

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MAGGIE O'SHEA

Seven months ago, I almost drowned.

Late at night, as I was crossing an ancient bridge in Cornwall, a car roared from the shadows and flung me into the icy river below. I was sinking into blackness when a stranger found me. As for the man who ordered my death... he is still out there, somewhere. Waiting.

Now I am back in Boston, but the nightmares and memories still invade my sleep. So every day begins just after sunrise, with a run along the Charles River, while the lightening sky turns the water pink. *Inhale, exhale.* I veer up Beacon Hill, then back beneath the Common's bare branches to Charles Street, my Nikes like the steady beat of a Bach cantata on the cobblestones. Running makes me feel strong. And less afraid. *Inhale, exhale.*

Ahead of me, on the corner of Pinckney St., is the two-story brownstone that houses my music shop, The Piano Cat – named for a gold stray who followed my son Brian home one long-ago day and refused to leave. Now Brian is a jazz pianist in Cape Cod, the married father of my charming grandson, Ben. The blink of an eye.

I unlock the bright blue door, with its sign that says *Bach Tomorrow, Offenbach Sooner.* This early, the shop is quiet. Red leather chairs, library table, bookcases overflowing with classical scores, the framed Carnegie Hall program – *Magdalena O'Shea Performs Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1.*

My eyes find my Steinway in the curve of the bow window. Morning light spills across the keys, glowing and waiting for me.

The window panes catch my reflection – a too-thin woman with blade cheekbones and huge eyes framed by a mass of unruly dark hair.

Shrugging, I head upstairs to shower. My morning will be spent at the Museum of Fine Arts, a place of solace. In the past I have played concerts in that soaring Atrium, but today I don't have to play, or talk, or listen. Just fall into the art, another reminder that there is still beauty in the world.

There is a painting at the museum that reminds me of Michael. Colonel Michael Beckett. My fiancé, my noble, rainy-eyed soldier, at his cabin in Virginia's blue mountains. I whisper his name, smile as I picture him with Dov, our foster Russian teen, and Shiloh, our three-legged

rescue Golden. Michael did not want to let any of us in, he fought against loving all of us. Look how that turned out.

This afternoon I'll bring sheet music to the kids I coach at our local Boys and Girls Club for their Winter Concert, Mozart's stirring *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*. Their rapt faces, when they play, strike a chord deep within me.

Finally, at sunset, I'll head to Symphony Hall, my home away from home, to meet Maestro Valentin Zharkov. He conducted my recent performance of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. I still can feel the music, colors rushing down my arms like hot wires, through my fingers, notes spilling like sparks onto the keys. I'll never forget how I felt that night. God how I love the Rach Two.

By the door, my suitcase waits. Tomorrow I head back to the mountains to kiss Michael goodbye before catching a flight to France. My French grandmother, Clair, a woman I've never met, left me a cottage in Brittany – 'The House of Echoes.' I believe my music, so deep within me, came from her, like a thread across the decades. The answers to her past – and mine – are waiting for me.