

The Cottage  
@LMMolina

Joseph loved taking walks in the forest. It was an excellent way of keeping fit. His walking routine usually took him through various trails, some more traveled than others.

One afternoon he decided to take a less traveled one. This one looked challenging and he set off at a quick pace. He figured it might take him a good hour. About halfway through his walk he spotted a small structure surrounded by tall bushes with beautiful lilac flowers. It looked like a house and he wondered who might live there. He thought it strange that it was in such a secluded area of the forest.

As he came closer he saw that it was a cottage. It had been freshly painted a bright yellow color with a light green trim. The window shutters were a rich terra cotta. The cottage looked surreal but it was a delight to the eyes and he couldn't resist stopping to meet the occupants. He knocked on the door.

A voice on the other side asked, "Who's there? "

"Just someone who is enchanted with your lovely home."

The door slowly opened a crack and a blue-eyed woman looked at him.

From inside the house a man could be heard saying, "Who's at the door, Miriam?"

She responded, "A young man who admires our house."

"Well, invite him in."

She opened the door to let the visitor in.

At first, Joseph was hesitant and said, "I don't mean to intrude but I couldn't help noticing your home. Have you lived here long?"

"Ever since we were married, these past 30 years."

It was then that he noticed how young the couple looked but didn't say anything.

"Young man, would you like a cup of coffee? It's freshly brewed."

"If it's no trouble,"

"Of course not. No trouble at all."

"You can call me Joseph."

The husband who was sitting on a wingback chair introduced himself, "I'm Henry and that's my wife Miriam."

Miriam brought in a tray with 3 cups and saucers. Next to the coffee pot there was a plate with pastries. She set everything on a small coffee table.

After looking at the delicious spread Joseph figured the rest of the walk was off so he decided to enjoy this afternoon treat. As he chatted with the couple he lost track of the time. He suddenly realized it was getting dark.

"Oh, gosh! Look at the time! I've got to go. It's been a real pleasure talking to you both."

"Drop by again anytime. It was nice having you here," Henry said.

And with that, Joseph left the couple.

During the next few days, Joseph would stop by the cottage on his way back from his walk.

On one of his visits, Joseph asked the couple how they met.

"We're avid skydivers. We met during a skydiving class. I was captivated with Miriam the moment I saw her," Henry said as he smiled at his wife. "As soon as I saw her, I just knew we had to be together for the rest of our lives."

“Actually we exchanged wedding vows in the sky, “ Miriam added.

Joseph looked at the couple in admiration and said, “That must have been the most exciting day for you both.”

“It certainly was very memorable,” Henry looked fondly at Miriam. It was obvious the couple were very much in love.

One rainy afternoon, Joseph couldn't go for his daily walk, so he decided to go into the village to do some grocery shopping.

He entered a small store where basic grocery items were sold. There was only one clerk in attendance, an elderly man of about sixty years of age.

As Joseph took his items to the clerk he mentioned his walks and the afternoons he spent with the couple who lived in the cottage in the woods.

The clerk looked at him strangely and asked, “Which couple are you talking about?”

“Why Henry and Miriam. I don't know their last name. I never thought to ask.”

The clerk looked at him and said, “Why Henry and Miriam Madison have been dead these past thirty years! They were killed in a skydiving accident. The parachute failed to open. It was gruesome! It took weeks to get them ready for burial; their bodies were so mangled. Indeed, it was very tragic because it was on the day they married. Their honeymoon cottage has been abandoned all this time. But there have been rumors that the couple return to the cottage on their anniversary, which is around this time.”

Joseph just stood there and stared at the man.