

(Static fades in and out. Music fades in)

I told you about my doll, right? The one Dr. Alexson gave me. I don't think I gave you all the details. It was one of those... really marketable cash grabs from a toy company type doll. Like, sure plenty of young people have great memories with them, but we all know that's not why there were so many put out. So many for different careers and fashions, commemorative ones for holidays and world events. Hundreds and hundreds of possibilities and well over several dozen released already. Even if only a handful of people collected them, they were a gold mine right there. But that's.... They still mattered to children, though. Don't forget about that bit. Mine certainly mattered to me with her artist's smock and all those accessories. I loved and cherished her. I really did.

I wonder whatever happened to it. I know it wasn't passed on to Roslyn. I definitely would have seen it when I was cleaning her room if it had. And I doubt it had any chance of making it past that point in the family line considering how often I used and played with it and how it must have been on its last legs by the time I outgrew it. I didn't have many toys, to be honest, but I did have a history of running them ragged.

Plausible theory, but there's no way of knowing. Even if I do remember, there's no way of really knowing if that's right.

(Pause)

Shortly after I got her, I remem-- I think Dr. Alexson got me what could be considered the real thing. An art set. Or something akin to an art set. I don't know the terminology. But it was a large yet slim wooden box. Kind of like a large briefcase. Or one crossed with a chest of some kind. It had buckles in the front and a small handle. A

handle broke after a couple weeks. I remember that. And it's an odd detail to make up. From a distance, it looked like leather, but it was a cheap knock off. And you can have whatever opinions on leather that you want. I'm just here to say that not all substitutes are the same.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

This was a cheap one, so I had to grab the case by both hands and lay it on the ground if I wanted to open it. And I always wanted it open. Because it was a chest-ish of art supplies.

I wasn't very good at art. Let me tell you right now. But there was this doll that I absolutely adored that was a... quote-artist, and kids tend to copy their toys. Art initiates life imitates art: that whole thing. Also maybe there was just something fascinating in the mythos of it all.

Dr. Alexson said that I had an artistic heart. He could tell that much about me. And maybe eyes too. For good measure. Or maybe he was just being the parental figure he had always been for me. So he gave me an art set because of course that's what you do. Of course I was going to want something like what my doll had. Except the one he gave me was better, which of course makes sense.

My doll only had a paint set, but opening my chest or brief case or whatever, you saw a vast array of art supplies. My favorite were the colored pencils. 72 of them, I think it was. With mostly black handles but the top of each pencil was colored to match what the pencil would produce. And there were more greens and oranges than I could have ever imagined. Those were colors that had always seemed straightforward to me. And

they still do seem that way to some extent. But there was so much more to them if you kept looking.

The case had what I think were oil paints in there too, but maybe they were acrylics. I don't remember. They were certainly better than the watercolors I had been stuck with for years, especially at school. Okay but don't get me wrong. Watercolors can be beautiful, but the charm is in the delicacy of it all. The almost fleeting nature of the pigment: that is what defines the medium to a great extent, and I did not like that trait. I wanted something that was just in your face there and capable of lasting for a really long time.

Then again, maybe watercolors can last as long if not longer. I don't know. I never particularly bothered to look into it.

(Pause)

When I try to think about it more, for whatever good it may do me, I just feel fear. Like anticipating fear if not fear outright. Slight nuance there, but I think it's enough to paint some sort of picture. Not a great one but one that speaks volumes. I get it. There are people out there with worse childhoods than mine. Even if I could remember everything, that would still be true. At the bare minimum, I got out once. Maybe twice. If all goes well now. Hopefully. That right there makes my life better than a whole bunch of people's lives. But it was still hard. Maybe dangerous. Definitely frightening. It was a lot of things that it should not have been. And I wouldn't wish what I do remember on anyone. It's coming back in pieces. More so as of late. I think I opened the floodgates.

I wouldn't wish that on anyone, and yet, what am I doing to the kids leaving them here with this? I know I keep mentioning it, but I think I'll only stop when I don't feel so

bad about it. And I'll potentially always feel bad. Some things can't be easily fixed, and some slates cannot be wiped clean. I don't even know if I can come back for them. Never mind if I will.

Maybe Dad did not trick me into coming back. Or that's what I want to think sometimes. Maybe I just did it for them. Sure, I never wanted kids of my own, but they're here, and I want them to be happy and healthy. Dad's not great at that, and he wasn't great at getting a nanny, which he needed to do even with me around. I've always had to have known what they were getting into or what they were stuck in.

They're part of my heart. Part of me. And they're the part I definitely remember, which should make them the most important. And just morally speaking, they're helpless beings, which should make them important, right? I mean, more important than this quest. Than my own self-indulgence. But they aren't. I hate to say it, but they really aren't.

I need to put myself first. Maybe I shouldn't. But cue the guilt.
(Static starts. Music cuts. Static fades out).

This has been a production of Miscellany Media Studios with music licensed from the Sounds like an Earful music supply. It was written, performed, edited, and produced by MJ Bailey. If you like the show, please consider leaving a review and-or telling many friends about it. Thanks.