

[Dorothea's Point of View]

Do you know the feeling when you are so excited for the upcoming day, that your sleep was amazing and awful at the same time? It is such a strange feeling. You feel like you slept like a baby and yet your body feels as if you struggled to get a single hour of sleep. This was my situation on this very day, this special day.

Good thing that I silenced my phone or else it would have vibrated all the time with the same type of message, but you can blame anyone on this day?

I took a quick look at the message counter and smiled for a moment. So many people thought about me, and the day has not even really begun.

'Time to get out of bed, you lazy bum!', I said to myself and rose out of my teeny tiny bed. Just one of the many objects I have outgrown in my life. There are two constant things in this universe: time and Dorothea growing.

Because of that, I had to be careful even with the simplest of tasks. I stretched to start my day but had to be careful to not hit the ceiling. Even in this position I was, it was so easy for me to touch it and I was not even standing yet. Speaking of standing...

This was another hassle with my big body. Standing straight in my own room? Pfft. Forget about it. Try to stand straight when you are more than 10ft tall. It is not possible, let me tell you, but this didn't ruin my mood. Not in the slightest.

I liked my tall frame. I liked being taller than everyone else. I liked getting even taller. Growing was part of my life and would not have it any different if given the chance. This was me. I was Dorothea Lockhart, the ever-growing girl.

And especially today there was no chance in hell, that anything could ruin my mood. Nothing could do that, believe me! One more look on my phone:

'September 4th ... almost 9 a.m.! Happy birthday, big girl!', I congratulated myself. It finally happened. My 18th birthday. A special day for any young person and so was it for me. 18 years. It probably sounds rather stupid but just thinking about being 18 now made me feel like an adult for the first time in my life. That age had something magical about it. 18 years old. Welcome to the real world, big girl.

This made me already think about the past few months. I graduated at the end of June. I had a whole summer just to live life and I enjoyed every single day of it. This is a lecture my Mom gave me a long time ago.

'Whatever your situation in life is, Dorothea. Think positive. Our life is a special gift, and we should not waste it with negative thoughts. We are all unique and we should always celebrate who we are, no matter our situation!'

It took me quite a few years to fully embrace her advice but once I did, I saw the value in this. Mom was so right, and I am glad that she did teach me this way of thinking, especially since I really do live a happy life.

I had a great family. My Mom and Dad were always there for me. Mom, the gentle soul of our family, she always had a way to lift my spirits whenever I was in doubt of myself or when I went through a rough time. I would wish, more people had a Mother like I did. She truly was the best.

Or a passionate Dad like I did. Just thinking about all the time, he spent to work on new furniture for me growing needs. The many beds I outgrew, the many little things he did, and he never complained about it.

'I will make you new stuff, even when you are thrice my size, my little muffin!', he promised me, and I had zero doubts that he would not fulfill this promise. He was always so proud about his two daughters, and I was proud to have him as a father.

And then there was my big sister Tiffany. My idol. My role model. My ... everything. She too was always there for me. She always took care about me, my condition, and my health. She always listened to me, when I needed her. She always was there for me. Sometimes I thought that her constant medical checks on me were unnecessary but today I fully understood why she did that: because she cared about me, because she loved more than any sister on this planet could love their younger sibling. Tiffy ... I love you for everything.

Just thinking about those three made me smile big time. They were my family and the best family one could have, and I was the lucky girl that was able to call them family and this was the main reason, why I wanted to make them proud.

But you know how you don't make your family proud? Exactly, by staying in bed all day like some lazy bum, even if it was my special day. So, time to get ready for the day Dorothea and off you go!

Time to grab some tidy clothes, put your phone into your pocket and greet them on the family dinner table, or so that was my plan at least, but...

'Where are they?', I wondered once I entered the living room. I was all alone. Nobody was here. It was silent in the entire house. Strange.

'Huh. Breakfast is on the table, but... wait... what is this?', I said to myself and once I got closer to the table, I saw what *this* was. A letter, written by Tiffany.

Good morning, Dorothea!

Both Mom and Dad thought it would be a neat idea to turn your birthday into a sort of riddle for you to solve. To make things short: you will have to find out by yourself, where the big party will be held at.

I personally think it is silly, but you know them as good as I do, especially Dad ... it was mainly his idea.

I cannot wait to see you at your party. I am proud of you, and I hope, we all make this birthday the most amazing day in the world for you!

You are the best sister I could have ever imagined.

In love,

Tiffany

This letter made me smile and shrug my head at the same time. Oh yes, this truly was my family. I cannot even imagine how long Dad (let's face it, this was ALL of Dad's idea ... it just HAD to be this way!) spent to get this *riddle* to work. Welcome to the Lockhart family, everyone!

