

## Chapter One

### September, 1980

We are the generation who raved at the Beatles, coveted San Francisco's "Summer of Love," and hitchhiked around the world. Born in the fifties, schooled in the sixties, we graduated after Vietnam and before AIDS. In September, 1980, thousands of us roamed Europe.

I stick out my thumb, wincing at Renaults and Citroens that splash me on the exit ramp leaving Paris. Boys in tee shirts and jeans, with shaggy beards and packs at their feet, line the ramp. Line the ramp for hours. Maybe days.

I no longer count either the cars or the hours that pass under the scorching September sun, as slimy sweat pours through my yellow blouse and exhaust from cars and trucks spray me in dusty grit. I rip a chunk from my baguette, offering some to the sunburned man behind me.

When, finally, a Mercedes screeches to a stop, it stops next to me, the only woman on the ramp. I open the door and ask, "*Sud?*" as in "are you headed south?" which, of course he is, it is a southbound exit, but I am checking out the driver to see if I want to get in.

"*Ab, oui. Sud,*" says the balding man. He stinks of men's cologne. Not a man I'd want to date, but safe enough for a ride.