

**A FEW DAYS
IN THE LIFE OF..**



PROLOGUE



39°

39% 11:25 AM

< Billy H



Tuesday, July 4

Billy - it's Maggie Walker.
Do you have a minute?



11:25 AM



Enter message



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How's things?

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I think I need your
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Seriously?



11:29 AM



11:29 AM



Trust me Maggie - I have a plan 😊😊

11:29 AM



Enter message



1

Seattle, Washington
Walker Residence
Maggie Walker

“Really? He said to send me?”

“Yes, really. I think he may need you for something...” I let the comment trail off, so that her imagination can go to work on it.

“Oh, how cool!” my daughter blurts out, as she stuffs some clothes into a suitcase on her bed.

“Do you have your debit card and your passport?”

“Yes, Mom – for the hundredth time, I have them,” she replies, laughing.

Sometimes, I forget that although she is only sixteen, she has lived enough life to be twenty-something. I’m just thankful that she is almost back to the bubbly teenager she should be.

Thank you, Billy!

Four hours later, I’m watching as an airline employee (she’s still technically an ‘unaccompanied minor’) leads Brandi through the security section of the airport and to her plane. Billy, being the amazing guy that he is, even paid for her to be in First Class.

In about fifteen hours – somewhere between 4:00 & 5:00 pm tomorrow – Billy will pick her up at the airport. Hopefully.

I catch myself crossing my fingers as I watch her disappear into the throng of people packed into the security screening area. I find myself hoping that this is what my daughter needs, in order to find her way...





Stockholm, Sweden
Arlanda International Airport
Brandi Walker

When I get to the end of the jetway, the first thing I see – much to my total surprise – is one of the twins, standing with two airport security people. I run over and hug her, as the airline employee following me, speaks to the security guys.

“Okay... no fair. Which one are you?”

“Which one do you think I am?” she asks, a big smirk covering her face.

Somehow, the calmness of her reply gives her away.

“Marit... for sure.”

She laughs, and hugs me again. Once she signs where the lady tells her to, indicating she is now ‘responsible’ for me (which makes me laugh), we head off with the security guys, toward the baggage claim area.

Thirty minutes later, we’re in a white passenger van, headed across Stockholm, in the direction of Haugen Studios – with Marit driving.

We shoot down the E4, over a couple of bridges, and into the Södermalm district, which is where Billy’s

studio is. I'm kind of surprised at how well Marit knows her way around.

"How is it you can be 'responsible' for me?" I ask, as she winds her way down side streets.

"I'm eighteen, remember?"

"Oh...duh..." I mumble, as she makes one more turn, before parking right in front of the studio's main door. When I sit silently staring, she prompts me.

"You okay?"

"Uh... yeah... I guess. It just sorta all rushed back into me for a second."

"I know that feeling."

"Any idea why he wants us here?"

"He wants us to sing – I think. He's hasn't really said yet. Marli is inside. Come on, let's go mess with her!" With that, she is out of van and standing next to the studio door. As I open my door, she smiles and adds, "Leave your bag in there. I'll be taking you to the apartment in a bit."

"*apartment?*" I mumble, as I climb out of the van and join her.

"Yeah. It's actually pretty cool. You'll see..." she replies, pulling the door open.

I shrug and follow her into the studio, my 'emotion meter' pretty much pegged at this point.

I hear Marli even before I see her. The scream she lets out, fills the studio. Seconds later, she has me wrapped up in a hug, and is laughing like she is crazy.

"*OMG!* They let you out of school to come?" she asks, still holding onto my hands.

"Uh... well... no? I graduated already."

“no way...” they mumble, almost at the same time.

“Well, yeah. I was just hanging around doing pretty much nothing. I didn’t want to start college until I was as old as everyone else there.”

“Yeah... I guess I get that. So, tell me everything!” Marli blurts out, dragging me into the break room.

I spend the next hour catching them up on my life for the last two years – including my one failed romance. They listen, stopping me every so often to ask questions. Once I’m done, they tell me what they have been doing since the last time we saw each other – including the fact both have fairly serious boyfriends back in Denmark.

Eventually, I again ask the question that is driving me nuts...

“So... do you guys have any idea why are we’re here?”