'I cannot think with an empty stomach!', I told myself and decided to take in the fabulous breakfast my Mom provided me for this special day.

Meanwhile, I was on my phone again. Even more messages. So many people thinking about me, it was such a nice thing. It just showed, that even if I was twice as tall as most people, it was good that I always treated everyone with respect and kindness. This was the result.

Just think about it. Think if a nasty brat would have been in my situation. Growing taller and taller and therefore stronger and stronger. I guess, many people would use this advantage

to assert dominance or such, but this was not my thing. I liked to be humble and friendly towards everyone. I was just regular Dorothea, an ordinary girl. That's all... okay, an ordinary girl that kept on getting taller and taller but that's beside the point. It didn't matter that I towered over everyone, just take my lovely boyfriend as an example.

'My boyfriend!', I shouted with excitement. Maybe he would be able to help me solve this riddle! Time to grab my phone again, but...

'Huh! No message from Christian yet!', I recognized and that made me think. This was so unlike him. Christian, my little hero as I always called him, he was the type of person that would have would have texted or called me right on midnight but here was ... nothing. Really suspicious. Time to text him right away and moments later he started to respond with the following:

I am very sorry, but it seems you have the wrong number.

Oh, come on, he was clearly joking. Probably it was part of the act, part of Dad's silly little riddle. Okay, time to act along.

Oh, sorry. Thought it was the number of my boyfriend. Really sorry for disturbing you.

This time, it took him a bit longer to respond. I could envision how he and my Dad were sitting somewhere having a laugh about all of this, maybe even thinking what they should respond to this. This would fit the entire situation.

I was not only lucky to have such an awesome relationship with my little hero and that he accepted my growing ways. No, he and my family got along so nicely. I was already part of my family and that would never change. I just knew it. He was ... and will forever be ... my little hero.

Ah, another response!

No problem. Maybe I could help you with this endeavor. Maybe we should meet each other. Meet me at a certain location, where it all started ... ;D

That cheeky little ... argh! They were playing with me big time. Fine, if they have a blast with it, I let them have it.

But that hint made me think. Meet me at the location, where it all started, Christian texted to me. The location where it all started was technically online in a MMORPG. Was he talking about this? Did they actually planned something there as well?

'Just how long did they spend on this whole thing?', I asked myself once again but also admired their spirit. Well, time to finish my breakfast and then boot my PC. Was not planning on hitting up this MMORPG on my 18th birthday. Oh well, how did Tiffy always say it? Plans are made to be torn apart. Back into my room it was.

'Let's see what those crazy bastard planned next', I said once again to myself and logged into the game.

Christian and I continued playing this game long after our relationship started. It was a way to spend time together whenever he wasn't around. Remember: Christian was not living in the same town as I was ... yet. Hopefully, that would change in the future.

A few minutes later I was in the game world, looking for some clues but it took me a while to get somewhere in this.

'The location, where it all started', I repeated not just once and went through my memories. Where exactly did Christian and I first meet in this game? By the design of this 'challenge'

it was not possible to be some dungeon. Hmm, think Dorothea, think.

'The guild house!', I then shouted louder than expected. I think this was the first time, Christian and I spoke to another, which made me remember this very first conversation:

Wow, quite the big girl you've created!

These were basically his first words towards me. I don't know my exact response, but it was something in the line of:

I'm a big girl so it only makes sense to me, I guess!

Cheesy and corny, I know, but this was how it all began. In an MMORPG and we are lucky together and went through everything together. Christian, my little hero, he was my ideal boyfriend and luckily, he not only accepted that his girlfriend was way taller than him, but also remained with her when she suddenly grew in front of his eyes for the first time!

That faithful first family dinner with Christian and my family. I remember it so clear. Everything went just fine. Christian and my family got along nicely, and they immediately accepted him as my boyfriend. Everything was great, I even showed him my famous *Dorothea hug*, but then ... I grew several inches right in front of him!

I thought I lost him. I thought that he saw me as some sort of freak. At this very moment, I hated my tall body and my growing antics, but Christian stayed with me and never left me ever since. What can I say? He was simply the right one for me! Ah, all these memories. They almost made me forget, what I was actually doing right now!

Luckily, I was able to return to our guild house rather quickly and I started looking around. Due to the time of date, not many guild members were online. In fact, I was the only

one in this house, which made it both easier and harder at the same time.

Harder because there was nobody to ask, if they knew anything. Easier because I had peace and a quiet surrounding to look for any clue ... if I was on the right track in the first place!

