Short story- Huda

Layla and Antonio: Latte Lessons

Layla and Antonio walked out of the café chuckling after their shift, about the customer who had ordered ‘a latte with no coffee…’ Best friends from primary up until graduation and working together. Finally, today, they were holding their very first payslips.

Layla waved her slip in the air and yelled out to her bestie with a grin stretching across her face, “Antonio, I’m officially rich, let's go!!!” Antonio on the other hand, didn’t look rich. He looked broke. He looked up at Layla and complained. “Layla… half my money is gone. I worked the same hours as you. Where did it go?”

They sat on the curb outside the shop, the late-afternoon breeze carrying the strong smell of coffee. Layla took his payslip and compared it to hers. “Hmmm… mine has tax and super too, but yours has way more tax.” “Damn Toni…did you commit a crime?” she jokingly asked. He vigorously shook his head, staring at Layla in disbelief, “I-I-, me? Bro!? What?! Crime?! Layla! I didn't, I swear bro, you've known me for so long… do you really think I’d do such a thing?” “Me and crime?” he exclaimed out loud.

Layla swat her hands in front of his face and laughed saying “Chill bro, relax”, of course you wouldn't actually do something like that.” “Definitely don't have the slightest of guts to even think among those lines.” She muttered under her breath observing his pay slip. His ears perked up after hearing her, and grumbled, staring and observing the cars passing by “I heard that Layla” She giggled beside him and spoke, “Antonio. You basically donated money to the government.” He groaned dramatically loud burying his face into both of his hands. “I can’t believe this is my life right now.” Suppressing her laugh, Layla explained, “Tax pays for stuff everyone uses; hospitals, roads, schools, etc” Antonio huffed, “So I’m paying for roads before I even get my license. That’s actually sad.”

Layla kept reading, ignoring his continuous whining. “Okay, and superannuation is money that your boss saves for your future.” Antonio blinked. “Future? I don’t even know what I’m doing tomorrow.” Layla laughed and replied. “In the future, I’m going to be relaxing on a beach at 70, sipping pina coladas.” Antonio snatched his payslip from Layla’s hands and said, “At 70 I'm going to be stuck making cappuccinos" he sighed. They stared at each other dead serious, then bursted out laughing, leaning against each other, scent of the tiny coffee grounds still on them. Then Layla nudged him with her elbow after regaining herself. “Okay, drama king. “This is how it actually works, tax helps the country, super helps your future, and your responsibilities are actually pretty simple.” Antonio raised an eyebrow at her brief explanation, gawking, “Simple? For who?” Layla said, smacking his head playfully, “For you, dummy”,“If you actually… give your TFN, check your payslips, understand tax, and make sure your super is being paid.”

Antonio nodded accepting his fate. Puffing out his cheeks, he exhaled a breath,“Great. So I have homework now, even after graduating school, when I actually thought I got rid of homework for good.” Layla smirked. “Better than donating your whole pay again.” They walked home together, still laughing and now aware they had unlocked a new chapter in their life, and the best part was? They did it together. Once again.