

MONETS' GARDEN – by Julia Bordejczuk

“Tap, tap, tap, tap.” that was the only thing that you could hear aside of noise of the traffic. No one was talking to each other, they were just constantly glued to the screen on their mobiles, tablets or laptops. It was nothing unordinary these days. However, there was one exception in this online world.

He lived close to the centre of London a few blocks near the highway. He used to be a postman, but due the internet and e-mails, nobody was using post office to sent letters or postcards anymore. The man lost his job, but since working as a postman was the only job he wanted to always do, the government decided to monthly send money to him as a compensation. His favourite part of working as a postman was the feeling of fresh air in the morning while he was riding on his retro baby blue bicycle. His whole family have agreed on living an online life and they also decided to leave him behind since he wasn't into it. They bought him three lovely cats as a goodbye gift and shortly after they moved to another city, they forgot about him as if he never existed. He felt abandoned and depressed but thanks to the cute cheerful cats he decided to live on. He was trying to find something that would bring him as much of a joy as his previous profession and it took a while but then he found another passion in his life – gardening.

The garden he created was truly something... His hard work on it started to bear fruit. There were lovely tiny bridges all over the place and a large one right next to a gorgeous giant sakura tree. You could also see a streamlet flow under the bridges. There were flowers everywhere and the whole place was in the style of Japanese gardens. The man even built a small temple on the east side and he often spent mornings there with his cats Maya, Mei and Momo. This garden was the only thing that made him truly happy. Well until he met her...

Once on the spring day when he was trimming off dry leaves and flowers as he always did, a woman with a pug was passing by. Suddenly the pug started barking at cats which were playing with each other surrounded by jasmine flowers. The woman accidentally released the leash and the dog ran right into the garden through the bushes to reach the cats. Momo and Mei started to run all over the place to hide on the nearest branch. The youngest of them - Maya was running towards her owner to protect him from the uninvited guest.

“Hey, Deena, come back!” shouted the woman at her dog. She then spotted a tall man with a straw hat. “Good morning, sir, I'm very sorry about my pug I hope she didn't scare your cats too much.”

“Oh, you're... you're talking to me?” said the man while he was looking back as if there is someone standing behind him.

“Of course I am! Can I come in? I should also probably catch my dog, her name is Deena. She might run towards you but don't worry, she's in fact very friendly. She just wants to play.” said the woman with a bright smile on her face.

“Yeah, don't hesitate, miss, come over.” said the man and he went out of his garden to meet the lady.

“Nice to meet you my name is Suzanne, but please call me Sue.” said Sue while shaking his

hand.

“Nice to meet you too, I am Claude, do you want to see my garden?” said the man with sparks in his eyes.

“Claude? Umm... It reminds me of Claude Monet, have you heard of him? His copies of paintings are the best sellers these days!” said Sue and then she showed him Monet’s website on her tablet.

“Yes, I’ve heard of him. I’ve read a lot about him in my books about art, but I didn’t know he’s that popular nowadays. I actually don’t use the internet at all.” said Claude a bit embarrassed of his lack of ‘online knowledge’.

“No way! I think you are the only one left living offline in this world. That’s impressive, how do you manage to keep up with the society and... Oh my God, your garden is absolutely stunning! Look at these gorgeous bridges, flowers and cherry blossom trees! That is truly magnificent!” said Sue and then she walked across the little bridge which led her through the path with the colourful flowers on both sides. She stopped right under the biggest sakura tree and she felt like she has just appeared in a fairy tale.

“Yeah... that is worth living an offline life...” whispered Sue and then she called her dog. Deena ran towards her and Sue took her to her arms. Both of them were amazed. Claude offered Sue a cup of coffee and then they sat on a bench while slowly sipping tasty cappuccino.

Claude and Sue spent the rest of their afternoon talking about life, art, environment and society they live in. When the sun began to set, all of a sudden Sue’s phone started to ring. She looked at the display. It was her boss. Sue was very surprised and she quickly answered the call. “Hello?... Yes, this is Suzanne Petit ... Yes, I have finished all the paperwork for this week... No problem, I will be there in 10 minutes... Goodbye.”

“Claude, I’m so sorry but I have to go now, it was a pleasure to meet such an interesting person as you are. Thanks for the coffee, see you around!” said Sue and then she called herself a taxi. Claude made her a beautiful bouquet as a goodbye gift and he waited with her. When the taxi arrived, Sue and Deena got in the car, she looked at Claude and his garden for the one last time and then they drove away. Taxi stopped next to her apartment and Sue paid for the ride. After she got off the car she quickly walked into her house. She asked her neighbour Mike if he could look after her dog when she’ll be at a meeting and she left him front door keys. Then she rushed to the garage, she started the car and drove from the garage straight to the road.

She arrived safely at the meeting. The boss told her that she’s going to go on a business trip abroad next month. Sue was happy but also worry about Deena and her new friend. She told her boss about his beautiful garden, but she forgot his name, so she called him Monet since the garden was similar to the garden in Monets’ paintings. After the meeting, Sue started to prepare for her new life....

6 years later she finally came back to London. It was a warm sunny autumn day and Sue was walking by the street with her favourite coffee to go and with a tablet in her left hand. Suddenly a huge leaf landed on display and covered it. She looked up to see where the leaf came from. Then she noticed that she's standing right next to the beautiful garden which she had seen years ago. The garden doors were open, so she walked inside, but surprisingly, nobody was in there. She saw a light coming from the temple and she decided to walk its direction. After entering the temple, she noticed the gravestone with Claude's portrait on it. He died just a few months ago, yet the garden seemed to be even more beautiful than before.

"Maybe his spirit takes care of this place" said Sue while lighting up the candles in the temple.

She was amazed by the man's story and she posted it online with photos of his garden. The article went viral and a lot of people commented that they want to visit the gorgeous garden. Sue decided to buy Claude's house and in her free time, she provided visitors through the masterpiece Claude created. She always felt like his spirit is happy to see other people enjoying their free time sitting under the sakura trees and relaxing. Few visitors even often came back and became friends with Sue.

"You see, Monet? It is all happening thanks to your hard work, warm heart and one little article from the world you were trying to avoid your whole life..." said Sue while sitting on the same bench she shared with him the last time, sipping delicious cappuccino and with a sleeping cat on her lap and her pug playing with the cats under the sunflowers.