After a good minute, I found a suspicious item in the house. A notice letter. You see, in this game it was possible to place private notes for other players in special locations and a guild house was such a location, so I did the only logical thing: I grabbed the item and looked at the note:

Good job, big girl. Dad thought this might be too tough to solve but I trusted in your memory. I have so many memories of this time when all I knew of you was your angelic voice and your face from that one photo you sent me. The very photo that made me develop a crush on you, Dorothea. I will never forget our countless times in this game. I love you so much.

PS: The next clue is placed at a certain medical office! Dad said I should be more ... obscure with this hint but to be honest... I want to see you and wish you a happy birthday sooner than later.

Your little hero

Aww. That was so sweet. Any doubts that this boy was the perfect boyfriend for me? No? Very good, because he truly is. He is my little hero and thanks to him, I knew where to go next: Tiffy's medical office!

Dad turned this into one big fetch quest. Oh well, it probably gave them all the time they needed to prepare the big party ... or so I hoped that this was the main reason behind all of this!

You know what the very best thing about leaving the house is? It is something, you *regular-sized* people probably never think about. I told you before, how I am not able to properly walk in my own home? Yes, of course you do. So what could it be that I am talking about?

As soon as I was outside, I was able to stretch and fully stand straight, haha! You have no idea how good this feels. Every single time, I feel like a girl reborn when I stretch and put my arms high in the air, almost being able to touch the second-floor window. Sadly, I have to use the word *almost* ... for now. One day, let me tell you...

So, here I was, stretching while standing at my full height, fully taking in the wonderful weather on this sunny day. The weather gods were really nice for my 18th birthday. Maybe, I should be kind to them as well, hehe.

'Oh...my...GOD!'; suddenly a female voice said out loud. Yes, another thing I am more than used to, especially with people that never knew about me or saw me in person and so this too happened in my special day.

I looked over the wall of our property, which is anything but difficult for a girl of my size and gave the onlooker a little look myself.

It was another girl, most likely about my age, but I have never seen her before, which is not super common in a little town of just 6,000 people like my small Thurmont.

Anyway, the poor girl was probably just minding her own business, walking to wherever she wanted to go when she came across the Lockhart property and now she was looking at me with THOSE eyes. I knew them far too good at this stage of my life. They were the, as I like to call them, '*Oh my God am I imagining things? No, I don't*'-eyes, haha.

I looked a few more seconds. She was a good-looking girl I must say and I thought to myself what I should do with her. It was time for some *Dorothea-fun!*

'Hey there, sweetie!', I started talking to her and she immediately put her hands before her chest in a sort of 'sorry, I didn't mean it. Please don't hurt me' kind of way. Oh, she was so cute. She definitely had no idea who I was, hehe, and so I walked towards our property wall and leaned on it and once again looked at her. Meanwhile she just stared at me, scared to say anything. Poor thing, so it was time for part two.

'Give me a second, cutie', I said to her and then placed my leg on top of the wall to climb across it. This was still a bit of work, even for a girl of my size, but one day I would be able to casually walk over it to make this even more impressive. One day, Dorothea. One day...

Meanwhile, the girl still was not able to say a thing. She just stared, now placing her hands on her cheeks, as I climbed the wall and then stood before her. I was standing on a row of stones, that made me even taller than I already was.

'You must be new here', I continued talking to her. Her answer? You guessed it. Silence, big eyes and an opened mouth. She was so not believing what she just saw and probably really scared to make a mistake. Time to end this, hihi.

'Aww, you look so scared, but I can tell you one thing ... I would never harm anyone. I am a gentle and friendly soul!', I told her while starting to smile and then laughing.

'Y-You are?', she finally said something and then I decided to kneel down to make it a bit more easy to talk to her. Her neck must have already hurt from looking up at me, especially since she was clearly not used to it.

Only a bit, you say? Well, even like this, this poor girl was barely as tall as my chest. Once again she looked at me and then her eyes went down a bit more, looking directly forward. Some people might say, she stared at my breasts, maybe she even did this, but I don't mind, as long as people are respectful and to be completely honest... there was a lot to look at, hehe, even if my sister Tiffany still had me beat in that department. Oh well.

'You are one cute girl, I must say!', I told her and show her my kindness and friendly nature, I placed my hand on her head and patted it gently. That broke the ice by the way and now she was smiling as well.

'You truly are. I have never seen someone as tall as you are!'

'Well, that's because you never have met me, until now, hihi!', I responded and giggled to ease the mood even further. 'My name is Dorothea by the way!'

