

1. MR. NICE ISN'T CONVINCED

May raced down the hall and swung her ninja backpack onto the coat rack. In one elegant glide, she opened the classroom door, hopped between the tables and plopped down on the chair next to her BFF, Rosie.

BRRRIING. Just in time. Rosie sighed and shook her head. May laughed and gave her a wink. Typical.

Mr. Nice shoved his chair back and walked up to the whiteboard. "It's time for the presentations," he said solemnly. "Who wants to start with their 'what-do-I-want-to-be-when-I-grow-up' poster?"

A tense silence filled the air. All the students looked down to avoid making eye contact with the teacher. The floor creaked as Mr. Nice paced through the classroom, searching for his first victim. He pointed to Rosie.

Rosie began enthusiastically. "I want to have my own store when I grow up. And I'd really like to sell kickboxing stuff!"

"And why that profession, Rosie? That's not something for girls, is it, kickboxing?"

What kind of a question is that, May thought, furrowing her eyebrows.

"I'm taking kickboxing lessons, Mr. Nice," Rosie replied, "and the kickboxing stuff looks so boring to me. It's always black, white and red, and that's it, while there are so many other colors to choose from. Look, I've pasted a few examples on my poster." She held her poster up and pointed to the leopard print headband.

Mr. Nice looked at it skeptically and rubbed his chin. "Who would buy something like this?"

May and a few other children immediately raised their hands.

Mr. Nice shook his head and muttered, "I guess I just don't understand. Okay, Rosie, you've obviously done your homework. And, if this class is to be believed, it looks like it's going to be a big success. So you get a 'good,'" he said. Then he turned to the slender boy at the table next to May. "Mo, what are you going to do when you grow up?"

Mo was Mr. Nice's favorite. He was very good at English. He wrote the most beautiful stories and always got

to read his poems out loud to the class. "I'm going to be a teacher!" Mo announced, pointing to his poster. "I wrote a poem about it."

Mr. Nice clapped his hands and smiled broadly. "Now that's more like it!" He walked over to Mo and patted him on the back. "That's what I call a *real* profession. Of course you get an 'excellent!'"

Mr. Nice made his way around the rest of the class, and finally it was May's turn. She squirmed a little in her chair. She was nervous. Mom's mantra popped into her head: *whatever you do, do it with conviction, that's how you learn the most*. May stood up and said with a big smile, "I'm going to be president when I grow up!"

"Well, that's a big dream, May. Extraordinary..." Mr. Nice shook his head. "Do you remember what the assignment was?"

"Yes," said May. "Make a poster of what you want to be when you grow up."

Mr. Nice sighed. "Only men can be president. There's never been a female president as far as I know. So that's not a profession you can choose." The first red spots appeared on his neck, a sign that someone was about to get



a good scolding. They called it a “Nice volcano.”

May was quick to respond. “I think it should be possible nowadays. Women can get Nobel Prizes, so why can’t they get this job?”

Now the spots on Mr. Nice’s neck had turned dark red. “*If you know history, you know the future.* Maybe you’d be better off as a hairdresser or a nurse,” he said firmly. “You should have done more work to prepare for this. You get an ‘unsatisfactory.’”

He turned around and marched to his table. May watched him angrily and raised her hand. Rosie poked her in the side, but it was too late.

Mr. Nice looked at her with astonishment. “So what’s it going to be, hairdresser or nurse?”

“I’m going to prove that it *is* possible. If the President himself says it is, will you believe me and give me a ‘good?’”

Mr. Nice seemed a bit flustered, but he quickly pulled himself together. “Fine. You ask the President. But the *actual* President. If you get the answer you want, I’ll even give you an ‘excellent,’” he said. Then he burst out laughing. The whole class, except for Rosie, laughed along sheepishly.

At 3:30 the school bell rang. All the children shoved their chairs back and ran out of the classroom. May had to do her best to catch up with Rosie.

"What's the rush? Aren't you coming with me to see the President?"

"I don't know," Rosie said.

"I'm going to write him a letter. Then he'll send me an answer and tell me that girls can be president, too."

"At least you can try," said Rosie cautiously. "I hope your plan works. It would be nice to pull your grade up to a 'satisfactory.'"

"Or even an 'excellent.' Are you coming with me? We can take Donut for a walk and deliver the letter while we're at it."

They ran to May's house where Donut was waiting for them, her tail wagging. May stroked her chocolate brown fur. The dark brown eyes gazed at her with adoration.

"We're going to do something really fun, Donut! We're going to deliver a letter to an important neighbor."

She pulled a piece of paper out of her sketchbook and took her colorful glitter pens from her pencil case. Then she began to write.

"Is that glitter biodegradable?" Rosie asked.

"Of course it is! Now all we need is an envelope and we're done," said May enthusiastically. She sealed the envelope and walked to the door. "Come on, we're going to the President's house!"

