

1/8/05

Adios

Marcus Jefferson sped his new BMW Flyatron into the air parking lot of Head Council Member Patrick Henry's office building. Marcus came here everyday. After all, Marcus was Patrick Henry's advisor and secretary. Marcus lived in Valletta, Malta – the capital city a small island in Europe. Marcus swerved his car this way and that until he skidded into his parking space. He quickly headed into the building. When he got inside, he walked toward his boss's office to get the assignments for the day.

After Marcus knocked on the door, Mr. Henry called out, "Come in." Marcus opened the glass door and stepped into the office. As usual, Mr. Henry's office was spotless and grand.

"Hi, boss. How's it going?" Marcus said.

Mr. Henry smiled.

"I came for the assignments. Hey, you know the new law that President Richard passed recently, I think it was really stupid. The government is making unforgivable decisions. Don't you agree?" Marcus asked cheerfully.

Suddenly, Mr. Henry's face got stern. "Marcus, I've ignored your remarks before, but you are increasingly putting down the government. You realize that for five years now, since 2025, we've had a dictatorship, ever since President Richard took over. We can't make bad comments about the government. I should be arresting you. But, you are a nice guy and don't have bad intentions. The least I can do as the head council member for the government is fire you. I'm sorry."

Marcus frowned as he slowly stuttered out of the office. He left the building without saying a word. He got into his BMW drove out of the parking lot and on to the air highway.

Later that day, Marcus went to pick up his friend, Felix, who worked at IBM. He did this everyday at six o'clock. A slim man with a trimmed beard, Felix, came out of the building and scanned the parking lot. Marcus honked the horn in his car.

Felix was startled. He turned and grinned when he saw Marcus waiting. "Yo man, how's it going?"

"We need to talk."

"Whatever, don't be so tensed."

Marcus sighed, "I got fired today."

"WHAT!"

"Yes, my boss fired me because I made a comment that put down the government. At least he didn't arrest me. The person that I despise is President George Richard. I've been thinking all day. It might be possible to start a Freedom of Speech club and have people join without the government knowing. Meetings could be once a week.

"Where will your dream meetings be?" Felix asked sarcastically.

"First of all, I'm serious. And, the meetings will be in that warehouse that closed down last year. It's big enough. We will let anyone join," Marcus replied.

Wide-eyed, Felix spoke, "O-K! Why are you doing this? And won't people tell the government? We will all get arrested. How are you going to get freedom of speech?"

"Felix, obviously we're doing this to get freedom of speech. And people won't tell the government if they want freedom of speech like us. The only problem is that I don't know how we'll go about getting freedom of speech, we'll decide at the first

meeting. The first meeting is in a month. Let's see how many people come. We have a lot to prepare," Marcus said confidently.

Felix stared at Marcus with wide eyes and his eyebrows raised.

"You are joining, right?"

Felix woke up from his expression, "Oh, yeah, of course."

"Good, tell your other friends to pass the word around."

Felix smiled, "I got fired, too."

"WHAT?" Marcus exclaimed as his jaws dropped open.

"Gotcha! I was just kidding," Felix laughed. "Let's get out of the parking lot."

The friends got a new floating surround sound system and a floating cordless microphone. Finally, on a Saturday, it was time for the meeting.

Marcus and Felix headed to the warehouse with hopes that lots of people would come. When they got in, there were thousands of people in the gigantic warehouse. It was packed. Marcus and Felix sprinted up to the front of the crowd. Marcus stood at the podium he had set up. Into the microphone, Marcus said, "This is a miracle. So many people! Even kids! Where did you people park? There are hardly any cars outside!"

Most of the people said that they had parked a few blocks away.

"Anyway, I'm Marcus Jefferson. My friend Felix Augustine, who's standing right next to me, organized this group with me. You're all now part of the Freedom of Speech club. How many of you people like President Richard," Marcus questioned.

Nobody moved.

"How many of you want him gone? Who wants a democracy back? Who wants their rights to speak freely back? I do! I just got fired for putting down the government!"

Marcus was very excited. Felix was grinning.

The whole crowd stood up and cheered.

“Ok, ok, that’s good,” Marcus said calmly again. “This is the right club to be in. My plan is to overthrow the government. But, how? Any ideas?”

“Impossible!”

“That’s stupid.”

“We will get killed!”

Everybody shouted things about how that idea was stupid and dangerous.

Finally, one kid shouted, “Lets protest. No, better yet, let’s riot!”

The crowd got quiet. Eyes stared at both the brave kid and Marcus.

Marcus said, “That’s perfect. Listen to this boy, people. He has the heart that you should have to get your rights back. He has the braveness that we need. I want one person from every family to come at this time every Saturday. We can plan how to do this so precisely that it will work. Think about it. The meeting is over. See you next week.” Marcus and Felix walked out confidently with admiring eyes staring at them and the warehouse buzzing with talk.

Week after week, the FOS club met at the warehouse. They shared ideas but didn’t get very far.

One meeting, a man ran in yelling at the top of his lungs, “The word is out. The government knows about the club.”

Marcus thought fast with his very precise mind. The next thing he said was very serious, “This is the plan. I want nobody to come next meeting. Government police will probably come. They will take me away and think that this club has come to an end. I know they will want to kill me for trying to overthrow the government. They will not want the public to know. I’m almost sure that they will kill me on the day of the annual

festival two weeks from now. I'll give you a signal on that day and you will riot until you win. The signal to riot is when you here the word 'Adios'. Get to the president and make him surrender. He will be there. I want the next president to be Felix."

The people were silent.

Felix burst out, "No, I'll sacrifice myself. You don't deserve to die!"

Marcus solemnly stated, "It's my honor to die for our rights. It's the right thing to do."

That week was quiet in Malta's capital city, Valletta, because everybody knew that Marcus was to die.

The next meeting, Marcus came to the warehouse. When he stepped in to the building, he was surrounded by guards. Without a word, he was grabbed by two hands. The guards ran out with Marcus and stuffed him into a cop car. He was driven away.

Later that day, before Marcus stepped into the jailhouse he took a deep breath and mumbled to himself, "Goodbye, Malta." He knew that he'd never come back out of that building.

The day of the festival came. The place was crowded with people, all of them thinking of the same thing – rioting. Later on, the president gave his usual speech. His last words in the speech were, "I'm sure many of you know Marcus Jefferson. He has done some bad things. He wanted to tell the public one word. *Adios.*"

It sounded like rain as thousands of people ran toward the president. There were thousands of faces full of fury. Instead of making the president surrender, the people had let a shot ring out in the air. President Richard was on the ground, dead.

Someone yelled, "The people have taken over!"

Cheers lasted for what seemed forever. They even came from many cops that had reluctantly worked for President Richard. That day in Valletta was joyous but sorrowful.

The crowd chanted, “Fe-lix Au-gus-tine! Fe-lix Au-gus-tine!”

Felix ran up to the podium and spoke, “I’m glad to be appointed President of Malta by the people in honor of my best friend, Marcus Jefferson. We will miss him. Malta will become a democracy again!”

The crowd cheered.

Felix started again, “I’m sure that if Marcus were here with us, he would say something like, ‘Don’t let anything stop you from getting your rights or your dreams’.”