

## Day 6000

When I opened my eyes that morning, I couldn't help feeling strange. I'd been inside so many bodies, even that of Rhiannon, but nothing was like this. Not that the feeling was bad; it was actually quite good. I'd been reborn, and I think this character felt the same. I immediately understood the notion that my new body was special; I wasn't sure why, but I enjoyed the feeling. Today was going to be unique.

Her name was Madeleine Trolinger— Madie for short. Upon hearing my alarm, the Doom theme song, I awoke without even a single shred of exhaustion. Finally, someone who wasn't always trudging about yawning with droopy eyes. Quickly accessing some basics from Madie's mind, I found that she shared a room with her younger sister Olivia. I had to be careful not to wake her up. Unfortunately, Madie's bed— she knew this all too well— made a shrill squeak like a dying mouse every time it moved in any way. I sighed. Luckily, her bed decided to cooperate. I rose from the comfortable cavern of blankets, then took a look around. The beach-themed room shone with memories, even in the darkness. Artistic photographs covered the walls near her bed and some little figurines and trinkets sat neatly organized on her nightstand. On her desk were many assembled Lego sets that belonged to Olivia, as well as a jar of pencils. There was so much to take in but not enough time to admire it all. I soon escaped the room in silence.

My daily routine consisted of using the bathroom, straightening my hair, getting dressed, brushing my teeth, and gathering my things. Madie did not often eat breakfast on a school morning. This time, I thought I'd treat her. I accessed her memories and discovered that she enjoyed waffles with Nutella. After straightening my hair, I put some waffles in the toaster, then

walked back to my room to choose an outfit. Of course, Madie always checked the weather on her phone beforehand. I soon decided on skinny jeans and a t-shirt with her favorite band sweatshirt. Deciding to stay private for Madie, I did not look at my reflection in the bathroom mirror until I'd finished changing. Turns out Madie was actually really pretty, though she didn't always think so. I took this time to access more memories while staring at my mirrored self.

My rounded face was soft and clear of acne with freckle-decorated cheeks. Accentuated by a pair of rectangular glasses, my large, wide brown eyes gazed curiously at the figure before me. My thin nose and small mouth also contributed to my looks— or rather, Madie's looks. When I flashed a smile, I took notice of the neat row of teeth in her mouth; she'd finally gotten her braces off several months ago. My short, straight hair flowed down to my chin and curved inward to add shape. Madie was quite lovely, yet her facial features weren't the only nice thing about her appearance. Despite being eighteen, she had a short and slender build; all of her proportions connected together perfectly. This was Madie. This was me.

After some memory manipulation, I learned about her family and friends. Madie had two younger siblings, Noah and Olivia, and loving parents by the names of Pete and Lori. Speaking of family, Madie's brother Noah needed to be woken up. I did so for her, then quickly finished getting ready. I gathered up my things and glanced over them. An Attack on Titan messenger bag contained my binder, some notebook, and other school supplies. A little black backpack held my planner, wallet, calculator, and earbuds. Then there was my flute, carefully cleaned the night before. Once I loaded everything into my car, I waited for my brother to arrive. Ah yes, Madie's car; a silver Pontiac, purchased from her best friend, Aurora Wiltfong. Suddenly, I emerged from daydreaming and we left for school.

Today was a big day for Madie— a sad one, but great nonetheless. It was May 15th: her last band concert. I accessed her mind once more for directions to her school, her parking spot, each of her locker locations and combinations, her class schedule, and her friends' names. As I drove to school, I let myself experience only her.

This is how it feels to blink her eyes.

This is how it feels to listen to her music.

This is how it feels to breathe with her lungs.

When I arrived at the school, I was overcome with nostalgic sadness. This day was going to be so painfully bittersweet. I soon parted ways with my brother after entering. I dropped off my items in my band locker and sat opposite it with my binder and notebooks. Suddenly, I heard a familiar voice and turned my head to see none other than the school's band director. Delving into Madie's mind, I recognized his name to be Mr. Andrew Jacobi. Now, Madie was quite fond of her band director, so I figured I would greet him.

