Because ageing in the model industry is basically the same as ageing in dog years that makes her...an old dead dog. She dreams of being an engineer and is studying at night school. Throughout the season she struggles with being less in demand due to her age. She has little work, spending the day in her pyjamas and quickly changing before everyone gets back.

Her agency suggests placing her on the "classics" board, with other women "more mature-looking". Even though she has contempt for the industry she has always modelled, it's a huge part of her identity. She struggles to know who she is without it. Her studies become crucial. But will she be able to finally escape the vacuum of the modelling world? Will she manage to break into the male-dominated industry of engineering?

Oh and she's in love with Bella, but that's a secret.



BELLA: Brazilian. Loud. Loves a party. A little wild as she has already demonstrated. She is loyal, messy, extreme. She becomes Aliane's closest friend and confidante.

Bella's main issue is dealing with the disjunct between her real and her instagram life (she has 90,000 followers. Partly because she's good at social media and partly because she's good at posing in her underwear.) But she doesn't really book shoots or earn enough money to live. Most of what the public sees is gifted. Her reliance on her instagram persona brings a lot of anxiety. She isn't delusional, she knows how fleeting her fame can be.

And she knows that without it she has nothing. Furthermore...she is in love with Robert, the husband of her booker. (That wasn't him in her bed though. Ssh). Her booker is the one person who can actually help her build a tangible career that actually lasts. And yet...she is risking this for a man who will never be hers. She knows if her booker finds out, all that they are working on will fall apart. Everything is hanging on by a thread until one day the thread snaps. Who is holding the scissors? Aliane. Told you there was betrayal in this story.



BELLA



GETRIIN: Estonian. High fashion. Hungry. (This tends to be connected.) Growing facial hair which takes her hours to remove before a show. She hasn't had a period in years.



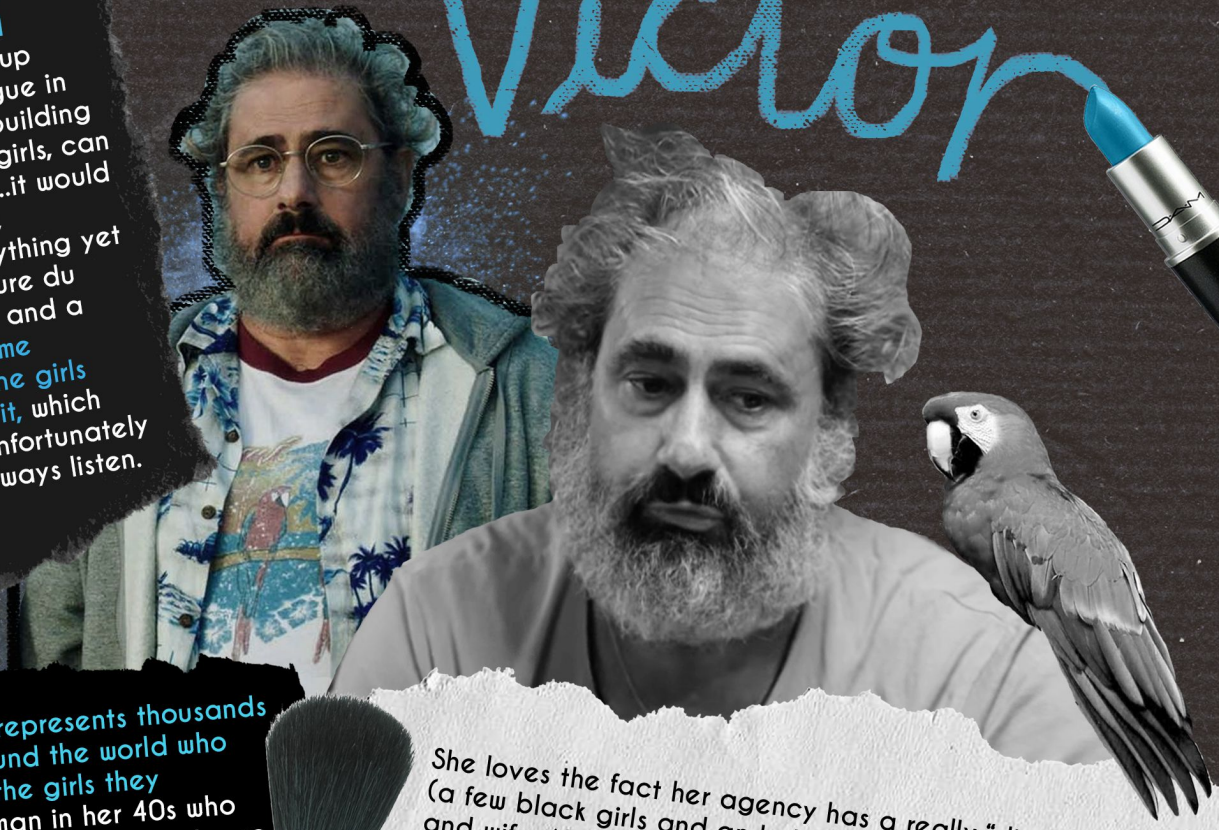
Her battle with anorexia heightens throughout the season and also gives us insight into the very real consequences of the distorted bodily standards for women in this world.

