

"You pulled me like the moon pulls on the tide..."

What A Glorious Day - A Tale Of The Heart

by Debra R. Micas

Sam sat there, eyes closed. The warmth of the sunshine felt good on Sam's face after winding through the tree covered route. Downshifting into third, second and then first, Sam had guided the Miata into a pull off and let the engine cool down. What a glorious day.

The car was not new when Sam got it years ago, but had been purchased from a small used car lot. It was a chilly, fall day when Sam spotted the car sitting in a back row, stopped to take a look and knew at once that the search was over. The car belonged to Sam.

"Never buy a car with your heart," Sam's father had said when told about the car.

"You never saw a car you felt belonged to you and bought it?"

Sam's father's eyes grew soft and with a bit of regret in his voice said "No, but there was one..."

Sam smiled and knew that buying the car was the right thing to do. What was the old saying? "Act in haste and repent in leisure." Sam had decided that any penance to be paid would be well worth the price.

Sam could drive a stick shift, but it never seemed easier than with this car. And why did the car drive better with the top down? Sam kept the top down whenever possible, laughing with delight when driving through the rain. People in other cars would stare through their rolled up windows as though they had been passed by a lunatic. Even in winter, Sam persevered, with the heater on high, bundled up with a heavy coat, hat, scarf and mittens to ward off the cold. Sam always just smiled.

Grocery trips were no longer a chore, but an excuse to drive. Sam started taking off on day trips, driving roads that seemed to be designed for the car, but somehow it seemed that almost every road was designed for that car.

Sam found out that Miata owners tended to name their cars. Friend Robert's car was named "Tango" because the first time he drove the car, he said he heard the music and they danced through the curves as one, a couple doing that romantic dance. "Belle" was another name. "She's a Southern Belle, gentle and smooth on the outside, but she's so ferocious within," the car's owner said.

They all said, "Listen carefully and the car will tell you its name."

Sam listened, but heard nothing.

Sam's marriage ended in divorce. In the lawyer's office, cold words were spoken. "You don't love me anymore, but love someone else. But I don't think you know it." Sam had sat and listened, saying nothing, but always thought about that statement and wondered.

Now, long weekend trips with the car became a regular event. Sam headed to Deal's Gap with its 318 curves, then a trip around Lake Superior, another trip to Nebraska to see Carhenge. One weekend, Sam decided a trip to Memphis to see the famous duck march through the Grand Lobby of the Peabody Hotel was in order. "Might as well drive by Graceland, too," Sam thought, "I can't go to Memphis and not drive by the home of the King."

It was a cool, summer evening as Sam headed towards Memphis. The car had a CD player which Sam sometimes listened to, but tonight the engine was music enough. They snaked northward on unmarked two lane roads that paralleled the Mississippi, going through small towns that were asleep. Crumrod, Mellwood, Elaine. Suddenly, Sam felt an urge to turn on the CD player. Tom Rush sang softly "River runs by my window, River



runs by my door, River runs so sweet..."

The CD skipped and played the verse again. "River runs by my window, River runs by my door, River runs so sweet..." and then the player went dead.

"River," Sam thought, "Your name is River."

River pulled smoothly down the road through the moonlit night.

Sam and River took more and more trips and soon, they were able to be on the road as much as they wanted. Summer trips were always good, sunscreen on and top down. They saw the Rocky Mountains, the San Rafeal Swell, Moab and its Arches, and the petroglyphs in Capitol Reef National Park. They explored Yellowstone and the Tetons, then north to Glacier National Park. They drove south on Highway 1 in California through Monterey, Big Sur to Morro Bay. They went north on Highway 1 through Bolinas, Point Reyes, up to Mendocino. They drove east to the Bay of Fundy to watch the 50 foot tides.

They went south in the winter towards warmer roads. They watched the shrimpers leave port heading out to Galveston Bay and saw the Sandhill Cranes in Aransas. They drove to Key West and watched for the green flash as the sun set. They drove down the California Baja peninsula, finding deserted beaches and watched sunrises and sunsets over the calm waters.

Sam and River always shunned the interstates and drove the two lane roads. Blue line highways was how William Least Heat Moon described them, just blue lines on the map. They saw America that way, the America that is hidden from the interstates, hidden from the lumbering RV's with video cameras stuck out windows in national

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