

PRESENT

As the music faded, he twirled her around and dipped her down. The band fell silent and was replaced by the chatter of everyone surrounding them on the dance floor. Ursula had been in the middle of the ballroom with Prince Edward for the whole night and she swore he was getting ruder and uglier with each dance (though she wasn't particularly pretty either, especially with her abnormally long giraffe neck).

But he's rich, so rich! Ursula thought to herself. *Once I inherit his money my mother can't possibly believe I'm a failure anymore.*

Piano notes wafted into the room, gradually growing louder into a waltz. The prince reached for Ursula's wings, but she turned away and pushed through the crowds, stumbling on the lace trimming of her long gown. As she stepped through the doorway a wing linked around hers.

"Don't lose your shoes, Miss Cinderella."

It was Claude Dubois, a stowaway also attending the ball, that she had met on the boat to England. They skipped through the corridor, laughing at everything and everyone. They passed chefs and servants and ladies in dresses each more extravagant than the last. Ursula and Claude turned corner after corner until suddenly Ursula's high heel snapped and she fell backwards onto the carpet.

"I think we're lost." Ursula said taking off her heels.

"Oh no, I know exactly where we are." Claude pulled her to her feet and led her to a large family portrait.

"Well, fancy that!" Ursula marvelled. "He looks even uglier in this painting than real life."

"My golly, high standards. Is that why you escaped the ball?" Claude snickered.

"Yes, it is rather a pity because he's so rich, but I just couldn't this time."

"This time?" Claude inquired.

Ursula froze. "Um... it's a long story."

Claude raised an eyebrow but didn't say anything. Instead, he swung the painting open to reveal a doorway to the dark city outside. Ursula went first and Claude followed after

closing the painting behind them. They stepped out into the crisp evening air and onto a cobblestone path. Ursula looked up and the night sky was twinkling with stars.

"Look at the stars Claude. They're so beautiful. Do you think the stars are happy?"

After a minute of silent pondering, Claude finally spoke softly. "Well, I don't know."

"Hmm. I hope so," Ursula whispered. "It's late, I guess I should go."

"Oh come on Ursula. The night is still young." Claude said. "There's a garden close to here and they serve the finest cheese and tea around."

"Well, that is very tempting." Ursula agreed.

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The steaming tea warmed Ursula like a cozy hug and she inhaled, breathing in the soft scent of sweet-peas and lavender. They had been talking in the garden for hours and Ursula was on her third tea and had tasted at least 50 types of cheese.

"Ask me a question." Ursula said suddenly.

"What?"

"Ask me a question." She repeated.

"What is your favourite cheese?" Claude asked

"Not like that!" Ursula laughed. "Like... who are you Claude?"

"What do you mean? You know who I am."

"No, who are you really?"

Claude sighed. "Okay fine, who am I? I am Joe Shmo, I'm just a poor physiologist in France."

Ursula's heart skipped a beat and her throat suddenly went dry, despite just having swallowed a sip of tea. Joe? Shmo? Joe Shmo. Not Claude Dubois. And he wasn't rich, he was quite the opposite.

"My turn." Claude - Joe said, bringing her back into focus. "Have you ever been in love?"

A moment before, her mind had been racing but it suddenly went quiet.

What am I doing with my life? Ursula thought.

She had gone through 9 husbands, each of whom she had married and soon after murdered for their money. But never in her life had she been in love, until now? Was this love? She was falling in love with - but with a poor person.

"I-I need to go." Ursula blurted before fleeing from the garden.

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3 DAYS AGO

Ursula set down the shovel and took a step back, admiring her work. She wondered if he had stopped breathing yet. Either way, he would hopefully be great fertilizer for her garden, her last husbands certainly had. Though, they were already decomposing before she hid their bodies for good, but James Windermere had been buried alive. Suddenly, Ursula heard footsteps approaching.

"URSULA!?" It was the voice of her best friend, Petunia Petunia.

"What are you doing here?"

"I-I just had a vision, Ursula."

Ursula rolled her eyes. Petunia was a psychic and she had been coming to Ursula with visions since she'd escaped from the psych ward - the only concerning thing was that so far all of these prophecies had come true.

"Ursula, I can feel it in my bones, even in my broken toe. If you marry your next husband for his money again, something really bad is going to happen."

"What? My groceries will go moldy again?" Ursula guessed sarcastically.

"No Ursula, you will die."

Ursula sucked in a breath. That was her biggest fear.

"You will die a very very very very VERY painful and unhappy death."

Well, at least maybe when I die, I'll be closer to proving to my mother that I'm not useless and stupid. Ursula thought to herself. Besides, the previous visions were probably just a fluke.

"Stop it Petunia, that's not true. Just wait till the morning, I'll be so rich and perfect and my mother-

"No, it won't be like that at all Ursula, your mother hasn't changed her mind at all over the years and you're getting impatient and greedy." Petunia cut her off.

"I am NOT!" Protested Ursula.

"Yeah? When did you get married to Mr. Windermere?"

"Yesterday, and so?"

"So? So after a day of marriage he decided that you will inherit his money?"

"I'm sure he changed the will ages ago. You'll be wrong and I know it." Ursula turned on her heel and stormed out of the garden, looking back over her shoulder. "Come on Petunia, do you want tea or not?"

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PRESENT

Long story short, Petunia was right about the will. Ursula hadn't been left a single penny. So she'd packed up her bags and headed by boat, where she'd met Claude, to Queen Elizabeth's son's ball, hoping to find wealth and love, however she'd only found the later.

"Ursula!"

She turned around to find herself face to face with Joe. Joe... had she known him 20 seconds or 20 years? It had only been a couple days but it felt like forever. Was that what being soulmates was like? Maybe that was really all she needed - love. She wasn't sure whether it was the cool night breeze getting to her or if there really was love in the air.

"I'm sorry Joe. I love you."

"I love you too. Ursula, I love you and I want to be together for the rest of our lives. Let's get married."

"Right now?" Ursula laughed. "I mean yes, a million times yes."

"Let's fly to Peru and get married tomorrow morning."

"I doubt there's any planes leaving at this time of night."

"That's what our wings are for!" Said Joe.

And off they flew.

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The sun had already set, as Ursula sat on the soft grassy ground, her white dress out around her. It had been a long day, but it was the first wedding that Ursula had been truly happy. Only a few guests lingered and a silhouette was approaching but Ursula couldn't quite make out who.

"Daughter?" Either than the fact that only two people in the world called her that, and that the voice was high pitched, Ursula could recognize the striking voice of her mother, Gertrude anywhere.

"Mother?"

"I'm so proud of you, love. I'm sorry for everything I've told you your whole life."

"No, just since I was 4." Said Ursula.

"Yes well, I suppose so." Gertrude agreed.

"Mother, why did you tell me I'm dumb?" Ursula asked.

"Oh no dearie, you are dumb, I'm just sorry about it."

It took her half her life, but Ursula finally realized that her mother was right - she had dropped out of kindergarten and still didn't even know how to count to 10. But as long as her mother was proud, that was all that mattered.

"Don't worry love, I don't know my alphabet either. It's an impractical life skill, who needs to know the order of ABC? Well, now I must get home, Antonio made avocado pie and you know that's the best thing your father ever cooked."

Ursula watched her mother until she disappeared into a small dot in the horizon. A moment later, she felt the warm embrace of Joe as he wrapped his wings around her.

"Ask me a question." Joe whispered into her ear.

"Do you think the stars are happy?"

"Yes, I think they are." Joe said as they danced off into the night.

THE END