

Chapter 1 - Marceline and Sarah Graduate

Marceline Pârfait couldn't contain her joy. As she drove her Corvette sports car toward Napa Valley, California, after graduating from Agerstone College in the Class of 2020, with a Master's Degree in Biology, she could not silent those songs of liberation rattling around in her memory. Recalled passages of those songs became stronger and louder, but as she hummed them loud enough in her sotto voice, the melodies intrigued Sarah. Marci, as all her friends and relations called her. Then, feeling a bit braver, she sang a few lines of those songs she remembered from past Fourth of July celebrations:

Thomas A'Becket's, *'My country, 'tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty, Of thee I sing!'*

Katharine Lee's *'O beautiful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain, For purple mountain majesties, Above the fruited plain!'* Then she finished her medley and caught Sarah's attention by singing rather loudly:

David Shaw's *'O Columbia, the gem of the ocean, The home of the brave and the free, The shrine of each patriot's devotion, A world offers homage to thee.'*

Once she got the lyrics straight, Marci started singing all the lines she could remember, one after another. Her renditions were nothing special but Sarah Davidson, her passenger, as an excellent songstress with *perfect pitch*, recognized each melody and sang along with Marci. Gradually, the tunes became stronger and louder, which prompted Sarah in her curiosity to say, "Are we harmonizing patriotic songs of liberation today, Marci?"

"Well, I'm not whistling Dixie, my dear Sarah."

"I can acknowledge that Marci, with you, a dyed-in-the-wool Yankee in King California's Court, but my first question is why; *pourquoi?*"

"I guess because for the first time in five years, I am completely free, Sarah."

"I can buy that; do you mind if this Yankee joins you."

"At the waist; or in a two-girl songfest, Sarah, ha, ha?"

"Funny girl; I'd like to just sing these tunes with you, Marci."

"Okaay Sarah; but I if I get silly, just consider it an expression of my release. We've been cooped up too long; now it time to fly!"

"I agree, Marci; but let's not get arrested for disturbing the peace."

Then they began to sing each song together, piecing together bits they remembered and reinforcing memory by execution, they both sang louder and louder as they became accustomed to the words and melodies with each chorus. The air around the Corvette, trying hard to keep up with their enthusiasm, reverberated with the two girl's sonic joy. Marci even tried to match Sarah's powerful semi-professional delivery by singing in an ever more expressive tone. Now and then as they caught their breaths, the laughed so hard they almost choked and had to settle down several times to recompose themselves.

Toward the end of their self-performances, on an empty stretch of California's Route 128, Marci signaled to pass a large oil tanker truck, the driver acknowledged her request by blinking his brake lights and slowing his huge Cumming's Diesel engine down to let them pass. As they passed and roared by in full song, the truck driver smiled at the two ingénues and gave them a big '*thumbs up.*' Because his engine was on idle, he could hear Sarah and Marci singing and even picked up one of their tunes. Then as they got about a hundred feet in front of him, he blasted his air horns. Even with their singing at the top of their lungs, the air horns were more than startling. Then each girl gave the trucker a big '*thumbs up,*' in return they laughed themselves silly.

Marci then almost breathless and tuckered out, asked Sarah, "Can you unwrap a Ricola Honey and Herb throat lozenge for me, Sarah? They're in the glove box and have one yourself if you need it."