When their facial expressions change, and they don’t answer, I turn and look behind me.

Standing in the doorway is none other than Mr. Billy Haugen, engineer/producer extraordinaire. And, to my total amazement (and the twins as well) standing next to him is Mrs. Agnès Brooks (formerly Agnès Ahlström) – one-time member of the pop groups *Ripples* and *Perfect Timing*.

Yeah – I’m close to freaking out...





Stockholm, Sweden
Haugen Studios
Billy Haugen

“Let me explain...” I offer, trying my best not to laugh.

“Please do,” Marit replies, grinning.

“Tomorrow, you have a 7:00 am flight to Inverness, Scotland...”

“Scotland?” Brandi asks?

“Yes, Scotland. Once you arrive there, you’re going to pick up a rental car,” I pause and make eye contact with Marit – because I know she is the better driver. She catches on instantly, and laughs.

“I saw that, Billy,” Marli quickly adds, giving me her ‘look’.

“You’re going to drive to Portree, a really small town that is a little over 100 miles away. It *should*,” I put a heavy emphasis on the last word, which makes all of them laugh, “take about two hours.”

“And?” Brandi asks.

“That’s the difficult part of this. You’re going to have to find a way to convince a certain young lady you will meet there, that she needs to come back here with you.”

“Because?” Marit asks.

“Because I’m asking you to. Is that a problem?”

“You’re such a butthead, Billy...” Marli blurts out, as the others look at her in disbelief. Seconds later they all fall out laughing.

“Smart ass...” I mumble.

“Oh hell... I’ll just tell you what’s going on,” Aggie offers, smiling at them. “We’re creating a new group.”

“And *we’re* in it?” Marit blurts out, the surprise in her voice, very pronounced.

“Only if you want to be,” Aggie quickly replies.

Brandi looks so astonished, I find myself wondering if she’s going to faint on us.

“Hey... easy, Brandi. You okay?”

At this point, her tears begin – it’s obvious she can’t control it.

“I’ve spent two years dreaming about this... about getting another chance...”

“And this is it,” Aggie says, walking over and putting a hand on her shoulder.

“Mrs. Brooks, we tried it – remember? And it just didn’t work...” Brandi blurts out, her tears now falling in earnest.

“Stop,” Aggie instantly replies. “From this point forward I’m *Aggie*. Got it? No ‘Mrs.’”

“But...” Brandi tries to force out, making Marit and Marli laugh.

“This is Sweden, Brandi – so get over it.” Marli says, gently slugging Brandi in the arm.

“The fans fell off when you tried it with *new songs*, remember? When you were doing covers, the kids –

and the world in general – couldn't get enough of you, as I recall." I turn and take a seat next to Marit.

"True..." Marit mumbles.

"So... we're going to cover old songs?" Brandi asks.

"Yep!" I energetically reply. "Aggie has already come up with a pretty decent list of songs. I have two other girls I want to get in on this, which will make five of you."

"And one of the girls is in Scotland?"

"Exactly."

"Well," Marli blurts out, following it with a laugh, "Scotland here we come!"



4

Portree, Scotland
A Small Dance/Vocal Studio
Brandi

At 5:30 the next morning, Aggie drops us off at the airport, and tells us good luck.

And yes, we think it's a bit odd that they trust us to do all this on our own. Thing is, the twins are both eighteen, and have paperwork saying I'm temporarily in Marit's custody (yeah... it's still funny) and that she is responsible for me.

At the airport in Inverness, we find a rental car waiting for us, with Marit listed as the driver, and a complete set of instructions on how to get to a place called Portree – which is where our new member is.

It takes us two and a half hours of driving and screwing off, but we eventually find what we are looking for.

When we pull up in front of the address we were given, it turns out to be a dance/vocal studio. I'm a bit shocked – but only because it seems so small. I think that maybe Marli reads my mind...

“It's the same size as the place we started in...” she mumbles, as she jabs me in the ribs.

“Well,” Marit adds, pulling the keys from the ignition, “we’ve chased her down, let’s go meet her.”

We get out of the small SUV and head for the door. Marli pulls it open, and single file we go in.

