

THE HOMELESS MAN

He arrived one sunny Monday morning, a fragile, forlorn figure, old and freckled. He limped across the road without checking right and left for vehicles, and I pressed my face against the window to follow his movement. At the corridor, he swung his old canvas bag off his shoulder and set it down very close to a streetlamp post. He then instinctively looked right and left, blew his nose and, casually, dragged the bag to the wall, less than a metre from our main door.

“What’s he doing?” I heard a voice ask me. It was my assistant manager, Sarah.

I turned sideways to face her and slowly shook my head. In that moment, up close, her beauty struck me, almost as if I was seeing her for the very first time. She was petite: pretty in every way, subtle and modest in attire. She had deep set blue eyes which could be unsettling in their stare. She had flowing jet-black hair, but today it was held in a ponytail. She was visually intoxicating, I can describe it no other way.

“Look, he’s settling down,” Sarah exclaimed, standing and placing her face to the window.

I turned my attention to the man again. He’d taken out a sweater from his canvas bag and was laying it carefully evenly spread out to the ground. Or relief.

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t the sweater was ated frame down gasp, probably in

Our company occupies both floors of Furaha House, initially called Happy House, for it housed API, which locals called “appy”. The customers are served on the ground floor, with offices tucked away in the luxurious first floor. From here, the panoramic view of the park adjacent to Furaha House is spellbinding. There’s no better way to relieve stress than to look out of the window onto the beauty of the park, the cuddling couples, the flowers in bloom, the jacaranda trees shedding a purple carpet of flowers, the horses strutting up and down the park.

“This man is homeless,” Sarah said, and I could detect sympathy in her voice.

In more than a year, we had not encountered a homeless person in our street. The mushrooming rehabilitation centres had absorbed a good number of them, and it was thus a surprise to see the man cozily settle on our doorstep.

A soft knock sounded in the background. Sarah turned, and beckoned the man in. The footsteps were distinctly Patrick’s.

“Sir,” Patrick said in panic. “Someone has just sat near our door.”

“I saw him,” I retorted, irritated by his lack of sympathy. He could clearly see I was staring through the window, in the direction of the homeless man. Patrick was known for complaining about everything.