Chapter 26: My Pokémon — Courtship with Randy

After a life-changing divorce, I stayed in Harbor Springs for a year before accepting a new position in Wayne, Michigan. It was a difficult move—especially for my son John, who was in his senior year of high school. Together, we left Harbor Springs for Dearborn, a suburb of Detroit. John graduated from Detroit Country Day that year and soon joined his sister, Barbara, at Michigan State University.

For the first time in my life, I was living alone in the Dearborn house. Wanting a fresh start, I decided to build a new home in Belleville, a charming small town east of Ann Arbor. It was a chance to create a space entirely my own—and as it turned out, to open the door to an unexpected friendship that grew into something much more.

I've always been a take-charge person, quick to move from planning to action. Patience isn't exactly my strong suit—especially when I'm working with someone who prefers to take their time. That's why my early friendship with Randy was both a challenge and a gift.

I completed my new Belleville home in October 1995. Over the previous year, Randy and I had become work friends, sharing advice and lending each other a hand with various projects. He had a sharp eye for decorating and could tackle almost any home repair. So when he offered to help me install valances in my new home, I accepted without hesitation, imagining we'd be done in a couple of hours.

Instead, as the day stretched on, I learned that Randy believed in measuring not twice, but three or four times before hammering a single nail. By evening, the three valances were finally in

place—perfectly, of course. That was the beginning of my lesson in patience. Eventually, I gave him the affectionate nickname Pokémon—my "Pokey Man."

Our first real conversation happened one afternoon at work. Passing his office at the far end of our three-story building, I heard him call out, "Hey, Rose, I heard you're building a house in Belleville. Do you know I live there too?"

His warm smile made me feel instantly comfortable. We chatted for a few minutes, and before I knew it, he was inviting me to visit his home that Saturday. He jotted down his address and phone number on a Post-it, touching my hand lightly as he handed it over. "I'll be working on the yard—come casual. Maybe you can give me a hand," he added with a grin.

On my way back to my office, curiosity got the better of me. I discreetly asked a coworker about him and was happy to learn he was single, well-liked, and easygoing.

That Saturday, I found myself driving into his quiet neighborhood of well-kept homes, some set along the shore of Belleville Lake. His single-story brick ranch was beautifully decorated inside and framed outside by a garden bursting with life—emerald arborvitae, golden forsythia, and delicate pink peonies. In the backyard, twisting Harry Lauder walking sticks and a Japanese maple created an artist's touch.

Randy proudly showed me around, offered me a cool drink, and then—true to his word—handed me a rake. We worked side-by-side spreading mulch until the sun dipped low. Tired but happy, I left that evening with dirt on my hands and a smile on my face. The next day, we shared an easy dinner at a cozy Ann Arbor restaurant, marking the start of something special.

In the months that followed, Randy and I spent countless hours together—shopping for lighting fixtures, choosing window treatments, planting gardens, and seeding lawns. He was there to help me finish my home, and I was grateful for his steady presence.

Both divorced for about fifteen years, we were independent and set in our ways. But we quickly found a rhythm: one person would take the lead on a project while the other offered advice (sometimes more than the leader wanted to hear).

Our friendship gradually deepened. Weekend dinners became a ritual—sometimes out at restaurants, sometimes cooking together in the kitchen. Randy's specialty was his famous chopped salad—romaine, tomatoes, walnuts, cranberries, apples, cheddar, and a sliced hard-boiled egg on top. I often teased him that it was his only recipe, but it was delicious every time.

As we cooked, music played—Celine Dion or Amici Forever—and Randy would slip his arms around me, swaying across the kitchen. Candlelight dinners followed, slow and warm, much like our growing love.

We treasured our weekends together. Chores came first, and then evenings were reserved for simple pleasures—popcorn on the couch, Clint Eastwood spaghetti westerns, and quiet laughter. Even now, the smell of popcorn takes me back to those early days.

Over time, we began talking about the future—about retirement, about combining our lives. We shared values, loved each other's families, and laughed often. In March 1999, we sold our separate Belleville homes and married, choosing a new home in Ann Arbor's Stonebridge community as our fresh starting point.

Blending our households meant letting go of some of the past and choosing together what would shape our future. In 2025, twenty-six years later, we're still choosing—still building a life that is part home project, part love story, and completely ours.

Every love story is beautiful, but ours is still my favorite.