

Cruel Fate

Lene Franke with her hands on her hips and a small smile playing on her face glanced proudly at the Altar adorning with red and white roses. The past week had been tiring for her as she took over the responsibilities for her sister-in-law's wedding.

She turned and began making her way through the crowd to the bride's chamber when a small girl, scarcely 5 years old ran into her almost setting her off balance. The first thing Lene noticed after lowering her head was the striking resemblance of the chocolate brown eyes to a certain man whom she had banished from her heart long ago. Memories flashed through her mind while looking into the deep brown innocent eyes. Memories of him and her holding hands amidst a lake on the boat on a bright and sunny day.

She quickly brushed off the thoughts and playfully ruffled the girl's hair giving her one of her signature smirks. "Watch where you're going sweetheart".

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Lene's name was called through the hall like an alarm which rang every few minutes. Either it was her sister-in-law who required help in fixing her hair, the orchestra men who asked her which music to play or her husband who could not fix his tie.

She was striding through the hall with a platter filled with bowls of dessert when a voice caught her ear's attention. She stood still for a moment and pondered over the thought if she really heard it or just hallucinated. Praying for him not to be here her eyes quickly scanned the church hall.

Standing and chatting away at the corner of the hall she found the man whom she had not seen for 7 years. The platter would have slipped from her hands had her husband, Gideon Franke not saved it in the last moment.

Gideon looked into his wife's usually gleeful face but noticed her scrunched up eyebrows.

"Lene what is wrong?"

She quickly plastered a smile on her face which did not reach her eyes "Nothing, I just remembered that I forgot to add salt to the soup". She handed him the tray and ran away leaving him no time to react.

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Hiding behind a pillar Lene surreptitiously drank in the sight of Botho von Rienaecker. He was still the same charming and handsome man she had known. He was talking joyfully with some other men while holding a glass of wine prestigiously.

All these years her eyes yearned to catch a glimpse of him, her ears ached to hear his voice and her skin was longing for his touch. All the memories, the feelings and emotions which she locked up in her heart threatened to overwhelm her again. The lump in her throat was growing bigger by each passing second and tears were clouding her vision.

She hated herself for being so vulnerable. She hated Botho for still being able to affect her even after all these years. Confusion swept through her mind. She thought she moved on. She thought she only loved Gideon.

But she was wrong! She never stopped loving Botho and her marriage to Gideon was nothing but a mere compromise. A sob escaped her mouth inadvertently.

Lene sprinted into the deserted backyard which was connected to a forest, oblivious to the pair of eyes which followed her.

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Sitting on the bench she allowed her tears to flow which never seemed to stop. She did not doubt her love for Gideon but her love to Botho was much stronger. It was like comparing a stone to a mountain. She wondered what Botho thought of her. Did he miss her all these years the same way she missed him? Did he still love her? Or was he happy with his married life? Did he even remember her?

The thought that he may have forgotten her wrenched her heart into pieces. A gust of wind blew on her face drying her tears and cooling her cheeks. She looked around and noticed several bushes and flowers in different colors which grew wildly on the big yard. Nature always gave her solace and calmed her down.

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Just as she wanted to get up and return to the church hall she felt someone moving behind her.

“Lene?” her heart stood still for a moment and her hands clutched onto her dress.

It was *his* voice. How could she not recognize his husky voice? She did not dare to move an inch as he came and sat beside her. “Lene?” he called again. She slowly turned her face and looked into his eyes. “How are you?” She made an attempt to smile and just nodded, afraid that her voice might choke if she tried to speak.

An awkward silence followed for a few moments until Botho reached out for her hand and slipped his fingers into hers. His one touch sent shivers down her spine and left her heart thudding into her chest. “Care to join for a walk with me?”

She swallowed and cleared her throat before answering “Yes”.

* * *

Both of them did not utter a word while strolling around the yard. It was not necessary for them to speak out their thoughts because one look into the other person's eyes was enough to convey a hundred unspoken words of love.

Throughout their walk Botho occasionally picked up some flowers, some blue ones, yellow ones and red ones. Lene did not bother to pay attention to which kind of flowers Botho chose but she constantly stared at his face as if to memorize his each and every feature. His eyes, his perfectly shaped straight nose and his many toned jawline. He had not changed much. The only difference she could notice was the slight stubble and the white highlights in his caramel brown hair.

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When both of them sat on the bench again Botho handed over Lene his self made bouquet of flowers. Lene gasped as she looked it.

The flower bouquet in her hands consisted of blue Forget- me- nots, yellow Immortelles and red Devil's bit scabious'. It was the exact same flower bouquet which both of them made on their trip to 'Hankels Ablage'.

Botho carefully reached out, plucked a strand of her hair and bound it around the flowers as if completing a ritual.

While she looked into Botho's eyes she could not see anything but two bottomless pools of love shining for her. He gingerly cupped her face and left a feather like kiss on her forehead “Goodbye Lene!”

He got up and disappeared into the church hall leaving Lene behind.

Her heart fluttered and jumped in joy. He *still* loved her. Loved her the same way she had loved him the past seven years. Their love for each other did not fade away with time, it grew stronger.

Tears welled up in her eyes.

Why did fate have to be *so* cruel with them?

Fiction based on “Irrungen, Wirungen”
by Sneha Gollapalli