The weekly measurements in the agency, stripped down to underwear in the middle of an office, every inch of skin documented with a tape measure. The psychological effect these normalised rituals and toxic standards have. Getriin is booked to open for Yves Saint Laurent at London Fashion Week. It's a dream come true. But one she never gets to realise as she never makes it down the runway...



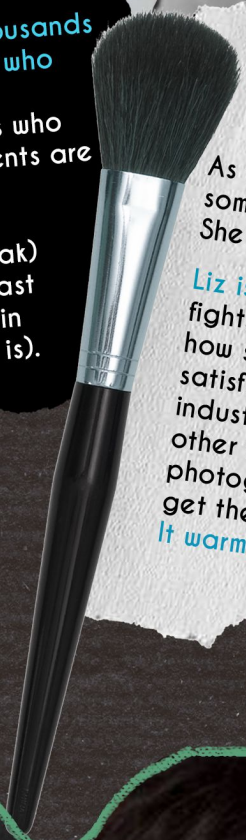
Victor: He owns the apartment that the agency rents. **Elderly, eccentric, a parrot constantly on his shoulder like a feathered accessory.** Retired make-up artist who worked for Vogue in the 80s. He lives in the building but not actually with the girls, can you imagine? "Mon dieu"...it would not be possible. Grumpy, complaining about everything yet always available au l'heure du gouter for a sweet treat and a gossip. **He dispenses some no-nonsense advice to the girls exactly when they need it,** which turns out to be often. Unfortunately for them they don't always listen. Pfft...

Victor

Liz: Agency Boss. **She represents thousands of model bookers around the world who nonchalantly exploit the girls they represent.** Liz is a woman in her 40s who honestly thinks the girls she represents are dumber than flies and absolutely replaceable. She set up a Female Empowerment Foundation (tax break) and is so proud of how much her last gala dinner raised for schoolgirls in Ibadan! (Don't ask her where that is).

She loves the fact her agency has a really "diverse board" (a few black girls and an Indian) and is a devoted mother and wife. Ahem. As the head booker of the agency, what happens with Getriin is some very bad PR. Liz tries desperately to do damage control. She is under pressure and very close to finished. Capital F... **Liz is ready for blood.** She will not accept being replaced. She fights to keep her spot at the top (in ways that also demonstrate how she got there). We hope she fails. But will she? Will we get this satisfaction? Liz is one gear in the vicious machine of the model industry: we love to hate her, but we also have moments to hate other mechanisms of the machine. There are cruel stylists, pervy photographers, arrogant casting directors, vile designers...you get the drift. **Ah, what a lovely bunch all gathered together. It warms the heart, like the 9th circle of hell.**



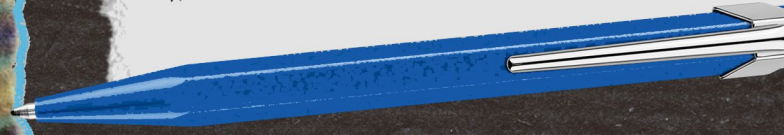
Liz





DANIEL

Daniel: He lives with his grandmother in the apartment below the girls. Not exactly the suave bachelor pad he would have liked but still! He cannot believe his luck. Constantly trying to appear casual when he encounters any of them. Hanging out on the stairs, oh wait it's time to take the garbage out again! Fix the front door. Check the mail. He's a law student, the first in his family to go to University. Second generation Cameroonian descendant with big ambitions and a calm, firm sense of self. Grounded in a totally different world from his upstairs neighbours. He is bowled over by Aliane. His crush makes him bashful but slowly they get to know each other... at first through "accidental" encounters on the stairs. But then more intimately...



