

House Hunting

by Jim Morrison

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On a quiet Sunday morning a few years after we had married, my wife, Edie, and I were enjoying a relaxing breakfast in our apartment in Northern Virginia, not far from the Pentagon where I worked. I poured us another cup of coffee and picked up the Sunday *Washington Post*. From the three pounds of newspaper, I dug out the classified advertisements for houses for sale.

Like most young couples, we longed to have a house of our own. The paper listed several columns of houses which their owners or realtors were opening that Sunday afternoon for inspection. I saw an ad for a house in suburban Springfield which looked interesting and was in our price range. I showed it to Edie. She was excited.

I called the number and identified myself to the owner, whose last name was Jones. I asked if we could visit the house that afternoon. He gave me directions, and I said we'd see him around 2:00 p.m.

At the agreed time, we pulled up in front of a nice brick rambler with a carport. The house had a large yard, and the house and property looked well maintained. We walked up and knocked on the front door. A man, probably in his forties, opened the door. "Hello," he said.

"Hello, we're the Morrisons," I said, "Jim and Edie."

"I'm Tom," the man said. "Please come in." We entered the living room and were introduced to the man's wife and two children. They were all watching a Washington Redskins football game, while enjoying popcorn and sodas. They invited us to sit down, turned off the TV, and offered us drinks. We sat and chatted for 15-20 minutes, discussing a range of topics from the Redskins to our respective lines of work. He was a major in the Army and also worked in the Pentagon.

After about 20 minutes of conversation, I asked if we might see the house. "Sure," the man responded. The couple took us through the dining room to the kitchen, which was nice and modern, and then took us to the back deck, which overlooked a well-groomed back yard. We went back inside, and I asked if we might see the rest of the house. They led us to the bedrooms, which were nicely decorated, and I asked to see the closets. The bedrooms and closets were clean and neat, like the rest of the house, including the bathrooms which we looked into as we went down the hall. We complimented them on almost every room. It was a really nice house, and we were definitely interested.

After we had spent close to half an hour touring the house, we went back to the living room and sat down.

"How soon are you moving?" I asked.

The man replied, "Well, we're not really sure."

"You're not sure?"

“No, I haven’t got my orders yet,” he said, referring to Army orders to a new posting.

Confused, I said, “You don’t have your orders, but you’re selling your house?”

“No, not really,” he replied.

Now I was really confused. Something didn’t calculate. I said, “You are the Joneses, and you advertised your house in today’s paper, right?”

“No,” he said. “We’re the Smiths. The Joneses live two doors down the street.”

I looked at Edie. We were both mortified. “Oh, no!” I said, blushing. “I’m afraid we’ve made a terrible mistake.”

The Smiths started laughing. Despite our embarrassment, we could only join in the laughter.

Major Smith said, “When you came to the door and introduced yourselves, I thought you were from our church and were making a Sunday afternoon visitation.”

We had interrupted their Sunday afternoon and football game, and we had even looked in their closets. We could not get out of the house soon enough. On the way out, I complimented the Smiths on how neat they kept their house, even when they weren’t expecting company.

Once in the car, Edie and I shook our heads, and we both said, “I can’t believe what we just did.” We could only imagine what the Smiths were saying.