

The Cloudberry Cottage



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Elsie woke early, before the sun peeked over the hills. She pulled on her yellow raincoat and red rubber boots. Today was berry-picking day! She took her woven basket and stepped outside. A thick, soft fog hugged the hills like a fluffy blanket. 'Perfect weather for cloudberryes,' Elsie whispered, and off she went.



The fog swirled around Elsie's boots as she climbed the hill. It was quiet and cozy, like the world was wrapped in cotton. She knew where the best berries grew—near the top, where the fog was thickest. Her basket swung on her arm, empty and ready. 'I'll find a whole hill of them,' she said.



Elsie searched under leaves and around rocks, but no berries appeared. The fog grew thicker, curling like a scarf around her. Then, through the white mist, she saw something strange. A tiny cottage stood on the hill, with a moss-green roof and two round windows. 'A house up here?' Elsie wondered. 'That's odd.'



The cottage looked warm and friendly. Its chimney puffed soft white fog, and flower boxes bloomed under the windows. Vines curled up the cream walls. Elsie stepped closer, her heart beating fast. The wooden door opened like a smile. 'Hello, dear!' said a cheerful voice. 'Come in before the fog floats away!'



Inside stood a short, stooped woman with silver hair in a low bun. She wore a lavender cardigan and round spectacles on a cord. 'I'm Mrs. Moss,' she said, her blue eyes twinkling. 'And you must be hungry.' The cottage smelled of pancakes and honey. Elsie nodded, her freckled nose sniffing the air. 'I'm Elsie. Is this your house?'



Mrs. Moss laughed and poured warm milk. 'This cottage travels with the fog,' she explained. 'It only appears when the morning mist rolls in. We drift from hill to hill, never staying long.' Elsie's hazel eyes grew wide. 'A traveling cottage? That's amazing!' Mrs. Moss smiled. 'It's shy, but it loves visitors. Especially berry pickers.'



They sat at a small table by the round window. Mrs. Moss served cloudberry pancakes with sweet syrup. 'These berries come from right outside,' she said. Elsie took a bite and grinned, her gap-toothed smile showing. 'They're the best I've ever tasted!' The cottage seemed to hum happily around them, the windows glowing like warm eyes.



After breakfast, Elsie helped wash the dishes. The cottage creaked softly, as if saying thank you. 'Does the fog always carry you?' Elsie asked. Mrs. Moss nodded. 'The mist is our friend. It lifts us gently and takes us where we're needed.' Through the window, the fog was already thinning. 'Oh dear,' said Mrs. Moss. 'The sun is coming.'



The mist swirled outside, fading fast. The cottage began to tremble. 'It needs a new resting place before the fog disappears,' Mrs. Moss said. 'But I'm too old to search quickly.' Elsie grabbed her basket. 'I'll help! I know these hills.' She ran outside, her red boots splashing through the wet grass. The mist trailed behind her like a scarf.



Elsie looked around. The fog was lifting, and the cottage grew lighter, almost see-through. 'Where can it hide?' she thought. Then she spotted a hollow between two big rocks, shaded by a willow tree. 'Over here!' she called. The mist swirled toward the hollow, carrying the cottage gently. But the cottage wobbled—it wasn't quite cozy enough.



Elsie remembered a patch of soft moss behind the hill. 'Follow me!' she shouted. The mist, with its faint glowing eyes, swirled after her. The cottage bounced along, its chimney puffing. They reached a quiet nook where the fog lingered longest. 'Here!' Elsie said. 'It's shady and snug.' The cottage settled down with a happy sigh.



Mrs. Moss hurried over, her grey slippers slipping on the grass. 'You found the perfect spot!' she cheered. The cottage's door opened wide like a grin. The mist curled around it, tucking it in like a blanket. 'Thank you, Elsie,' said Mrs. Moss. 'You've saved our home.' Elsie's cheeks flushed pink. 'It was nothing. I'm glad I could help.'



The sun peeked over the hills, and the fog began to fade. The mist grew thin and wispy. 'Will I see you again?' Elsie asked. Mrs. Moss pressed a small jar of cloudberry jam into her hands. 'Whenever the fog rolls in, look for us,' she said. 'And bring your basket.' The mist swirled one last time, then vanished. The cottage was gone.



Elsie walked home with her jar of jam and a heart full of warmth. She told her family about the traveling cottage and kind Mrs. Moss. 'You made a friend,' her mother said. Elsie nodded. 'And I helped her home.' She put the jam on the shelf, a sweet reminder of the foggy morning. 'I'll look for them tomorrow,' she whispered.



Days passed, but Elsie didn't forget. Each foggy morning, she climbed the hills with her basket. Sometimes she found nothing but berries. But sometimes, through the mist, she saw a moss-green roof and a puffing chimney. Then she'd run to the door, and Mrs. Moss would welcome her in for breakfast. 'Friends are the best kind of surprise,' Elsie said.



And so the cloudberry cottage kept traveling with the fog. It always found a cozy place to rest, thanks to Elsie's help. Mrs. Moss and Elsie shared many breakfasts, laughing over pancakes and jam. The hills held a secret friendship, wrapped in mist and kindness. And Elsie knew that hospitality could turn a foggy morning into a wonderful adventure.