'I am Cheria.'

'Oh, that is a real sweet-sounding name. I think it fits you!'

Would you look at that. Not even a minute ago she was scared and all and now she was blushing and smiling. That's the Dorothea magic, hihi.

'But I am sorry, because I have to move on. Today is my 18th birthday and my parents made me some silly riddle to solve in order to get to my own party. I would invite you, but I have no idea where the location is, haha!', I told her and then I had rose once again and when I was standing at my full height again, Cheria was clearly impressed one more time. She was, what I would assume, around 5'3" or 5'4", so almost half my height.

'I hope to see you around, Cheria. See ya!', I said goodbye to her and with an even better mood, I was on my way again. I

think, I just found a new friend today. What a sweet birthday gift!

One rather interesting fact about this. My walk to Tiffy's office would lead me by my school. Sorry, my former school. This girl has graduated after all. So many memories of this place. So many friends I made. Good times. Bad times. I had them both.

But it made me think of one thing while I was walking towards my former school. Not too long ago, I had a nice and long talk with my sister Tiffany on what I should do in my life, which career path I should seek.

You see, I was really unsure about this question in particular. Me? A regular girl living a regular life? Even if I tried to do just this, in the end I knew far too well that this was impossible, mainly due to my size.

Just look at me. I was over 3 meters tall. Even if I tried, certain jobs and career opportunities were just out of this question and Tiffy, and I even joked about some odd scenarios that would occur with a big girl like me in certain jobs.

And once I was near the gate of my old school, another part of my memories kicked in. Talks I had with my friends and later with my older sister. One topic in particular. One question that I got asked more than once, even during this summer.

Dorothea. Why don't you become a history teacher. You are so smart and know so much about it and you are actually able to teach others these things with ease. What is stopping you of becoming a teacher?

Yeah, what was stopping me, I asked myself while looking at my old school. Instinctively I looked towards the windows

of my former classroom, and I imagined my former teacher, Ms. Smith, standing in there, looking towards me in this very moment, even if I knew that this was nonsense.

Ms. Smith left the town at the end of the school year. But the way she announced this, the choice of words she used to announce it. Ms. Smith said that she *had* to leave. I didn't understand it and I honestly wanted to know more, but if it was part of her private life then we should all accept that.

'Oh, Ms. Smith. You were such a great teacher', I spoke in the direction of my old classroom and then I did something, that was maybe a bit forbidden. I decided to enter the school grounds, which was rather easy given my size and all.

Maybe it was a stupid idea, maybe I could get in trouble for this, but my mind just told me to do this and before I knew it, I was on school property and walked over to where my old class was.

Standing underneath the window, it triggered even more memories, this time of our graduation ceremony, the same ceremony where Ms. Smith told us that she had to leave as well. How it overfilled me with emotions. How I was standing next to her during this announcement and how I then just had to lower myself to give this great teacher and human being a friendly hug as a sign of goodbye. The tears we both shared, because this sign of gratitude made her cry as well.

But standing outside of the building was not enough. I actually wanted to get in and rather surprisingly, the door was not locked. Strange, I was almost certain that the school building would have been locked, but on the other hand ... who in their right mind would want to enter a school during the summer break? Well, I wanted to and so I did.

So many years I spent at this very place. Countless times I walked across these hallways towards my classroom. It never changed, apart from me getting taller and taller and therefore the hallway getting smaller and smaller in my eyes.

School personnel, teachers, classmates, friends, they all got smaller in my eyes over the years, but it never changed our relationship. I was one of them, even if I outgrew them and never stopped growing.

I think, by now it surprises nobody what I did next. I went this far, so there was no reason to stop now. I entered my old classroom.

It felt strange, standing in there and not because I was barely able to stand straight in this room due to my height. No, it felt strange because it was so silent. Of course, you big dummy, some of you might say right now. You were in a school at the tail end of a summer break, and nobody was around you. You were the only one in here and of course you are right about it.

I looked towards my old desk. That tiny little desk that caused me so much trouble as I grew taller and taller. Sitting there, writing there, working there, it became such a hassle for me, but that was just one aspect of my unique life with my big body, and I even found solutions that made life a bit easier for me.

I remembered how I brought a giant cushion with me for the first time and my friends asking what I was doing with it. How I grinned at them and then told them my plan:

If my seat gets too uncomfortable for me, I will simply swap it with this cushion and sit on the ground!

And so, I did. More and more over the years in fact, even if I always started the day on the chair as part of being 'just a regular schoolgirl'.

