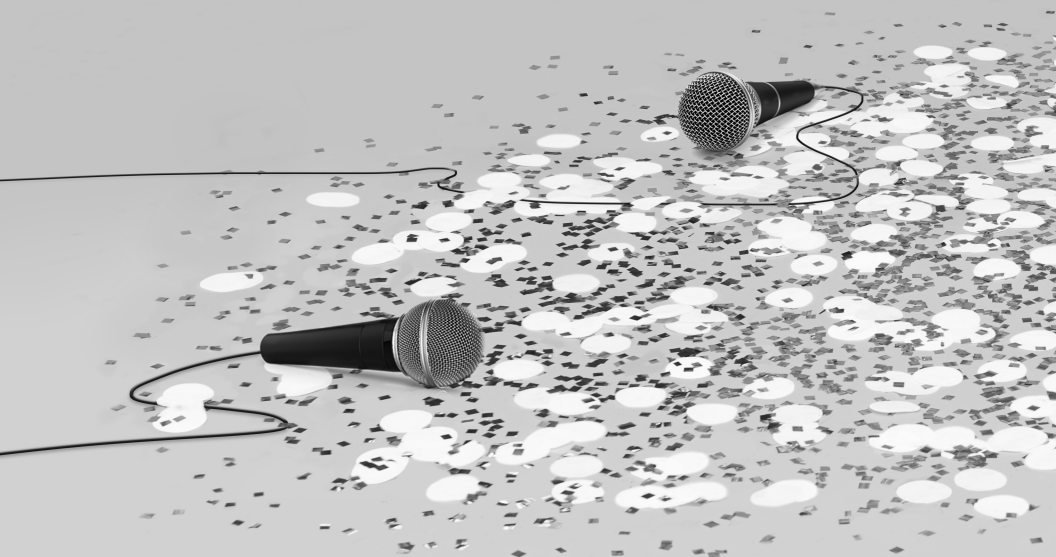


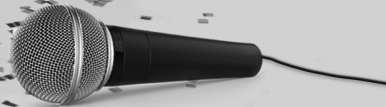
Turn



It Up!

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Calonita

Point



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CHAPTER ONE

Lidia

WERP!

The noise was so loud, Lidia Sato almost fell out of her bed.

She sat up and stared sleepily at the Sailor Moon alarm clock on her nightstand.

It was only 6:52 a.m.! And that noise sounded like it was coming from inside the house!

EEEE—WERP!

There it was again! What was that noise? Didn't her family realize she was still sleeping? Her alarm wasn't due to go off for another eight minutes!

Lidia coveted sleep the way her mother loved chocolate, her brother collected Pokémon cards, and her grandmother had a daily date with *The Price Is Right*.

SCREECH!

Lidia covered her ears with her pillow. The sound reminded her of nails on a chalkboard, but she wasn't at school. She was home in bed.

She pinched herself to make sure. Yep, still in bed. Where had she heard this noise before?

EEEE!

Aha! Suddenly, the sleep fog lifted and the answer was clear. That was the sound of a mic being plugged into an amp that someone had forgot was turned on. But Lidia had to be wrong. No one in her house would be stupid enough to plug in an amp this early.

“Good morning, Naples, Florida!” Lidia heard her ten-year-old brother, Douglas, yell into a microphone.

Lidia groaned. Sleep was now a lost cause. Anyway, it was almost time to get ready for her job as a first mate/unofficial cruise director/member of the fun squad on Salty Sam’s pirate tourist cruise. She stretched her sore limbs, pulled back her plaid lavender comforter, and jumped out of bed. Pushing her long black hair out of her eyes, she slipped her feet into her fuzzy rainbow-colored slippers. Wait till she got her hands on Douglas!

“We are coming to you live from the Sato household where Evie Fukui will now be singing her number-one Japanese pop hit, ‘Bubble Gum Love.’ Take it away, Evie!”

Evie? Her grandmother was in on this pre-alarm travesty too?

“No, *you* take it away, Douglas Sato!” Lidia heard her grandmother say. “I’m making lunches. I can’t solo right now.”

“Come on, Grandma! It’s just one song!” Douglas begged. There was something about his caramel-coated voice that let him get away with murder. “Please? I need to practice my guitar solo before lessons this afternoon, and ‘Bubble Gum Love’ is my favorite song to play.”

Dougie was such a kiss-up.

“Aww, all right. Let me just put this turkey sandwich in your lunch box and I’ll warm up my voice.” Lidia rolled her eyes—Grandma Evie never passed up the chance to hold a mic. Her grandmother began a series of warm-ups at full volume.

It was official. Her family was insane.

Sure, her family kept a karaoke machine in the dining room the way other families had a china cabinet, and it wasn’t unheard of for someone to break out the microphone while washing dishes, but pre-alarm a.m. jam sessions needed to be banned. Lidia would mention this at dinner that night, but she knew she wouldn’t win the argument. Music was her family’s life and there was no escaping it.

