

Once a man and a woman who had loved each other for a long time came together as man and wife. The people of the village, to celebrate the marriage, built them a beautiful house. It had a roof of bright-green leaves. The two of them were very happy.

But one morning they were in a bad mood. They started arguing. Then they started yelling. The two of them became so angry, they forgot many things. They forgot that they had spent a great deal of time together laughing and talking in the shadows of the great trees. They forgot that they were in love. They forgot that they were happy. The husband got so angry that he ran out of their house.

Once outside, the husband, in his fury, laid his hands on the first thing he saw and began to rip it apart. This thing was the roof of the house.

He was so angry that he did not even realize what he was doing. He had forgotten that when either the husband or the wife pulls all the leaves off the roof of their house, it means "I divorce you; we will no longer live beneath the same roof."

The wife came outside. As she watched her husband pull leaves off their house, she saw how full of anger he was. It made her remember that he could also be full of joy. He loved to laugh, and he could sing better than anyone else in the village. He was also one of the best storytellers.

The wife was going to say something when she noticed people coming out of their houses. "If I say something," she thought, "they'll think I'm to blame for this argument. I won't say anything unless my husband speaks first."

The husband began to pull the leaves slower and slower. He realized what he was doing. He didn't want to divorce his wife. Now that his anger was leaving him, he couldn't even remember why they had argued.

Just as he was about to stop pulling the leaves, he saw his wife and all the villagers watching him. "If I stop pulling the leaves, everyone will think this argument was my fault. Well, I won't stop until my wife says something."

The people of the village looked from the husband to the wife. They were astonished.¹ They knew the two of them loved each other. All the neighbors wanted to say something, but it was not a good idea to come between a man and his wife.

It seemed there was no hope for the situation.

Everyone was silent. The wife watched the husband, the husband pulled leaves off the roof, and the neighbors looked around sadly.

"Husband," the wife said, so suddenly that everyone jumped, "these are the only leaves that are dirty. You can leave the rest of them up there."

The husband looked at his wife with confusion. "I said," she repeated slowly, "these are the only leaves that are dirty. Come, let us take them down to the river."

Without waiting to see if he was doing what she said, she began to gather up the fallen leaves. The husband stood there for a moment, confused, and then he began to smile and collect the leaves with his wife.

They took them down to the river and washed them in the water. Then they laid them out to dry in the sun and went swimming. Afterward, they collected the leaves and replaced them on the roof together. On that day every wife went to her husband and mentioned something about the dirty leaves on top of their own homes. Together, husbands and wives removed leaves from the roofs of their houses, washed them in the river, and dried them in the sun. That had never happened before in the village. As far as we know, it never happened again. The best that can be hoped for is that we remember that we can always wash the leaves