The cushion was gone of course, but all my memories of what happened in this very room remained. Memories like when we got an exchange student from France. Charlene. A really tall girl. Well, tall if you did not include giant ol' me into the occasion. Charlene, a statuesque 6'9" tall blond girl. So strong with her strong built. I remember the day we first met. I was late for school due to my Dad's car breaking down and I rushed towards my class. Charlene was in the middle of her introduction when I entered the room, heavily breathing and all and suddenly she was in shock of looking up towards another girl. I was way smaller back then, but even then, I was towering over everyone, and Charlene could not believe her own eyes. How tall was I, when we first met? Was I 9ft already? I cannot remember. Anyway, he was huge even next to this 6'9" girl but we became good friends quickly and she was even able to stay in the U.S. as her parents moved over here as well. I was one lucky girl when Charlene broke the news.

That day I will never forget. I lost a bet during a school trip and Charlene therefore made me hit the gym with her. A few of our classmates, Jen and Laura, also participated in this and you probably know how much I hate to do sports, but we made it a fun afternoon and afterwards we all sat down in the park and Charlene started out as if she was saying goodbye, but then announce her staying. I was so happy. I jumped high and out of pure joy, I grabbed 6'9" Charlene, lifted her muscly body in the air and gave her the famous *Dorothea hug!*

Gosh. How long did I stay in my classroom, I suddenly asked myself. I totally forgot the time while being in here. One thing was for certain: I would miss this place.

‘But maybe one day, I will...’, I started speaking out loud, but then shook my head and looked towards the podium in the front of the classroom, where Ms. Smith always stood and lectured us young students.

I was barely able to stand in this room for now, but on that podium, I would have to bend or crouch or whatever. Whatever I would do, standing straight was no option even now. Would I ever return, I would be even taller then, so...

Sigh.

Either way, I just had to get to the podium, and I imagined talking to a class. My class? Who knows. All I knew that this desire, it...

Enough of this now, Dorothea. You wasted way too much time in here. Better leave now before you truly would get into trouble for trespassing!

My initial goal wasn’t even the school. No, it was my sister’s medical office where the next clue (and hopefully the last one!) would wait for me.

Dad’s silly riddle. I almost forgot about it as I spent so damn much in memory land. Oh well, it just happened. No way to travel back in time and scold myself, eh?

Thankfully, the walk from the school to the office of my sister was rather short, also thanks to my really long legs and before I knew it, I was standing in front of the office.

This time, I was not surprised that I found an unlocked door. All part of Dad’s silly riddle, I guess.

'I really hope, this will be the last clue. I want to meet everyone already!', I spoke out loud and started to look around, even if the notice was actually in plain sight, but I guess I was too blind to see it and so I was looking around like a fool.

On Tiffany's desk. Nothing. At her working PC. Nothing. At the weighing scale. THANKFULLY not, that would have been mean! No, it was so obvious and when I finally saw it, I was annoyed by my own stupidity or blindness or both.

The notice was placed on the measuring wall that Tiffany had installed for me and my growing needs. Out of all places, why did it take me so long? Silly, Dorothea. Just plain silly.

And how should it be any different this day, I once again had memories appearing in my mind. All those medical check-ups by my sister. All the time she spent in here to figure out, why I was getting bigger and bigger. At first, the taller I got, the more desperate Tiffany seemed to get. In her mind she just HAD to find the reason for my constant growth. But after many years, she finally accepted it. She probably developed a theory, but never shared it with me or researched it any further (or so I at least thought!).

'As long as you are healthy and happy with your situation, I ... will accept it', she told me once, even if it was tough for her to finally say this. It was a real hurdle for my proud sister. She was so smart, so intelligent, she HAD to find the reason. It was part of her character and yet, she finally embraced it. As long as I was happy and healthy.

And believe me, would I ever told her that I was no longer happy with my growth, this woman would have spent her entire life to find the reason. Not only because she was a proud doctor. No, she was my sister and she loved me just as

much as I loved her. We were a unit, the best sister combination one could dream of and even if I was well over 4ft taller than Tiffy, she will always be my big sister!

Anyway, back to the notice, which read the following:

Oh, you found this one. Not really surprising. With how much you love this measuring wall, I am sure you saw it within seconds!

No, I did not, but thanks for teasing me!

Either way, you found the last clue. Congratulations! Or did you? Now it is your task to figure out, where we planned the party, where we all wait for you.

I hope, you will not let us wait for so long, that one of us has to FAINT.

PS: Do you need any extra motivation? Here it is: Some of us have travelled A LOT to see you today!

