

MEET META, A 60-SOMETHING LADY who you wouldn't suspect to be actually sexagenarian because she is sprightly, quick-witted and very current.

Her dark-brown hair, highlighted with streaks of silver, has always been well-cut and styled. Her skin is taut but the faint laugh lines on her face that create soft pockets of skin for each time she bows slightly to read are what gives her age away if one is keenly observant. Right now, a book about de Beauvoir is tucked in her mini old rose-colored leather satchel.

Meta is fond of neutral tones and natural fabric, dresses up casually yet always aptly, has a distaste for polyester and synthetics but can talk for hours about Tyvek (she loves and is constantly amazed at the material but won't ever wish to be dressed in one), and thinks that 21st century wearable technology is cool but needs refinement.

Meta has maintained her lean form, one she has grown into since being a slightly chubby girl which contributed to somewhat of an introvert and a voracious reader of many many things—she even hated having to start reading something off an old newspaper wrapping because she knew the impending agitation of missing the parts and pieces but would yield to the temptation of a read anyhow.

In any case, she found no problem fitting into clothes she liked off-the-rack especially if they were priced to her budget, and could get away with mix-matching her wardrobe and her very understated accessories.

Meta's fair olive-skin tone allows her to blend in with cultures or groups of people who would assume she is of mixed Middle (or is it Southeast Asian?)-part-Caucasian, perhaps Indian, heritage. She may, in fact, be all of those, as she is much a traveler, at home in any country and among a diverse group of people; a chameleon of sorts. She got her aptitude for languages from

her grandfather, a retired soldier and old-school diplomat who traveled constantly with her in tow just before the war broke out.

It was to the war she lost her core family after which close family friends and some of her grandparents' colleagues, all war survivors living all around the archipelago, took care of her.

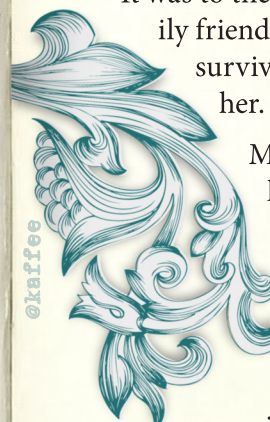
Meta is naturally shy but friendly. Despite her low-key personality, she is actually engaging and very curious. She can strike up a conversation with anyone of any age. She even wishes, to this day, to have the ability to communicate with animals in their language; a source of frustration it is for her.

She wears practical, unobtrusive reading glasses, a pair that goes well with whatever was in vogue even if she has had those for nearly 30 years, occasionally just replacing the lens to adjust to her optical requirements.

Her speaking voice would be comparable to an alto (although she herself does not sing), yet her laughter, long and song-like, would break out of her modulated vocal cage because her sense of humor is actually complex and a bit silly at times.

Meta is childless by choice but has had many loves and lovers, all of whom share her keen interest in history, music, stories and analyses, folklore and myths. All her loves and lovers parted amiably as none, included herself, were really ever committed to staying together forever but unwavering in their close and intimate friendships for life. They acknowledged and understood her freedom and sense of obligation and knew that should they cross paths again, that it would be as if they never separated.

She spends her free time brisk walking—*is she a walker!*—but biked, hiked and ran when she was younger and had more time to herself, sometimes with a lover, making use of such frolic for silent but meaningful bonding, sometimes just by herself.





Meta has the uncanny ability to metamorphose into individuals who, whatever and whenever she finds herself in, may be needed in critical times. Throughout her travels, she had become a highly experienced nurse, a paramedic, a rescue mountaineer, an engineer, police chief (or head soldier), a teacher. Yet Meta can be in command (or would occasionally take orders, as the case may be) and executes instructions with estimated perfection. She has the remarkable knack of being considered “one of the boys” in a men’s league (or “one of the girls” in a women’s grouping) as she never stands out in the crowd or attract untoward attention for peculiar accents, ways of dressing or unusual behavior. Meta loves the adrenaline rush of crises, and of doing what needs to be done correctly and with composure especially in the midst of chaos.

When she does accomplish her task, Meta slowly withdraws from the scene and never be heard of again. She leaves the scene with a sense of fulfillment achieved by all concerned. When she disappears, Meta is, in fact, off traveling to another place or engaged in another community.

She loves Morocco for its scents, Japan during brief stops in winter (she hates the cold), the Australian outbacks and kangaroos, south of Italy and its food, and Mt. Kilimanjaro when it was safe to travel (she is turned off by safaris). Meta would love to revisit those places more frequently again given the chance, to meet the friends she made there or reconnect with her lovers to share with them about the other places she has been to or tasks she has done.

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Strangers become friends and they knew without question that her stay would be brief but worthwhile.

Her lovers understood all the traveling Meta does; even her inquisitive younger South American love, an archeology student she met in an extended travel to Lima and who recently was among those whose paper was cited for deciphering an ancient indigenous Central American calculation that could accurately predict underwater seismic activity—he never sought Meta’s justification for her departure as he knew they would meet again. Or the European-educated ashram, a charming man who foretold of their intense meeting of hearts and minds.

In one of her trips, Meta encountered a Dutch lady named Renie (but who preferred to be called “Aunt” Renie despite probably a closeness to their age), on her way to a friend’s art exhibit. “Aunt” Renie struck her for her sincere friendliness, her delightful storytelling and who spoke with a nice but distinct accent; strangely, too, for this woman’s apparent awareness of Meta’s metamorphosing ability, the only one who, as far as Meta was concerned, had ever subtly suggested of this knowledge but to whom Meta never related any of her unique ability during their conversation.

Although taken aback by this lady’s initial observation, they remain friends to this day.



Chapter 3 / Unit 5 (Week 3)
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