

Monday 10th July 1911

IN THE BEGINNING

Bam! Or it may as well have been. The collision came more as a surprise than a shock and he only managed to utter a loud oomph instead of one of his usual expletives. Regaining himself he looked to see a young woman, who had not been there a few moments previously. He had known this bouquet would cause trouble, the size alone was ridiculous and now this. But it was his Dads doing and the flowers were for his wife, his mum's wedding anniversary. He had only been following his fathers instructions and now this had happened.

"Excuse me fraulein, I did not see you. It was the flowers they..." His voice trailed off as she interrupted him.

"Are those for me?"

"Erm, my mother actually." he stammered. She was very pretty, beautiful green eyes, shoulder length blonde hair and a great figure. A fine looking lass he thought to himself as a smile broke out across his face.

"Let me have this one then," and promptly took a red carnation. She sniffed it and passed it to her companion whom he had not yet noticed.

"Look Mummy, I said I would get flowers today and look what the nice man has given me."

The older woman looked at him and smiled. "And to whom do we have the pleasure of speaking to?"

He swallowed hard, she looked very proper, high class even and he was anything but "Erm Adolph Ma'am, Adolph Heidl" he tipped his cap respectfully as he spoke.

"Well Mr Heidl, you seem to have good taste in flowers and I can only imagine you bumped into my daughter by accident and not by design."

He looked back at the young lady, "Fraulein, I hope I did not hurt you."

"Not at all and you can call me Stefanie. Our family name is Isak, if it helps." Her eyes did not leave him for one second. It was as if she was measuring him up for something.

"Do you play tennis? If this question did not surprise him, then the second made him jump. "Or should I first ask whether you are already involved for fear of causing a scene."

"I am indeed single and I have played yes, though not very well and a long time ago."

His smile, if anything had got bigger and hers was just as broad. She was very pretty and her dress had little butterflies and flowers embroidered upon it.

"Dear, the young man should be allowed to introduce himself further, what is your profession or should I say trade?" She looked slightly down at him as if she was not used to speaking to people from his end of town.

"Madam, he said with a degree of pride in his voice. "I am a miller."

“ Yes madam a miller, everyone needs flour, as much as many of us like flowers.” He gestured towards the carnation she held and this elicited a small smile.

“ Mummy, can we invite him to lunch? You will come won't you? Please don't say no, I don't think I could bear it.”

His eyes shifted back and forth, not sure whom he was supposed to be making greater eye contact with and gave up. He turned to look at the young lady whom he now knew as Stefanie. Steffie, he thought, that's a good name for a girl who plays tennis.

The kind of girl whom... And realised he fancied her, the smile on his face only getting bigger

“ Um, perhaps it would be proper to ask your mother first.” His eyes shifted back to the older woman, “ Madam” I am not quite sure of how to reply to this invitation.”

Handing the flower back to her daughter, she looked at him again. This time up and down like he was being inspected for something. Perhaps she thought he had fleas.

“ Do you have a card or other means of contacting you, Mr Heidi? “

“ I certainly do. ” He fished around in his jacket pocket and handed her his business card.

“ Thank you,” she took the card between finger and thumb and, holding it away from her, started reading it. The look on her face disapproving, like she had smelt something unpleasant. “Fine,” she said. “ No doubt you will be hearing from us in the next few days. In the meantime,” She looked at her daughter who was twirling the flower by its long stem and looking at him over the top of it. “ I would suggest you find a suit to wear.” She still had a sour look upon her face, he began to wonder if he smelt.

She nodded towards her daughter and they strolled off as if nothing had happened.

For the rest of that morning, not to say day. He was in a bit of a daze. He had been thinking of starting a new relationship, but like everything in these matters, where to start and with whom? It seemed to a small degree that question was now answered, but it was still too early to get excited and he did not think he stood a chance in hell. The daughter was okay, but her mum was something else. Anyway, he thought, I must drop the flowers off at home and be on my way to work. Sure enough for the next few days he was so busy, as to not really have time to think about his recent encounter. And if truth be told he had almost forgotten, when on Friday, a letter arrived with his name on it. His employer, curious as to why his employee could not receive mail at his home address soon started asking questions. I thought she was going to clobber me with her parasol for being so clumsy. He said, as he wound up his story. Instead I get an invitation to lunch for next Saturday, which means. I don't suppose I could have that day off could I? Only they want me there at twelve thirty. He showed the letter by way of evidence. Finding all of this very funny, his employer took every opportunity to poke fun at the younger man's love life. Those people must be mad to want such a low life as you

in their esteemed company. He joked and made a point of reminding him not to fart, belch or otherwise do anything that might upset, annoy or offend these people. The poor lady he said must be deaf, blind and probably mad to want a man like him near her daughter. Adolph, being sensible, took everything in his stride and regarded the jokes as encouragement. He borrowed his father's book on social etiquette to prepare and make the best impression he could of himself. He was proud of his profession and wanting to look his best, he polished his shoes and brushed down his Sunday best suit

With his parents away for a few days. He had the house to himself and that meant no questions being asked which suited him down to the ground. He was already nervous enough and was barely able to eat, for not knowing what to do with himself. When Saturday finally arrived, it promised to be another fine sunny day and there would be a pleasant tail wind on his way down. He decided to stop along the way and buy a small packet of chocolates for the mother. It would do no harm and the book recommended such. He hoped they would not melt. Arriving a little later than suggested and propping his bicycle against the wall. He knocked at the impressive front door, which was presently answered by a tall massively built man in casual jacket and tie, with a moustache that would have put a Walrus to shame.

"Aha said the moustache, you must be Adolph. My sister said you had been invited, please come in."

Wiping his shoes, he promptly realised he had left his bike lock behind. Fumbling, he apologised.

"Don't worry about it, it will be perfectly safe in the hallway, it's where I usually put mine." The Moustache picked up the bike, carried it through and propped it against the hall wall. "My name is Joachim by the way, How are you?"

The giant extended a large hand, which Adolph took half expecting it to be crushed.

"I am very well, thanks and you?"

"I am pretty good, my sister will be with us shortly. Would you care for a drink whilst we wait?"

He nodded in agreement and found himself being ushered into a room with fine paintings on the walls and shelves groaning under the weight of numerous books.

"What would you like, beer or cider? I press my own apples and if I may say so, it is actually pretty good stuff."

"Oh Cider please." He was slightly taken aback by the relaxed nature of the giant. If not by his friendly, relaxed manner, then by the gentle, almost melodic voice he possessed rather than the deep booming roar he had expected.

Drinks in hand they went to sit outside and enjoy the sunshine before lunch. The usual small talk was made and he was introduced to the cat. A fine ginger specimen by the name of Pickle. Who he was told was in disgrace for having deposited a large and very