'Oh, come on, this is no clue at all. You are just teasing me!', I said rather annoyed and then I sat down (rather grumpy I might add!) on one of the benches in Tiffy's office and then formed a little ball out of the notice and then threw it across the room.

Here I was, sitting alone in the medical office of my big sister Tiffany, thinking about what this cryptic message wanted to tell me. They really made me work to get to my own birthday party. Unbelievable!

I was looking around the office, desperately looking for any further clue, but it was no hope. It was the same old office with the same old inventory and no signs of any further notes for me to discover. I was starting to doubt myself, until I thought about the last notice once more. Think, Dorothea!

'I hope, you will not let us wait for so long, that one of us has to FAINT, it said. Hmm...'

Dad, or whoever wrote this notice letter, wrote the word faint in big letters. There was certainly a reason behind it. Faint, hmm, ... faint ...

'Wait a minute!', I then had my Eureka moment. 'Of course! Faint ... fainting. Christian fainted in the middle of the park when we first met each other in real life! This must be the place where the party will be held at! I am a genius!', I celebrated my breakthrough, I jumped in the air out of joy but once again forgot about my most ... obvious feature: My height!

'OUCH! That really hurt! Hopefully, Tiffy will not be mad for the dent in the ceiling I just created!'

I scolded myself a bit, while holding my head. That really hurt, let me tell you. There was so much energy I brought into this very jump and given I was such a tall girl; the ceiling really took a big hit. Whoopsie! Just don't anyone tell Tiffy about it, that it was my fault, okay? Okay!

Off to the park I went! I wanted to see everyone. Finally! They probably already joked about how long it took silly ol' me to figure the location out. Little did they know about my longer than expected detour to my old school. Ah, they will not blame me. It was MY big day after all!

Some of us have travelled A LOT to see you today!

While I was walking to the final destination, the park, this sentence sparked another thought in my mind. Travelled a lot, the note probably spoke about my old friend Tom and his girlfriend Carina, one of the main catalysts in getting Christian and me together. She was such a great girl and I desperately

wanted to meet her again. Tom too of course, as he was one of my best friends. Oh, I remember how sad I was when he told me, that his mother took a high-paying job in Austria and that he had to leave. It was such a sad day in general. I had an argument with Tiffany and then this happened. Let me tell you something: Life sucks sometimes!

And even if we were separated by a giant ocean, we all stayed in regular contact, but seeing each other would be on a whole other level, believe me!

I wondered, how the two would look like in person. How they would react to my even taller frame and such. Oh boy, I was so damn ready for the party! I wanted to give all of them big hugs, big *Dorothea hugs*!

Another thing that happened, as I was getting closer and closer to the park, was my heartbeat starting to go crazy. It pumped so strong in my chest. The anticipation was about to kill me! Hang in there, big little heart! We were almost there!

And then I saw it in front of me: the park! Indeed, a very special location in my life. This is where Christian and I first met. This is where I gave him my first of many kisses. This is the place, where Tom and Carina met me during their visit some years ago. This is the place where Charlene announced that she was able to stay in Thurmont and stay with us.

So many happy memories. They really took the perfect location for my 18th birthday party! As much as I was annoyed by Dad's silly riddle, I was so happy that they choose this special location and today this location would present another important memory of my life. I just knew it.

Just one more corner. They most likely already saw me approach, as I was way taller than the wall, but I did not dare to look in the most likely direction. No, I stopped one more

time, closed my eyes, lowered my head and took in a real deep breath.

'This is it!', I said quietly to myself and then I opened my eyes again, stood there proud, one final look and then I turned around the corner and walked towards...

The biggest crowd I could have imagined!

I was mind blown. Just ... mind blown.

They all were there.

Mom. Dad. Tiffy. Christian. Jennifer (Tiffy's girlfriend). Tom. Carina. Charlene. Laurie. Nattie. Elena. My whole former class. Everyone, even Ms. Smith was there!

This picture alone made me cry out of happiness. They all were there. All for my birthday. Those ... wonderful ... people.

SOB.

Screw the presents on the table. Screw the giant cake. Screw all of that. These people were the true present. Gifts come and go. Memories remain forever and this was one memory I would NEVER forget, I can promise you that!

I was so damn overwhelmed, I didn't even know where to start. So many people and everyone deserved to be the first that would receive a *Dorothea hug*.

And they all looked so happy. They all had this big smile on their face. They all were surrounding me. Boy, did they all made this big girl happy and cry her tears out!