Finding no one in the lobby, we head down the only hall and quickly discover a very nice, yet fairly old studio – well, compared to Billy’s. Sitting on the floor against a wall, is a single female, I’m guessing about my age, with a *very* red braid twisted up on top of her head, a face full of freckles, and huge blue eyes – bluer than mine even. I assume it must be who we are looking for – Miss Maighread MacKinnon.

“Hey!” I call out, which makes her lift her head, “You must be Maighread.”

Her head goes up and down, but she doesn’t say anything, leaving me wondering if I pronounced her name wrong.

“Did I say it right?” I ask, making Marli laugh.

“Yes...” she mumbles, staring at her hands.

Having been the shy girl at one point in my life, and knowing what headspace she is in, I decide to take action.

“It’s a very cool name – kinda like these two,” I offer, as I point at Marit and Marli. I take a seat on the hardwood floor directly in front of her, and cross my legs under me. Still, she doesn’t look at me.

I watch as the twins take seats on either side of me. Eventually, she lifts her head and makes eye contact with me.

“Why me?” she asks, so softly, we barely hear her. She apparently knows who we are, and has been waiting for us.

“Do you love music?” Marli asks.

Again, her head goes up and down.

“Do you love to sing?” comes from Marit.

This time, I see the smallest of smiles.

“So do we...”

“But...” she quickly adds, “you guys are already famous...”

“*Were... were famous.* And it didn’t last long...” Marit replies.

“What does that have to do with right now?” Marli asks.

“Uh...well... I’m just a girl from a really small town in Scotland...” she mutters, sounding almost petrified.

“We grew up on a farm, in the middle of nowhere, in Denmark,” Marli offers, putting a hand on her knee.

“And I grew up in an even smaller town, on an island, in Washington state,” I add.

“But...” she starts, and is quickly interrupted by Marli.

“Being shy, isn’t an excuse...” she blurts out.

“Brandi was way worse when we first met her...” Marit says, giving me a gentle shove.

“Hey!” I blurt out, turning and glaring at Marit.

Her plan works... and Maighread is the first one to start laughing. In seconds, the three of us have joined her.

“Maighread...” I start to say.

“Maisie...”

“Huh?” Marit asks.

“You did say it right... but it’s just Scottish for Margaret. Everyone calls me Maisie... well... except for Nanna.”

“Well... okay then. ‘Maisie’ it is,” Marit says, again laughing.

“So...” I stand, and hold out a hand to our new friend, “How about you show us around Portree?”

“What about singing?” she asks, taking my hand, and letting me pull her to her feet.

“We have plenty of time for that. I want to go wander around, and listen to all the amazing accents here!”

“Besides,” comes from Marit, as she and Marli get to their feet, “we can sing anywhere!”

Ten minutes later, four goofy teenage girls, are wandering around ‘downtown’ Portree, looking in shop windows, laughing, and of course speaking to everyone we pass. It’s obvious that Maisie has no idea what to make of the three of us.

Although Billy got us rooms at a local Bed and Breakfast, Maisie’s parents insist we stay with them – which turns out to be a blast. Her Mom and Dad are amazing, and are all for her going after a performing career.

The four of us spend all night, and most of the next day, singing. Harmonizing this, taking turns singing lead on that, and just generally being teenagers. At one point, we are walking downtown, and a bunch of kids recognize the twins (even after two years!), and we end up singing *You Don’t Stand A Chance* a cappella, for a crowd of about thirty people – just because. Even Maisie gets into it.

Later that night, sitting on the floor of her parent's living room, she looks at Marit and with a good bit of apprehension in her voice, says, "Okay, I'll try it."

Her mom almost bursts into tears.

"You have to be sure, Maisie – *absolutely sure*. It won't work if you aren't *certain* you want to do it," I explain.

"All in, girl. You have to be all in..." Marli offers, taking one of her hands.

"I wasn't sure... until I watched you guys today – in front of the coffee shop. That was amazing, and I would love the chance to be part of something like that. Thing is..."

When her voice trails off, I get it – again.

"As long as you are all in, Maisie, you go right ahead and be scared. At some point, we all were. Thing is, you have us."

"Well then, let's go to Sweden and sing..." she offers, hugging each of us in turn.

Yeah... this is going to be an amazing journey – I can already tell.

And, I find I can't wait to meet our last member...

