

MY STORY

Murli Menon

WE'D MET THROUGH LETTERS AND LIKED EACH OTHER A LOT. WE FINALLY MET FOR A DAY, FELL IN LOVE AND MADE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE. AND THEN, WITHIN 24 HOURS, I WAS PARALYSED

24 HOURS OF HAPPINESS

THERE have been few decisions in my life I have spent sleepless nights over, and each time I've made the decision in the morning.

The first time this hap-



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Fate dealt him an unkind blow

pened, I had to decide whether to give up a plush job with one of India's largest pharmaceutical companies and do my M.B.A. instead.

After graduation, I had joined a multinational as a sales executive and had risen up the ranks, till I joined the present company in the management cadre.

But now, having got admission to do the M.B.A., after clearing the tough entrance exam, group discussions and interviews; I seriously debated whether to give up my cushy job, the fat pay cheque, the credit cards and the corporate jet-setting to get back to studies after five long years of work experience.

After pondering over this the entire night, by next morning I had decided to quit my job. I submitted my resignation letter to my boss first thing in the morning, before I had second thoughts and changed my mind.

The next time, I spent a sleepless night, was when I had to decide whether to get married or not.

I had completed my M.B.A., topping my batch, and after the campus interviews, joined a multinational healthcare company based at Bangalore as product manager. After settling down comfortably in my new job and house, and having celebrated my 27th birthday, the next logical step was to get married.

Pondering over it one night, I decided to go ahead. Instead of releasing a matrimonial advertisement in the newspapers, I chose the 'Meeting Ground' column of 'Femina'. I decided to go in for an arranged marriage as I had not found anyone by myself and thought it was too late to find someone to fall in love with.

My advertisement read as follows: Menon

guy, 28, M.B.A., manager MNC, interested in poetry, environment and philosophy, invites matrimonial correspondence from simple, independent and good natured girls. No bars.

Reply to :

The response was overwhelming. I got replies from Bahrain to Bihar, from Kashmir to Kerala, from Gujarat to Guwahati and one from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands too.

It was a tough job shortlisting the replies. There were many whom I replied to, but who never responded. Finally the choice was narrowed down to two candidates in Bombay. One was a journalist with a magazine and the other was a daughter of a defence officer.

My correspondence with the journalist - whom I'll call PM - continued for a long time. Finally, we decided to meet to check on mutual compatibility.

In the meantime, I had a scooter accident and suffered a head injury (my helmet saved me). After spending a week in hospital, the neuro-surgeon gave his verdict. I had a few blood clots in the right side of the brain, but they were not serious enough to be removed surgically and I'd be normal, provided I took my medicines regularly. Well, I left hospital and reached home and went about my routine without any further problems.

Soon, I got a chance to travel to Bombay on an official trip. I sent a letter to PM informing her about my accident and my planned trip to Bombay. I reached Bombay without incident.

I called up PM and we decided to meet at a restaurant in the morning; but, since both of us had never met or even seen each other's photographs, I decided to wear a blue cap so

that she could identify me. I hired an auto rickshaw for the day and reached the restaurant at the appointed time. Initially, I didn't see anyone, but then I spotted this attractive girl walking hesitantly towards me. It was PM. We introduced ourselves and wondered how to spend the rest of the day.

I was new to Bombay, and had to go for a number of official appointments throughout the day. PM insisted on accompanying me because she wanted to spend as much time with me as possible.

It so turned out that the rickshaw driver and PM were both Bengalis and they would chat away the time, while I completed all my appointments; PM and I talked and got to know each other in-between. Soon it was time for me to catch my return flight and I reached the airport just in time.

PM and I had got along like a house on fire. We were comfortable with each other, and both of us had liked each other immensely. The future looked promising.

I reached Bangalore and the next day, I awoke with a splitting headache. My landlord rushed me to the hospital. After a CT scan, the doctors discovered that one of the clots was putting pressure on my brain and an emergency craniotomy would have to be done to remove the clot.

I agreed to the operation. When I came to, I found myself surrounded by doctors who told me the tragic news. The clot had been removed, but the pressure on my brain had resulted in my left side being paralysed. I refused to believe what the doctors were saying to me, and tried to move my left hand and leg. But I couldn't. They were totally numb and

wouldn't move. I was, really and truly, paralysed!

I asked one of my colleagues to collect all my letters from home. There was one from PM. It was read out to me by the nurse as I was not allowed to read. It said, "I have fallen in love with you and I want to marry only you. I don't want to lose you." I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

For 15 days, I was in the I.C.U., bedridden and helpless. With no access to PM's phone number or address, I could not inform her about my fate. And as the months passed, and there was no improvement in my condition, I lost my desire to tell her. What was the point, after all?

But PM kept writing to me. Loving letters, lovely letters, desperately wanting to know why I'd stopped writing to her, pleading for me to come down to Delhi to meet her, where she'd got this fantastic new job with a foreign newspaper. She wanted me to share in her joy.

But I am stubborn, or maybe just adamant. I've decided never to contact her again. As I lie in bed, hoping for a miraculous recovery, the only thing I think about is that one wonderful day spent with PM. But I don't have the nerve to inform her about my condition. I don't want her world to come crashing down.

Today, my only solace is her letters and her cards, which continue to come regularly addressed to the man she met for one day and fell in love with. But that man, active and healthy, no longer exists; and maybe one day, as days go by without any news from me, she'll think as I already do, that that one day was a figment of our imagination. We never met. We never fell in love.