

The Cottage of Love

by Bright Eyes and performed by Tim Tubbs

I've never told anyone this before.

I met him working in the hotels in the 70's.

He was a stocky, masculine man, he wore padded body warmers and smoked a sweet-smelling pipe, even while washing the dishes. He had a very soft voice for a man of his size.

I was in a reasonably happy marriage at the time, with kids on the way but I had some very loud doubts of myself.

I never thought that he might be "a man like me" until I tripped on a carpet one day and he called me "dizzy."

He put his hand on my shoulder, and that's when I knew.

One day we finished work early, a coach tour from Blackpool had never arrived. He asked me if I wanted to walk home together, take the long way around South Cliff gardens.

We stopped at a wooden, cliffside shelter, where nobody could hear us for the roaring of the sea.

"I know about you" - he smiled.

The relief. I could be myself for the first time in my life.

We met many times in that same shelter. We called it our "Cottage of Love". We gave each other nicknames. I was "Bright Eyes" he was "Tegz".

We both got dogs so we could take them for walks and meet each other after dark.

When I was anxious he would tell me to 'cheer up' and my troubles would melt away.

Our meetings were short, because we both had families that we loved, but those nights in the cottage with the wind howling in from the North Sea were all the more passionate for their urgency and bracing crispness.

On those nights I was truly happy.

Tegz made me a much better father and husband.

Each of my two lives - one of duty and one of passion – each gave sense to the other.

Our meetings slowed down as we got older.

We lost touch.

A few years ago, I found out through an old work colleague that Tegz, my big, masculine angel, passed away.

I wasn't able to attend his funeral, but I did walk up to the old cottage instead, it's still there now.

I looked out over the grey water.

As my tears fell, I heard his voice blow in softly from the sea.
'Cheer up Bright Eyes.'