

Layoff Rumors

by Robert Burton Robinson



GENRE: Humor. LENGTH: 636 words. SYNOPSIS: And you thought *your* job sucked.

“Have you heard?” said Lance.

“What?” said Mary.

“There’s a new owner.”

“So?” said Tony.

“Are you kidding me?” said Lance. “Don’t you know what that means?”

“No. I just started here.”

“It’s not good,” said Mary.

“Why?” said Tony. “What’s the big deal who the owner is? It’s still the same job, right?”

“Wrong. New owners usually like to clean house—start fresh,” said Lance.

Tony had a blank look on his face.

“You have no idea what I’m talking about, do you, Tony?”

“No, I guess not.” Tony did not appreciate Lance making him look like an idiot in front of Mary. He really liked her. In fact, if the circumstances had been different he would have asked her out. Too bad coworkers could not date.

“Yeah,” said Lance, “we’ve weathered a lot of storms around here, and most of us managed to hang on. But this is different. We’ve got a new owner.”

“But this is my first day,” said Tony. “That wouldn’t be fair.”

“Fair? You think he gives a flip about what’s fair?” said Lance. “You’re just a number to him. That’s all.”

Tony wasn’t convinced.

“I’m afraid he’s right,” said Mary.

Lance continued, “I’m telling you, Man, you’ll be out of here so fast—you won’t even know what hit you.”

“That’s depressing,” said Tony, as it began to sink in. “But why doesn’t he just get rid of the old timers—like *that* guy. He looks like he’s been here forever.”

“Bob? Yeah, Bob’s been here longer than most of us have been alive. I don’t know what his secret is, but somehow he’s managed to stick around. But look at him. This place has just sucked the life out of him.”

“Well, this just makes me sick,” said Tony. “I really thought I was getting somewhere when I landed this job. And now—to find out it’s a dead end...”

“Just accept it,” said Mary. “Don’t fight it. You’re just making yourself miserable.”

“I can’t help it,” said Tony.

“Breathe deeply,” said Mary. “Release the stress. That’s what I do. It’s not about your situation. It’s about how you deal with it.”

“Hey, I don’t go for that new age stuff,” said Lance, “but to each his own. Whatever gets you through the night. Whatever floats your boat. Whatever—”

“—stop!” said Tony. “Enough with the clichés!”

Suddenly everybody got quiet. Something was beginning to rumble. It was getting louder by the second.

“What’s that?” said Tony, looking around. “Is it like one of those storms you’ve lived through?”

“Nope. *That* is the sound of your pink slip,” said Lance.

“But I thought—“

“—you thought what?” said Lance. “That you could just walk away from this thing? That you wouldn’t be affected like the rest of us? What makes you so special anyway?”

“But it’s just a job.” His voice began to quiver. “What is that loud noise and why is it getting so dark?”

“This is it,” said Mary.

“We’re dead meat,” said Lance.

Tony shouted over the roaring sound. “But I thought the new owner would just let us all go. And then we could go out and get new jobs.”

“You fool!” yelled Lance.

“This can’t be,” said Tony. “How can he just *kill* us?”

Before Lance could answer, he and his coworkers were bombarded by a thunderous tidal wave—sending their frail bodies airborne for a moment before they crashed to the ground.

Their jobs were down the drain—and so were they.

Poor old Bob still clung to the hood ornament. The new owner would have to scrape him off by hand.

A new crop of employees were waiting in the wings. They would begin to come onboard soon—unaware of their certain fate.

And you thought *your* job sucked.

THE END

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