"Hello, Mr. Jacobi."

"Hey, Madie. So uh. Today's the day. Your last concert. How are you feeling?"

"Excited, but still pretty sad." As my tone of voice softened, his expression changed slightly to one of sadness. He perked back up for my sake.

"You'll be alright. I'm looking forward to receiving the gifts."

"Thank you," I replied. He smiled at me, then walked away. I understood at that moment why Madie admired him.

Soon after the conversation, I was off to first hour. Madie was clearly a soft-spoken and highly philosophical individual. I really wanted to learn more about her, but I needed to wait. I

walked to AP English with my earbuds in, contemplating the complexities of the universe. Once the bell rang, I worked on analyzing poetry and studying literary terms with Madie's good friends, whose names I learned relatively quickly. Unlike other bodies I'd inhabited, Madie had depth. Sure, on the surface of her mind's ocean, there were the simple things. But if I dove down far enough, I would certainly find incredible things.

Before I knew what had happened, I was in second hour. I wanted to give Madie some special memories today, so I opened up her notebook and began to draw. Over the years, I'd gained much skill in my drawing capabilities. Today, I transferred them so Madie could draw something amazing. Out of all the bodies I'd inhabited thus far, her imagination was the most unique and powerful. I could create so much art for her.

"Remember this," I whispered to myself.

When second hour ended, homeroom began and passed by in a blur. Third hour was relatively uninteresting, but I kept myself busy solving equations. I stared at the clock with my inquisitive eyes, waiting for this class to be over, so I could go to band. My wish, her wish, soon came true with the ringing of the bell. A sense of excitement established itself in my heart as I walked alongside my friend Trevor up to the 800 hallway. He shared in Madie's band nostalgia the whole way, expressing his sadness at being a senior. If there was one thing I appreciated, it was the kindness of Madie's friends.

"Hey, Jaycie. Hello Desiree." These were two of Madie's closest friends and they both played the flute. From viewing Madie's memories, she loved them very much and they loved her. Madie was lucky; she had so many people who cared about her. The only problem was how often she couldn't see it. Wait. I didn't mean to search so deeply into her mind.

“Hi, Madie. How are you feeling?”

“Sad.”

“Oh Madie, me too.” In a world of salt, Desiree was sweet. She hugged me with a certain warmth that made me feel like everything was going to be okay. For a moment, I forgot who I really was. Emotions began flowing in my blood, but I had to save them for tonight. It wasn’t time yet.

Once lunch ended, I grabbed my flute and music, then entered the band room. Our rehearsal was entertaining as usual and Jacobi acted in his silly way. According to Madie’s memory, he often said funny things that made everyone laugh, so she took down his quotes and planned to make them into a book. By this time, she’d already finished the work, but I collected quotes for her again anyway. When the time came to play, I began to tremble slightly. Would I be able to get out a sound? When I blew into my instrument, it was as though I’d been playing my whole life. Everything I played was near perfection and Madie’s joy from being in band was revitalized in my own self.

“Remember this. Remember the fun you had today,” I whispered to myself. Band eventually ended with Desiree making me laugh and I walked to creative writing with newfound happiness. The next three classes flew by, bringing me and Madie ever closer to a life-changing moment. I drove myself and my brother home that afternoon without speaking a single word.

The call time for tonight was 6:30. The concert began at 7:00, and I had never been more nervous. I mean, Madie had never been more nervous. This was her last Ottawa High School band concert and I had no idea how the experience would go. I spent some time making myself look really nice and straightened my bow tie, then sprayed on some perfume. Once Noah was

ready, we drove back to the school knowing that plenty of family would come to watch. The band spent a few minutes warming up, then silenced ourselves in preparation for Mr. Jacobi's pre-concert speech.

