

July 4, 1786

by Serenity Stone

To-day, this Tuesday of July, we celebrate and reminisce upon the mark of ten years of independence of this our great nation, the United States of America. Though three years have passed since the signing of the Treaty of Paris, I, as do many around me, hold that our nation was truly born in freedom at the moment of its declaration, when brave voices first dared to name liberty aloud.

The air is thick with summer warmth, and yet it feels alive with something greater still; memory, gratitude, and hope intertwined. I find myself reflecting upon the long years of struggle that led us here, and upon the cost at which this freedom was purchased. Ten years is but a short span in the life of a nation, and yet it feels as though a new world has already been carved from the old.

I hung a flag this morning at dawn, outside of my bedroom window. To see the stars and stripes blowing in the wind, within the house and upon the land I call my own; to have it catch the first light of day, the same light that once rose upon weary soldiers and gave them cause to endure, swelled my heart with pride.

It seemed to me, in that quiet hour, that the world itself paused to regard it. The fabric moved as though it carried memory within it, of hardship, of courage, of all that was endured so that such a morning might be possible. I stood there longer than I intended, hands still, breath slow, as if any sudden motion might break the spell of it.

There is a particular kind of silence at dawn that feels almost sacred. Not empty, but full, of promise not yet spoken aloud. And in that silence, I found myself thinking not only of what has been won, but of what must now be built with these fragile years of peace.

I confess, my heart felt both heavy and bright all at once. For pride is not a simple thing; it carries within it remembrance, and remembrance is never entirely gentle.

Still, I would not trade the weight of it. Not for anything.

I will celebrate this day with my family, gathered in simple joy rather than grandeur, for it is in such humble moments that the meaning of independence is most keenly felt. There shall be shared bread, laughter, and stories of what once was and what may yet come to be. And as evening falls, I shall look upon the sky with quiet pride, and give thanks that I am witness to the early years of this experiment in liberty.

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I will celebrate for the free, for the fallen, for those who fought and never saw the fruits of their labor. And I will hold them in my heart, in my mind, and in the very soil of this nation, where every road and river seems to remember more than it says aloud.

For though we mark this day with joy, it is never joy alone. It is layered with reverence, with gratitude so deep it aches in the chest, and with the quiet understanding that freedom is never gifted without cost. It is carried forward, hand to hand, year to year, by those who choose not to forget.

So I will raise my thoughts like a candle in the early light: steady, unassuming, but unyielding. For them. For us. For all that still lies ahead and must yet be shaped with care.

And if the wind carries my words beyond my window this morning, then let it carry them gently. Like a promise kept, and a promise still being made.

And let them hear the words as they rise; not merely spoken, but carried, trembling slightly at the edges where memory and meaning meet.

“Oh, say can you see...”

It is not just a song in that moment, but something older than ink on paper—something passed through breath and breaking voice, through candlelit rooms and open fields and the long, uncertain hours between fear and hope. Each note feels less like performance and more like testimony.

My voice wavers as it continues, not from uncertainty, but from the weight of all that it gathers in its path: the living, the lost, the ones whose names were never recorded but whose absence is still felt in the bones of this land. There is a crack in it, soft, human, undeniable, and I do not hide it. I cannot.

And when tears come, I do not turn them away. They fall without apology, because some truths are too large to hold neatly behind composure. They belong here as much as anything else: the pride, the grief, the gratitude that refuses to sit still.

In that moment, it feels as though even the air listens differently, like the world itself understands that remembrance is also a form of devotion.

And if anyone were to stand near enough to hear it all, they would not hear perfection.

They would hear love.