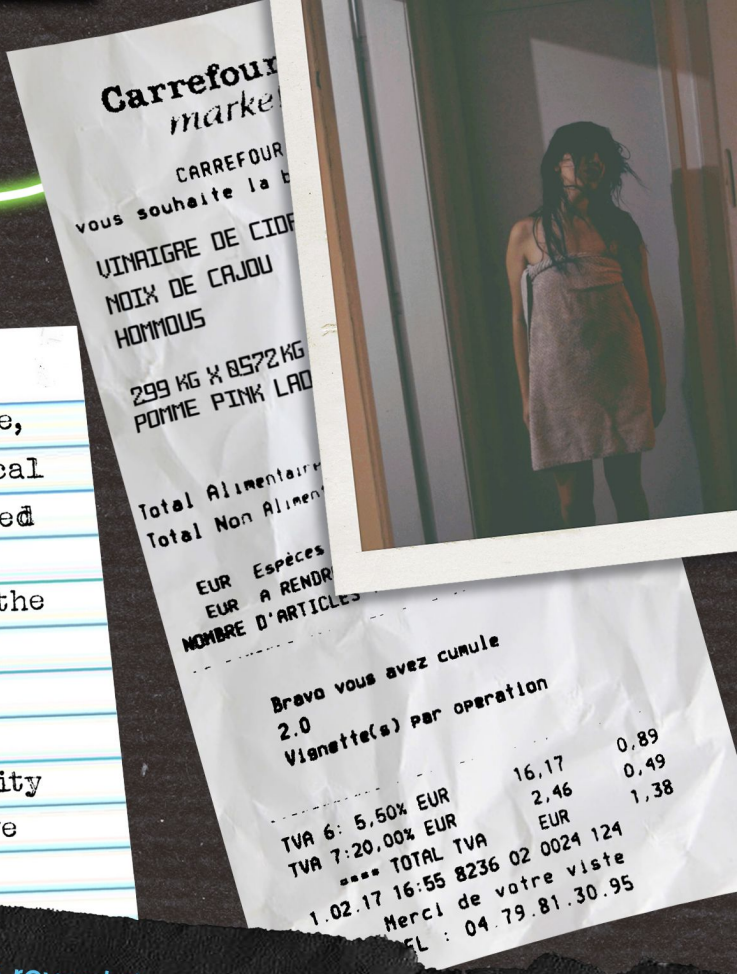
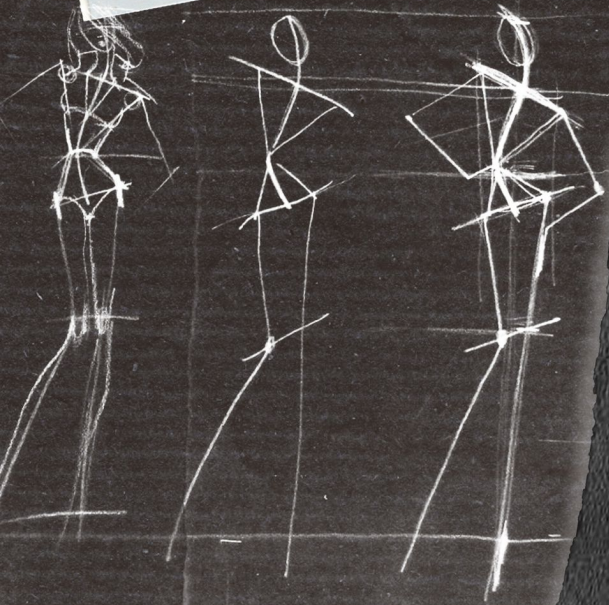
Matthieu: Aliane's first love, or so she thinks. He is a promoter. What is a Promoter? An important mechanism of a model world. They are men, usually ex-models themselves, who work for the clubs. Their job is to lure models to the clubs. Through promoters restaurants/clubs are easy to access. Models don't pay for a thing. Their presence boosts the social status of the men who pay thousands for bottle service. Promoters are usually Black, Asian, or Arab: they have "Colour Capital" which apparently makes them cool. It's an attempt to disguise the clubs as inclusive and edgy. It is obviously racist. Promoters can be sleazy or they can just be doing their best to get by, like everyone else. Who is Matthieu? A bit of both.

Matthieu



intentions

This story intends to show the exhausting and unglamorous reality of modelling; the pressure, rejections, the physical labour and psychological toll it all takes. The 16 hour days being treated like cattle while the agents have their nails done and tell the girls not to complain about the conditions on set. Yes ok you have a little hypothermia and possibly won't regain full feeling in your fingers, but did you know the photographer shoots for Vogue? Great opportunity babe. It's amazing he picked you, who would have thought.

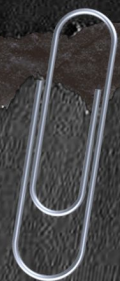


The point is to reveal the struggles of the anonymous young migrant models fighting against an oppressive industry. Dealing with cultural differences, language barriers, the pressure to work, the need to retain visas, the callous nature of the industry and of their own agencies who are meant to protect them. Each model fights the system in their own way. Nothing so dramatic as unionising -they'd never work again- but with various methods of maintaining dignity in a world that tries to strip them bare.

The tone is light even though this is drama. Everything worth saying can be said with humour. In the darkest situations the funniest moments can be found. As this world is often so surreal, there are plenty of moments to laugh.

Some references for tone and style: HBO's "Girls" (a classic), the painfully funny Australian series "The Let Down", the cool, straight-talking and female-driven American series "Insecure". The tragic, destructive comedy of "Shameless." The Model Apartment is a kind of anti-Emily in Paris.

It is the grit behind the glamour.



Visually, the grungy lives of the models contrasts against the sleekness associated with them. Their dingy apartment is the polar opposite of the gleaming facade of their jobs. The agency and the impressive theatrical catwalks are starkly different from the filthy shared bathrooms where the girls get ready. They can be wearing couture during the day and be unable to afford dinner that night. **There is a huge visual strength in these contrasts.**



As a model in Europe for the first time at a young age -from a far away country myself- I've spent years accumulating stories and noting the injustices of this industry. Models are told by agencies to be grateful for their opportunities, to be beautiful, to shut up and not complain, that this is just the way things are done. Well, I think maybe it's time things are done differently. **Time to bring out all the debris that has been swept under the rug.** Haul it out for the rest of the world to see.



SO, LET'S
HAVE A
LOOK...





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