'I think, this celebration can already be called a success, am I right, my beloved sister?', Tiffy said while walking towards me. I was speechless. All I was able to do was to fall on my knees and hug give her the biggest and most gentle hug of

them all. I have no idea, how long we stayed like this, while all the others watched us. Some of them also started to cry a bit. It was magical, let me tell you.

I don't even know where to continue after this. Like I said before: screw the presents. Spending time with all of them was priceless. The truest gift of them all. So don't expect to replicate and count every fancy gift I got that day and believe me, there was a lot.

But those people mean so much more to me and therefore I decided to focus on them. They were the true heroes in my life, and everyone deserved their focus but even that would break the boundaries as there were so many.

If I bore you with this, I am sorry, but they all mean the world to me, so I want to take this time.

Of course, there were Mom and Dad. Dad being proud of the riddle he created with so many people assisting him. Mom baking the biggest and most awesome cake in the history of Thurmont. At the very least I truly believe that. She made it with one of grandma's old recipes and it takes FABULOUS!

Tiffany and Jennifer, her girlfriend. How would my life look without them? I don't even want to imagine this. This was also the first time in God knows how many years, that Tiffany saw Elena again. Elena was a really good friend of my sister, and even a short-term lover, that left the U.S. for a job and just recently returned. It was certainly ... interesting to see, how they would react. Tiffany was a bit insecure at first, but that went away fast and the two hugged like old friends (mainly because they are, haha!) and then Tiffany introduced Jennifer to her as her current girlfriend. In short, there were zero ill-feelings and the girls got along really nicely. Neat!

Christian, my little hero, my boyfriend. My love. My everything. He stayed with me, even in times were I actually scared him when I grew in front of him. Not just once did that happen. One time even in this very park!

Tom and Carina. They looked so great. Tom stayed a small guy, but he was confident, especially with such a pretty girlfriend in Carina. That girl, I thought she looked great when we first met, but damn. That girl turned into one damn fine woman! I use the word damn too much, but I don't give a damn! They travelled all the way from Austria to Maryland, just to be with me on this special day. We laughed so much on that day.

'I see you let your hair grow out, girl. Looks fabulous, Carina!'

Laurie and Nattie. They too travelled all the way from Montréal to be with me and they too looked as great as always. They even announced their wedding to all of us and I (and of course my entire family!) got invited to this occasion. Soon, Dorothea would go to Montréal. Awesome! If it wasn't for my fear of flying but you know what? This would be worth it!

All my classmates. Sorry, former classmates. Screw it. They will forever be my classmates no matter what the future would bring! They all spent so much time with me. They all were so nice to me, even if sometimes my growing needs made things a bit ... difficult. To this day I still cannot really believe how poor Teddy was able to sit properly with my long legs and feet always get into his own space. He was such a nice guy and always so down to earth whenever I incidentally hit him with my legs and or feet.

Jen. Laura. Marianne. Some of my longest and best friends. Michelle, who didn't like me for so long but also over time became friends. Mika, Kaitlyn, Lydia, Dustin, Jimmy, Aurora and all the others. I am sorry to all I didn't mention, but believe me, I have not forgotten about you. You all will forever be in my heart. I promise you that!

'Good to see you, Dorothea', then Ms. Smith said and this time it was her giving me a hug and not the other way around. 'Had to repay the kindness you showed me at the graduation!'

Do you see why I will always hold this special teacher in such high regards? Yes? Good! Because there is no better teacher than Ms. Smith out there and I was lucky to be one of her students.

'Would you now tell us the reason, why you went and entered our old school, Dorothea?', was it Charlene that spilled the beans about my little side adventure.

'Hehe, I...', I started rather awkwardly, probably even trying to hide my signs of embarrassment. 'How do you even know about it? Did you follow me in secret and told everyone about my progress in my Dad's riddle?'

'No, but you do remember that I literally live on the other side of the school, right?'

Oh. That was GOOD argument. Whoopsie. I totally forgot about that. I am such a silly girl sometimes, hehe.

'Honestly, I was just on such a memory trip and when I walked towards the school, I just ... had to visit it. This place had so many great memories and I just wanted to see it ... one more time.'

'Come to think every student is happy to never have to return to school again and yet this giant girl actually wanted

to return because of memories. You truly are one unique girl, Dorothea!', was Michelle saying and getting closer towards me.

That tiny little girl. Michelle was by far the smallest girl in class, so our size difference was always especially spectacular, but this little girl was not done yet.

'Or could it be, that you actually think about my suggestion for you, eh?', she then said with such a big smirk on her face. She was right on that. Michelle was probably the first one that suggested me becoming a teacher. She did it when I helped her studying for the final history exam.