Everyone at Bradley Academy, where she went to school (and where her mom was headmistress), loved studying at Lidia’s because there was always a chance someone would burst into song, like they were secretly being taped for a Japanese American version of *The Partridge Family* (Grandma Evie’s second favorite show after *The Price Is Right*). It also didn’t hurt that the Satos lived on campus in one of the faculty houses. Instead of holing up in the tomb-like library, students could walk to Lidia’s in five minutes flat and be serenaded.

RIP! The growl of Douglas’s guitar solo kicked in as Lidia walked slowly to her closet to get dressed. She winced when he strummed the wrong chord.

“Wait for me! I just have to brush my teeth!” Lidia heard her mom shout. “I’ll be down in time for the chorus.”

“I’ll grab my acoustic!” her dad added. She could hear him running down the hall. He banged on Lidia’s door. “Lidie, up and at ’em! Family jam session over Cheerios starts now!”

Lidia banged her head against her closet door over and over again. How could her family love to sing this much?

Lidia *liked* to sing. If she didn’t, she and her best friend, Sydney, wouldn’t have lobbied to become co-captains of Bradley Academy’s all-female a cappella group, the Nightingales, this coming sophomore year. They’d dreamed of a cappella gold and glory since they’d started at the upper campus in seventh grade. Lidia’s mom—who had been in Bradley’s original Nightingales back in the day—still talked about how the group made her high school experience and how much fun a cappella competitions were. But by the time Lidia and Sydney joined freshman year, the Nightingales’ reign was over. Still the girls weren’t worried. They had a plan to turn the group around and bring home the team’s first trophy in years at the a cappella kickoff competition, Turn It Up, in November.

“If we win at Turn It Up, then we’ll move on to the next a cappella competition and then the next, and before you know it, we will be taking home the golden fruit at the Orange Grove Championship next May,” Sydney had declared. She was so sure of this, she had made Lidia a papier-mâché Orange Grove trophy. It sat on Lidia’s dresser along with Sydney’s other gifts, like “best friend forever” cards, Sailor Moon tees (since she knew Lidia was obsessed with the character), and even her old iPod, loading it up with new songs they could use for the Nightingales.

If they got enough girls to join the group.

Lidia shook her head clear of the negative thoughts Sydney hated. (“Don’t jinx us!” she’d say. She was way more positive than Lidia was about these things.) But it was hard not to be skeptical that the Nightingales would make it another year. Last year, they’d barely had enough members to remain a group. Most of the team had graduated in June, leaving them with a handful of returning sophomores and juniors they’d have to convince to sign up again.

They were in tenth grade now and Syd’s dream had never wavered. But if Lidia was being honest with herself, *her* faith in the Nightingales had. She was secretly convinced the group would fold, so she’d started taking dance classes at school and at Integral Dance Arts. She’d wanted to have something that would look good on college applications in case her a cappella career was over, but then the strangest thing happened: She fell in love with dance. This past summer, she’d even bumped up her classes to four a week. After her shift at Salty Sam’s, she’d run to hip-hop on Mondays, ballet on Tuesdays, a contemporary dance class on Wednesdays, and an acrobatics class on Thursdays—she couldn’t decide which class she liked more. It didn’t matter. She’d have to cut back to one the following week when school and Nightingales practice started up again. As co-captains, she and Syd would be working on songs and arrangements after school four days a week.

It killed her to think about giving up her dance classes, but every time she tried to tell Syd how she felt, she choked. Her best friend lived and breathed the Nightingales. How could she tell her that she wanted to have time for things other than singing? Syd had them sharing earbuds to listen to music, picking songs that wouldn’t make

the judges scream “No more Gaga!” and watching a cappella YouTube videos from winning groups as near as Port St. Lucie and as far away as Portugal.

Lidia smiled to herself. Only Syd could be that obsessive and still be her charming self. Her best friend was going to make a great actress/singer someday.

It was Lidia who didn’t know what she wanted to be yet, and sometimes that worried her.

“*Your smile makes my gum go pop, pop, pop!*” Grandma Evie sang at the top of her lungs as Douglas chimed in on his guitar. As promised, Mom came in on the chorus as did Dad and his guitar. “Lidia, get down here!” her grandmother sang.

No one was allowed to sit out the music in the Sato house. Maybe her friends were right. The Satos were missing out on their chance to be the musical Kardashians.

Lidia started dancing around her closet to the beat. She had to admit it—her grandmother’s song was catchy. She turned on the light in her closet and contemplated clothing options for the Gulf Coast in mid-August. Next week, she’d be back to wearing her pale-blue-and-yellow-plaid uniform, but today she was happy to slip on a gray tank top and slouchy silk shorts. They showed off the dancer’s legs she’d earned by doing a hundred scissor kicks in a row and two hundred pliés nightly for the last two months. After years of hating her tall, lanky frame, she was now embracing what her dance school owner called “the perfect dancer’s body.”

By the time she got downstairs, the jam session had ended and everyone was sitting around the kitchen table.