



November Seventh

I had lost all hope and desire to live, and I was ready to end it all. I watched my reflection in the mirror as I slumped down in pain on my bed, with my knees apart, supporting my elbows at either side. I eyed and touched the old, worn out quilt which dressed my bed, a reminder of a happy youth, back when I had thought that I could change the world with mere music. I felt failure and frustration reflected back at me. Forty-five years, and nothing to show but an aching back, courtesy of a miserable, dead-end job. There was no joy in my eyes. I could see no future. I took a few more gulps of my beer.

Since my earliest memory, I, Pablo Arturo Adrián, have wanted to be a musician. I learned to read and write music as

a child, and I could play the guitar, the piano, the drums, the trumpet and the flute. The flute was my favorite, perhaps because it was the most challenging

of all, and it allowed me to tell the world how I felt when words would not suffice. I've always had a need to express those feelings in the best way I knew how. That is why, I suppose, I actually wrote down some of the music in my heart although they were incomplete pieces, much like my life. My entire life could be played out in music, upbeat and happy at some points, sad and lonely at others. Recently though,

The character of Pablo is loosely based on one of the author's acquaintances. Interested in playing the flute himself, Gabriel Morales is now struggling to learn the instrument. He hopes to find his own Catalina one day soon. Web site: <http://GabrielMorales.net/>

nothing but melancholy music would leave my instruments.

Lately, I had been going out with a colleague and a friend of mine named Charlie after work. We'd usually go, accompanied by other friends and colleagues, to his house or to the local bar, simplistically, but appropriately named "The Barrelhouse."

At The Barrelhouse we'd indulge in the abundant consumption of intoxicating spirits while we watched some local band play a half-decent rendition of some popular song on the little stage near the entrance. We'd play cards maybe, or told stories and dirty jokes, complained about our jobs and talked about what might have been as the hours passed by and the day's pay was converted to fermented inebriants.

The more I consumed, the less I cared about anything else. Getting a little wasted made my life more manageable. The pain seemed to dissipate and turn into irony and cynical laughter.

But the pain ran deep within my heart. It was always there and particularly apparent to me when I was alone. The strongest liquor in the world couldn't mask that pain now. I finished my last bottle of beer, leaving only a little bit at the bottom and looked into my now red eyes looking back at me on the mirror.

Music is my passion, and it is my pain. It was time to end that pain for good. And so I lifted my right hand and pointed the gun at my temple. I closed my eyes and pressed against the weapon with my sweaty palm, wiggling my right index finger. Then I swiftly pulled back the trigger. BANG!

I opened my eyes and pushed the thought aside only to have my vision blurred by tears. Not only was I a failure, but a coward too. An imaginary trigger was all I could manage to pull. I was frustrated and angry at the world and myself. I was lonely, without a love to warm my heart. It'd been nearly fifteen years. It was pitiful. Life meant nothing now, not this way. Perhaps not as dramatically, but it would soon be over.

I had some pills, which my doctor had prescribed for me some time ago. I remembered he explicitly warned me not to exceed the dosage, and a warning print-

ed on the label which read "WARNING: DO NOT TAKE IN COMBINATION WITH ANY ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE." I decided to take these pills, go to sleep and never wake up.

Nobody would really care or know that Pablo Arturo Adrián was once around. I would die an unknown musician in a world that never noticed I was around. Days would pass, probably until my rent was due, before anybody would come to find what I had done. Hopefully the shock would give that old greedy landlord of mine a fatal heart attack. Then, at least, I would've done something good for the world. I saw a miserable, pained man stumble to the medicine cabinet and grab a bottle of pills. I stumbled back to the bed, emptied the bottle in my mouth, using the last of the beer to wash it down, and invited death.

I put my hands over my face, preparing myself for the end — I did not know how long it would take — and looked into the mirror through my tears to find something very unusual: I saw my reflection stand up and walk away. Confused and amazed I closed and rubbed my eyes. When I opened them, I was no longer in my bed or my room. The bed I occupied now was bigger and more elegant, as was the entire room. The walls were covered with photos, posters, news clippings and encased compact discs. I could also see various instruments around the room and bookshelves filled with books. This was definitely not my apartment.

A beautiful woman with long blonde hair and sparkling eyes was walking towards me. I could not decide just what to do. I hadn't the faintest clue how I had gotten there, except that it all seemed to come through the mirror, but that was crazy, of course. As she approached, I was sure she'd stop and question my presence here, wherever here was. Instead, she completely ignored me, and walked toward the other version of myself. I heard the alternate version and the woman greet each other, with genuine and obvious affection. I heard him call her Catalina — what a beautiful name! She smiled and I was taken aback by her smile, so radiant and sincere. There seemed to be a magical aura about her. And I could not remember being as happy as this "other

me" seemed to be, except perhaps as a child.