It became silent all of a sudden. They all looked up to me. Such promising looks. They all knew about my inner struggle on what to do next in life. The struggle of choosing the *right* career path for this ever-growing girl.

I felt nervous. Real nervous. Should I ... finally decide?

I looked into all of their faces. They all waited with anticipation. They wanted to empower me. Give me the final bit of confidence. They all probably knew better than I personally did on what was right for me and my future. Was it time to finally ...

'I ... want to tell you something, all of you!'

No turning back, but still I was a bit scared, and my heartbeat was getting even more crazy. I looked down to all of them once more, looking for one person in particular at first.

'What do you think? Do you think I have what it takes to become a teacher ... just like you?'

Of course, I was looking for Ms. Smith, my former teacher. This woman shaped my view on what a teacher should be. I

valued her opinion very highly and she simply smiled towards me and nodded.

‘I can see no hindrance in that ... apart from too small classrooms!’

That made the entire audience giggle, including me especially and I already felt some pressure coming of my chest. But I wasn’t done yet.

‘Would that be okay for you, Christian?’

‘Darling’, was it now his turn to come closer to me. ‘Whatever YOU want to do in life is fine by me. I support you, no matter if you want to become a teacher, an actress or hell even a cashier in a supermarket. I love you for who you are and not what you are, Dorothea!’

Aww, my little hero at his best. This deserved a *Dorothea hug* AND a huge smooch. I now felt even better about this.

‘Just don’t expect me to call you Ms. Lockhart, or Magister or Professor or whatever, do you hear me, sis? Or else you will have to call me Dr. Lockhart from now on!’

Aww, Tiffy. What else could I say? But there was one more opinion I had to hear, two in fact. My parents of course!

‘Dorothea. Muffin. Do, whatever your heart tells you is the right thing! We stand behind you!’

Once again, I started crying again. Once again out of joy. All this pressure I put myself under with the question about my future career. The pressure to make my family and friends proud. It all weighed me down so much, but all their positivity, all their support, it turned that pressure into a powerful energy. They all were right. My heart already knew it, but now

my mind was convinced as well that I was able to follow this dream.

'I...; I started to make it official, but I had to stop one more time. One final time in fact, because...

Rumble

Remember I just said that all this pressure inside me turned into positive energy? Yes? Good, because all this energy led to on big reaction. A reaction, most people around me already knew far too well.

They already looked so small next to me, but all this energy running through my body caused a massive growth spurt within me and second by second, these tiny looking people got even smaller in my eyes, as I shot up faster and stronger than ever before. I could feel every bone in my body getting longer and stronger. I could feel every inch of my skin tingling. I could feel ... the growth.

And boy was this a huge growth spurt. Getting taller by three or four inches at once, I was used. This happened once or twice in my life. But all this energy ... led to much more than *just* three of four inches.

It just didn't stop and all the on watchers made it even more special, as I grew in front of all of their eyes. For a moment I was scared about their reaction the more I looked into their eyes, the more I saw not scaredness, but rather the look of awe, as I got even taller right then and there.

Only scare that was left was inside me and considering my clothes. Please hold on tight. Please don't burst under the pressure, which would be embarrassing beyond belief!

But my body refused to listen to this scare, as I continued to grow taller and let me tell you something: it was a great feeling. It felt so, so ... good!

They all got so tiny in my eyes, and yet I continued to grow bigger and even if my clothes became really painful, they hold on tight and survived this massive growth spurt.

Before this, I was already an impressive 10'2", 310 centimeters. Wanna take a guess how tall I was after it? Any guesses? Last chance?

We decided to measure myself right then and there and naturally it was the role of my sister Tiffany, the doctor of the family, to announce my height.

'You truly outdid yourself on this one, Dorothea. You are now 10'11" tall!'

10'11". 333 centimeters. Wow. I was truly big now and my body gave me the biggest present of them all, hehe.

In order to get measured, I had to lay down. After the announcement, which I listened closely to while sitting, I just had to rise up and stand straight, strike a pose and look proudly down to all of them.

'What can I say? This future teacher is just a girl that loves to grow and to get taller just to make sure, she will stay forever the ... Tallest in the Family!'

THE END

Yes, you read right. This chapter marks the end of 'The Tallest in the Family' ... Part 1! Yes, you read right again. This only marks the end of the first part of Dorothea's life. I will take a little break from writing on this story, but I will return to create 'The Tallest in the Family' #2 down the line.

I hope you enjoyed this almost 100,000-word long story and stay on board for the comic series, which is still running strong!

Thank you for all the support you gave me on this journey. It would have never been possible without you!

Arianault