



MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

"I need a new metaphor," she scoffs for the umpteenth time.

It has been two years since I, a naive, aspiring soul, had applied for the post of the manager of this famous writer. Working for such a highly-sought after writer may be somebody's dream job but quite frankly for me it was the aftermath of a friend suggesting the salary of this job to me. On my first day at work, she had not appeared at all. On the second day, she appeared with sleepy eyes and tangled hair and said, "I have only one suggestion for you. Prepare your resignation letter *right now* and keep it with you all the time because for more than once when we will meet, you will find it acutely necessary."

Her editors and other people back then wished me good luck accompanied with sighs and sympathy. It is still beyond me why I didn't quit right then.

"Hey, are you even on planet earth?" her irritated voice brings me back to the coffee shop. This coffee shop's customers and staff were accustomed to the presence of the best-selling author Veroca Yeghi and her manager. Yeghi (as I was instructed to call her not Ma'am or Veroca) had managed to convince all the staff and others to respect her privacy when she enjoys her favourite cup of coffee. They can go crazy over her after she finishes it.

I take a sip of my own latte, "Yes, I'm on planet earth."

She rolls her eyes at me and goes on, "As I was saying before you rudely dozed off to another world, I have run out of my unique metaphors and desperately need some to finish off my novel," she cups her face in her hands, "Do you perhaps have any metaphors in your mind?"

This award winning writer with a doctorate in literature just asked me, an average man who majored in Economics, if I have any metaphor.

Why do I work for this nutcase again?

Seeing me quiet, she gives me the Yeghi look. The Yeghi look is a cross between a glare and a squint that is both scary and eccentric.

"I feel like a blind person," she runs a hand through her gold brown hair. I look at her chipped midnight blue nails, "You have..."

"Don't reprimand me for my trivial habits! Especially when I feel like I've lost my eyes. It's like now I'm seeing everything on TV, without any filters! I have been robbed off my crafty sense of touch, smell and sight. The last thing I need is your preamble on my detestable habits, kid. I need metaphors."

I stare at her. *Did she just use metaphors while asking for metaphors?*

"Okay." She takes a gracious whiff from her second cup of coffee and eyes me. I go on, "I clearly see your point. But, you will find your metaphors very soon. What I need is to inform you about your recent schedules, property related problems..."

"Ah, my coffee is finished. Time to shake hands and smile warmly at my fans," she gets up and on cue, a giddy, teenage girl rushes to her, spilling her admiration all over this weird woman. Drenched with praises and squeals from her avid readers, she strides off to her car, leaving me with the bill.

Someday, I will write my own book about working for such a multi-polar woman with the worst sense of responsibility.

A WEEK LATER

An unearthly vibration wakes me up but being used to being woken up by Yeghi at such odd hours, I don't even check the caller ID.

"Hello, Martin?"

I'm taken aback. It's not her voice, it's her editor's.

"Leah?"

"Yes, it's me. I'm sorry to wake you up this late. Then again I figured Yeghi must routinely call you in the middle of the night, so you must be accustomed to this."

"Yes, she has an uncanny ability of knowing when I'm dead asleep," I don't even yawn. Wow, that woman has turned my life into a predictable mess of strange habits.

Leah chuckles, "Okay, so I know you never read anything that doesn't have numbers on them. But, just go online and read this work..."

"Just send me the link."

She sends me a link after some time and I check it:

THE METAPHORIC MAN

Veroca Yeghi

"I need a new metaphor," I scoffed for the umpteenth time.

My mouth gapes open.

It has been two years since this clueless, aspiring soul, had applied for the post of manager for the famous writer, me.

On his first day at work, I had not appeared at all. I did that on purpose so that he might get the honest idea of what he was getting himself into. On the second day though, I took the liberty of coming to my office and told him, "I have only one suggestion for you. Prepare your resignation letter right now and keep it with you all the time because for more than once when we will meet, you will find it acutely necessary."

He was still racking his brains for logical reasons why he

didn't quit right back then. I broke him from his reverie, "Hey, are you even on planet earth?"

He made a cutting reply and I asked him if he had any metaphors in his mind.

The story was that I had very unfashionably run out of metaphors to use in my current novel and so was asking every known person for some help. But, the problem with this person in particular, my manager, was that it was his birthday that day.

SHE REMEMBERED?!

And I was finding a way to wish him a warm happy birthday without giving him a stroke because I, Veroca Yeghi, don't even remember my own birthday and my manager, Martin, knew that all too well.

I went on about my loss of metaphors all the while debating whether I should just abruptly say happy birthday. But I couldn't leave because my second cup of coffee wasn't finished. And a sad old lady can't abandon her cup of coffee.

As I babbled about metaphors, I sort of thought what metaphor would suit Martin the best. Saying that he is like my younger brother wouldn't be special. Calling him a friend would be very stereotypical since everyone is a friend, one way or other. But he does clean up after me, he has become familiar to my eccentricity and takes care of my monetary business. So, for authors like us, we must appoint metaphors to the people around us.

And for the second time that day, I ran out of metaphors.

Martin, as usual, brought up the topics that interests him and bores me and then suddenly, with drama, I, once lost at sea, came ashore.

Martin was the metaphor himself.

Metaphors are a bunch of mundane words we carefully select to attribute something in an aesthetic way. Martin is exactly like that. He is an average dunderhead whose brilliance lies in the work he does, in the way he handles things. He, himself, may be typical. But what he attributes to is his work, his simplicity, and sass in coping with me.

I got up, extremely happy that I found an answer and momentarily forgot that I must wish him a blithe birthday.

And so, Martin Cortez, my metaphoric manager, I wish you a very belated happy birthday.

Swallows circle around my head. This could not have been written by Veroca Yeghi. But there's more:

P.S. Martin, if you are reading this, I never actually remembered your birthday. My dear editor hinted few days later that your birthday had passed and I had forgotten it. So, I wrote this masterpiece. Feed my pet while I'm in France.

The corner of my mouth twitches. This was clearly written by my boss.