Moments later, there was a knock at the door, and the couple welcomed a tall, smiling man.

"Hey, Tom!"

They were obviously good friends and enjoyed each other's company. They progressed through the room and beyond my field of vision. I was very curious and decided to follow. Besides, what else could I do? I passed a mirror hung on the wall. They were all sitting on finely detailed and crafted chairs around an equally impressive table now. They had served themselves three glasses of champagne, one for each. The tall man seemed vaguely familiar to me now. I continued to be ignored by all. They were talking.

"Pablo, I'm so excited! I can't believe that you're going to play in Paris. It's a wonderful place to spend our anniversary! We'll take a ferry like the one we were on when we first met. I remember how almost five years ago, on a ferry to New York, I heard a handsome stranger playing something wonderful on his flute. I don't know exactly why, but the way you were playing, the emotion I felt — I knew you were something special back then," Catalina said

"Yeah, that Pablo sure has a way with the flute, don't he? Just lucky you took that ferry, huh Pablo? If I recall, you were on route to see my friend, Joe Perring, for the record contract, remember?" said the tall man named Tom.

I had taken the liberty of going through some of the books on the shelves by now, and was surprised to find my musical works completed and published. The three of them continued to talk.

"How could I forget? I had some spare time, and I decided to take the ferry across. Now, let's make a toast to our trip to Paris, good friends and destiny," the alternate me said.

"Aye, aye," they all shouted.

The ringing sound was now unbearable and causing me increasing pain. The sound was overwhelming, and my vision started to blur. I heard the sound of a mirror breaking.

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After they clinked their glasses together, the sound reverberated throughout my head and continued to get louder. I turned to see the mirror I had passed earlier. In it I saw myself asleep in my old bed, and I cried out. The ringing sound was now unbearable and causing me increasing pain. The sound was overwhelming, and my vision started to blur. I heard the sound of a mirror breaking. Then, I lost consciousness.

I woke up, with most of my clothes and one shoe on, to find an emptied twelve pack, an open pill bottle and some scattered pills all over the carpet. The pill bottle read "Essential Vitamins Dietary Supplement. Now with more Nutrients!" I had swallowed the wrong pills. I glanced at my clock.

It was afternoon already, November 7th, and I had missed work. I could not have told you how long I'd slept, or what exactly transpired the night before, but only that I felt somehow different today. Last night I had tried to end my life, but today I felt like starting a new life instead. I had a renewed interest in life and a sense of purpose in me that had been absent for a long time. I felt at peace, confident. Why, I wasn't quite sure. All I did know for sure was that things would be different, that the time for change was now.

I showered and put on clean clothes. It was too late to go to work, and I was starving. I decided to go have a late lunch at the Riverside restaurant. On a hunch, I took my flute with me. I was having an after-lunch coffee when I overheard a conversation between a tall man and the manager of the restaurant, a fat mustache-sporting man.

The manager had lost a soloist and needed a musician to replace him for at least the rest of the week. I took the opportunity to present myself to this tall man when he was alone. He said his name was Tom, and I vaguely recalled seeing him at the restaurant in the past. He was in the music industry and served as musical adviser to his good friend, the manager of the Riverside. I played some tunes on my flute for Tom, and he was so impressed with my playing that he con-

vinced the manager to hire me on the spot.

I called my boss the next day and told him that I was quitting. Charlie called me a little after. He said he was at The Barrelhouse and that they had a seat waiting for me. I politely declined.

I still play at the Riverside now and again, but I play mostly at clubs and special events. It's been about two years since that fateful November 7th. Tom and I have become good friends, and he's been guiding me and helping me out ever since. I'm very big on the local scene now. I have just about everything I could want, and things just seem to get better. I moved out of the old, crummy apartment and into a warm, elegant house. A little fame can go a long way with the ladies, too, but I digress. In fact, the only thing that is missing in my heart is a true and sincere love to call my own.

I went back to The Barrelhouse, but this time to play my own music. Some people come just to hear me play, and the word on the street is that The Barrelhouse has the best music in town. The owner always gives me a smile when I come in to play, and he jokes about how he's the one who's paying me now instead of the other way around. He offers me drinks for free, but usually I decline.

I had come to New York to meet with a Mr. Joe Perring, another friend of Tom's, who might be taking my music national, maybe worldwide. I had time to spare, though, so I decided to take a ferry across. I sat down next to the railing of the boat to admire the view and played a tune on my flute.

"That's beautiful!"

I turned around to find a girl whom I could easily describe with those same words. Those eyes, that hair... that smile.

"Do you play often?" she asked.

I stood up.

"Why, yes. I play a lot, actually. I'm Pablo Adrián," I said extending my hand towards her. She smiled again and accepted my hand.

"Nice to meet you, Pablo. I'm Catalina."

