

# Chapter 1

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I was the first one in my family line to get an ear infection. I've heard that some had tinnitus, but nothing where a tiny microorganism entered through the canal and banged on our eardrums like a power metal drummer. That thought intrigued me. Are our ears snares, or simple basses? Maybe they're crash cymbals, my personal favorite. The world may never know.

Today was a pretty exciting day for me. It felt like I had been waiting millennia for this one specific day, February 24th. As my mother started up the old 80's hatchback car, I kept my wallet close by me; I didn't want to lose what I've been saving over more than half my lifetime. I may not have many years behind me, but that's a lot of money when you don't spend it on games and toys like my friends did. I had been taught that things like those lose their shine eventually, and they are useless because I could spend it on things that would last a lifetime.

Eventually, we were on the road, then on the highway. Highways were always so busy and fast, which I liked. I don't understand why the police has to give tickets to people who speed, they just want to live life to its fullest. We passed by two police cars along the way, both of which were housing completely unharmed cars. Insurance people had to be called, causing a collection of cars surrounding the suspect; Any more and there would have been a blockage.

As she pulled into the worn yet smooth parking lot, mom stepped out of the car, taking a big whiff of the familiar air around her. It smelled like it felt: crisp and cool, yet welcoming. The store itself was a brown-roofed brick structure that wasn't very tall on the outside, but enormous on the inside. To be honest, it felt more

like a small home rather than a store. Warm yellow lights shone through the window panes revealing the people inside. The two of us walked in the door, causing the bell to ring in the key of F.

“Hey Lewis!”

“Sup Dex?”

I’d known Dex since I became a drummer. I met him at this very store. He was in the guitar room, which shed a yellow light from its ceiling. The wood-padded quadrant was a bit warmer than the rest of the store because the guitars “didn’t like the cold”. Sometimes I liked to take a look at the grand selection of guitars on the racks. It had always amazed me how many guitars one could fit onto one wall. Occasionally, when I go to take a look, someone will be playing a tune. This time, it was some hardrock song written by — Radiation Fox?

Taking a look around the room, I noticed a few people that I hadn’t seen before. Most of them seemed to gather around the drums and synths sections, browsing the wide variety of side drums and mouth organs. I waltzed over to the purple-marble kit goodness that was the heart to my body, the egg to my omelet. I felt the *accelerando* in my head and in my hands, which was rather disorienting, but I kept my pace. There’s just something about working towards a goal that really gets the adrenaline going, and it spikes when you get closer to it.

When I got closer, I noticed that there was one snippet left in the “Bring ticket to store associate for product” pocket next to the price tag. “Lucky timing” I told myself. There was a pattern with these tickets: They were less of them on every other weekend than on any other day. I wondered why that was. Maybe there were more birthdays on those days? That would make sense because people got money on their birthdays, except for my friends. They got random things that they didn’t want, like an electronic Simon

says that annoyed their parents, or a board game that taught Spanish. I got money to get a cool drum set.

I picked up the ticket from the little box and looked it down. I practically knew this ticket better than myself. It appeared to be written in “Rock Salt,” which I felt was an appropriate font choice for the context. I grabbed the ticket from the little slot that they were packed in then brought it over to the counter.

“It’s finally time.” I said.

The ticket slipped across the counter as if it had picked the little piece of paper up and handed it over to the cashier itself. Looking up at him, Brian seemed to be bemused unlike any other time I’ve seen him. See, Brian is a pessimist, so although he had great customers who’d interact with him all the time, he always acted rather depressed, or something? What can I say, I’m only nine. I won’t be able to pick up complex emotions until I’m fourteen, I think. At least, according to my health teacher.

“Huh, you actually saved up enough to get that set. Good job, buddy.”

“Thanks.”

And like that, we were loading the final tom-toms in the car. On the drive back, I was worried. What if the drums broke on the way home? Did that bump in the road put the final stab in the drumhead?

