

Autobiography "Of a Small, Green Ukulele"

- Marilyn Jones

(Senior Fiction First Place Winner)

It was 1937 when an artisan designed me. How proud of my shiny green tint I was, and my sparkling new strings ready to make music. After being placed in the window of a music store, I happily waited for my new owner to discover me there. After a year went by, I was no longer in the window and felt sorry for myself.

The following year, a lady entered the store and said she was looking for a birthday gift for her daughter. The clerk said he had just the thing and I left the store, tucked under her arm as we walked home. She wrapped me with tissue and a pretty bow, ready for the big occasion.

On the day of the party, I met my girlfriend. There were twelve candles on her cake and she was filled with excitement when she unwrapped me. But... there was a "small problem." She didn't know how to read music, even though a book of songs came with me. There was nobody to show her how to place her fingers. Once in a while she would plink my strings, but I had so much more to offer. I led a sad life in the closet with her roller skates and Jaxs. They were taken out daily.

She had nearly forgotten about me until one day her family moved to a different house. There was another closet here, where I lived in the dark.

Ten years later, my little girlfriend had grown up and got married. She packed up her belongings and moved again, giving me a tender pat. In her new home, I lived in a laundry basket in the basement, where I collected dust. Would my talents never be discovered?

The years flew by. Her children grew up and her husband died. One son was an accomplished guitar player. He made beautiful music, but never glanced in my direction. But when he had a son, he gave his boy guitar lessons and they both won many trophies for their skills.

It was now 2019 and my girlfriend had grown old... and so had I. My color was faded, while strings were brittle and broken. She was trying to downsize all the things she had accumulated and decided that it was time for me to go in the trash.

It would be humiliating... to rot in a landfill.

Her son showed her a ukulele that he had made. It had a lovely sound. She showed me to him and said how sorry she was that she never learned to play, before it went to the dumpster. He said that he would take it "and see what I can do."

I was saved in the nick of time. He carefully reglued all of my parts, polished my wood, attached new strings and tuned me. Then he played me. I knew I could, I knew I could!

At Christmastime we were gathered at his home when he announced "Time for your concert, Mom." We all moved to his music room. With a book of old songs, he and his son played a medley of duets. My girlfriend remembered all the words, and with delight, she sang along to each lilting tune. I felt so young and light hearted as we swung into...

"By the sea, by the sea, by the beautiful sea,
You and me, can'tcha see, Oh, how happy we'll be!"

And next....

"Five foot two, eyes of blue
But Oh, what five foot two can do,

Has anybody seen my gal?"

I was nearly bursting my strings with pride as we played...

"Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream
Make him the cutest that I've ever seen"

I would have cried if I'd had any tear ducts. Then she gave me to her grandson, with a big hug.

Now I'm handled tenderly and I hang from pegs on a nice wall. Next to me are some lovely guitars. They like to remind me that they are bigger and have a sweeter sound. But that's O.K..

What will they be like when they're my age? I've survived a long life.

The moral to my story? Never give up. Just when things seem the darkest, you may be rescued at the last minute, and spend the rest of your life making happy music.