"Seniors, it's finally time. You've all worked really hard for this moment, and I could not be more proud of everything you all have done. I know it feels like the end, but it's not. We'll have more fun together before the school year is over. Now, let's put on a great concert." He smiled a big smile which received applause from the band.

"Are you trying to make us cry already?!" a voice shouted. The voice was that of Mackenzie, the first chair flutist of wind ensemble and one of my, or rather, Madie's good friends.

"Oh boy. Please don't start crying." Jacobi appeared concerned. He quickly decided that was a good place to end his speech. He dismissed the symphonic band with a wave and sent the wind ensemble members on their separate way. After some preparation, the concert began. The songs symphonic band played were truly wonderful and took me— well, Madie— on an adventure. I found myself lost in thought for quite some time until it was wind ensemble's turn. I walked with a heavy heart to the band room and found it harder and harder to maintain my personality. Madie had a powerful influence on me whether she realized it or not.

Once I found myself walking out onto the stage, my surroundings began to seem so surreal. I waited patiently for the tuning note, then after tuning, I looked out into the audience. My heart raced. I looked up at Mr. Jacobi as he raised his baton.

This is how performing a concert feels in her body.

Every note, every rhythm, everything was absolutely perfect as I played the pieces of

music before me. I could not have asked for a better performance. The audience applause, however, would have to wait.

“Well hold on now, Jacobi, I don’t think we’re done yet,” a clarinet player named Bailey announced. He froze. This was expected for the last concert, and yet he had no idea what was going to happen next. “Everybody ready?”

I reached into Madie’s mind for a second and realized that we seniors were going to play the Avengers theme on kazoos; mine happened to be in my pocket, so I took it out and we began playing, much to the amusement of the audience. Once we had finished with the song and the announcing of band award winners, it was that time. I soon learned that every year at the last concert, the seniors would present a gift to the band director in order to thank him/her for everything. I found myself growing anxious as the time to give my gift approached. I watched in anticipation as various items were handed to him with a little speech to accompany the item. Finally, my turn came.

“Seniors, we’ve done it. We have reached the end of concert band season at Ottawa once and for all. I have enjoyed being a part of this band so much. It’s strange to think how quickly these high school years have gone by. Mr. Jacobi, when you first started here three years ago, you were taking over for a true legend which was not an easy task, as I’m sure you can attest to. You learned every special little quirk of our band program and tried new things. You made mistakes along the way, but you learned from them. Just look at you now! You’ve challenged us every year and we have grown so much in our skill. We work so hard all year long and you have guided us.” I could feel emotion starting to well up inside me, but this time, I didn’t stop it. “But most importantly, you are genuine and you care about every single one of us. You are also

perhaps the most relatable teacher and you make us laugh for that reason. I truly admire you as a person and your passion for music has no limit. Now, I present to you a little something to show my appreciation and that of the band. As we all very well know, Jacobi says some pretty strange and funny things just about every day. For that reason, I made a book of your best quotes, the best memories, and other special things.” I proceeded to approach Mr. Jacobi and carefully hand him Madie’s handcrafted book. I almost didn’t notice that I was crying Madie’s tears.

“Oh Madie, thank you. It’s not the end yet. Please don’t cry.”

“You’re welcome,” I replied softly. With that, we finished the rest of the concert and the experience was over. The audience applauded like madmen, standing and cheering to no end. I reveled in the moment as myself, then let her enjoy it.

“Remember this day, Madie. Remember the emotions. Remember the goodness.” I begged her to remember. I didn’t want her to forget this moment. Soon after, pictures were taken, hugs were given, and words were spoken. Truly, I could not have wanted a better day for her.

That night, as I lay in my bed after a fresh shower, I reflected on my day and smiled. Ordinarily, I just go through each day without a second thought as to what lies beyond. What happens to a person the next day when I leave? Very few had made me wonder what came next, but Madie was one of them. She had a heart and soul that I would cherish forever and I admit, I would miss her. But I knew one thing; she would be okay moving on. The time was 11:59. Less than a minute.

“Goodbye, Madie,” I whispered.