



Wordsmiths Inc.

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Sophie tugged at the collar of her shirt. The heat in the office was almost as oppressive as the people in it, which was saying a lot. A woman was sobbing hysterically in the booth opposite hers.

"I just can't get him to understand. Everything I say, he twists into something else!"

"Ma'am," Ben was saying in an overly patient voice, "Maybe you should consider putting an end to all of this. Maybe you could, um, leave him, or I mean to say..." His voice trailed off at the look on his client's face.

"Are you suggesting that I leave him? I love him! He's my husband! So what if he twists up everything I say? Everyone has fights! It's only natural!"

"Of course it is. Of course. I was just being silly I suppose." Ben made eye contact with Sophie, who mouthed to him: *No opinions, only assistance.*

With a slight smirk, Ben shifted his gaze back to his client. "So, should I write out an apology, then?"

"Yes, yes, I suppose that'd be best. Just tell him I love him, and miss him, and want him to come home," the woman broke into sniffles again as Ben went about writing out an apology message from her Facebook account to her husband, which would join the similar messages she sent out every week after regular fights.

"I just wish I could teach these women the copy-paste technique," Ben grumbled once his client had left.

"That'd be bad for business, though," Sophie reminded him. "Bad" was an understatement. For a company that specialised in constructing texts for people to express the feelings they struggled to convey, ignorance of the copy and paste technique was integral to hold onto the elderly client base. Wordsmiths Inc. had been formed three years ago, the result of "a sudden stroke of genius that arrived one lazy summer afternoon," as their CEO put it. In reality, it was an ancient idea presented in a more modern way: they acted as letter writers of the millennial age. Having trouble composing the perfect breakup text? Struggling with many emotions over your new pet, but you just

can't put together a perfectly worded Instagram post? This was the go-to place for all such problems.

A call came in from reception downstairs. Sophie put it on speaker. Linda's voice waivered out of the device. "18-year-old female, needs help with a personal text."

Ben and Sophie groaned simultaneously, and before Sophie could do anything more, Ben shot out of his chair. "Time for my coffee break, see you in twenty."

"You can't go on a coffee break half an hour before your actual break."

"I can when I've just finished dealing with the Confused and Abused Housewife, and the next client is bound to be one of those how-do-I-tell-him-I-love-him teenagers. Have fun dealing with another one of those, by the way." With a cheery wave, Ben disappeared through the door, and within a few seconds, the client walked in.

Sophie reluctantly sat up straight in her chair. No matter how trivial a client's problems seemed, she at least had to pretend to give utmost importance to them.

The girl was scrawny, with mouse brown hair hanging limply along the sides of her face. Her eyes looked a bit swollen, and she had an air of resignation about her. All the signs of a broken-hearted teen. If she wanted to, Sophie could've given out a lot of advice to this kid, but the words she always worked by came back to her: No opinions, only assistance. And she really, really needed this job.

"So, how can I help you today?"

"I'm not entirely sure how to, um, say this, but, um—"

"Okay, let me guess. You had a disagreement with your boyfriend of a few months, who incidentally is the love of your life, and now you want him back so you're ready to take the blame for what you said and/or did, and you just don't know how to word it, am I right?"

She blinked at Sophie, clearly at a loss for words. Sophie raised an eyebrow, starting to get a bit impatient, and the girl finally nodded. "Yeah that's...that's pretty close."

Sophie pulled out her keyboard and began clicking away. "So how about this? I'm sorry, and I know that's

not even nearly enough for the things I did, and—"

"Thing," the girl interjected, "The thing I'm about to do."

"Okay," Sophie made the correction, "Then let's say something like—"

"I'm sorry, and I know that's not nearly enough for the thing I'm about to do," the girl stated in a surprisingly steady voice. "I, of all people, should've been there for you. I know how it is to be alone and helpless, so you'd think I'd stick around to make sure you never felt that, right?" She chuckled a little before continuing. "But you'll understand, because you're smart like that. You deserve a better world than you've been given. I love you. Try to remember that."

Now it was Sophie's turn to be shocked. The girl had put together a paragraph that wasn't completely sappy and hopeless, for a start.

"I know what I want to say," she told Sophie with a small smile, "I just didn't have the courage to type it out."

Sophie wasn't going to complain when this girl had just made her job easier. So she went ahead and typed out her paragraph. "Who should I be sending it to then?"

"Can you just, print out the document, or something? I want to post it, in the old fashioned way."

Mystified, Sophie did as asked. She got out an extra envelope, too. The girl wrote out an address, and with a start, Sophie noticed the boy shared the same last name as her client. "Is he...?"

"My brother. He's my brother." The girl stood up. "Thank you so much. You've been of great help."

"Wait. Wait..."

"Goodbye," the girl said before jogging out of the room.

Sophie's brain was hopelessly jammed. It took her a whole minute before she could decide who to call, and another thirty seconds to pick up her receiver. She'd need to start looking for a new job.

Despite being a hopeless fangirl, Marisha Aziz lives under delusions of awesomeness. Contact her at marisha.aziz@gmail.com to give her another excuse to ignore her teetering pile of life problems.