

*Lovedale.*

*26<sup>th</sup> June, 2018*

There was a buzz all around. Since this is a very small town gossips spread really faster. I knew she was back because I felt it. I knew I will have to face her. But now that she is standing across the street and staring at me, I am confused whether to acknowledge her presence or rather walk away. Even before I could decide on the course of action, I noticed her coming our way.

‘Hi’ she said, I hate the effect her voice still has on me. ‘Your father said you were in town running some errands’.

‘Hello Miruthula, I heard you were back in town, how are you?’ Chandru asked politely. He is my cousin and a thorough gentleman who knows how to treat a woman even if she doesn’t deserve it. I stood there with a blank expression. I didn’t feel the need to ask her anything specially how she met my father.

‘Hi Chandru, am very fine and as I can see you haven’t changed at all. Nothing has changed in this place. The warmth, nature and peace everything is still the same even after 5 years.’ She said those words with so much love for this place. If it had been for someone else, they would think she loves this place. But I knew that was not true.

‘Except you!’ I said, for whatever reason I felt the need to mention that she was not the same person anymore. She looked different too, gone was the girl who loved jean or kurti. She wore a dress, a frock to be precise with an overcoat. It seemed like a business attire, maybe she is back for just a day or something. I hope she is back for only few days.

‘People change with time.’ She said. ‘I wanted to discuss something with you, are you free tonight? May be we can have dinner together.’ She asked as if everything is normal between us.

‘Sorry I am busy this week, I can’t’. That was my way of telling to not disturb me.

‘It’s important if not this week maybe next week, just think about it’. She pleaded.

‘So are you back for the resort?’ Chandru asked her curiously.

‘Yes, that and the house, I am planning to sell the house since no one is there to take care of it.’

‘I am sorry about your father; I was not able to attend the funeral for some work reason’. Lie. I didn’t attend the funeral because I knew she’ll be there and I didn’t wish to meet her.

‘I understand, just think about the dinner. I need your help.’ She looked at her watch. ‘I have to go somewhere, will meet you guys later, bye’

And just like that she was gone. Although I hated her presence watching her walkaway has always been painful. Like right now. So she is not here for few days, since she mentioned about dinner next week. I am going to have a hell of a month.