When I was six years old, I was a different person. The only thing I share with that little conniving blonde troublemaker are memories. This isn't a philosophical debate about what makes a person who they are and such and such and blah blah. I’m not speaking metaphorically. I actually am not that person. I have a degenerative disorder. I was diagnosed when I was six. My body falls apart faster than the average person, and that's putting it lightly.

I remember waking up on the morning when I discovered my disease. There was no feeling in my left hand, in fact my left hand had completely disappeared. At first I thought it was a dream until I saw my motionless limb lying on the floor beside my bed. Surprisingly there was no blood. I suppose that sometime in the night my other body parts had conspired against my arm and had decided that it was a waste of vital life resources and thus had no business eating up valuable energy. The skin and muscle and bone cells from my shoulder had just unhooked themselves from the cells of my arm, and had let go. As horrifying as this sounds this was just the beginning of the disease.

My parents of course were very understanding.

“Honey”, they said, “You’re still beautiful”, and “Don’t worry dear, we’ll get you a new one.”

They took me to see a physician. He didn't seem too surprised at my case, I guess there must be lots of people who secretly suffer the same thing.

“Ms. Nadia”, he said, while his botoxed face tried to smile, “Look at this as an opportunity to improve yourself.”

Then, attempting to look compassionate, he continued:

“We aren’t quite sure how to cure the disease yet, but we have lots of ways to fix you up so you’ll look better than ever.”

I guess I had to believe him, even though the side of his toupee kept un-sticking from his head.

Anyway, he sent me to this tech wiz guy who created a special prosthetic arm for me that could move all by itself. I have to admit that I liked it a little better than the first arm. I did look better than ever, so I guess the toupee doctor was right after all.

Well I didn't really know what to expect from the disease at first, I thought that it was a one-time experience. But a few months later my body had another conference in the dead of night. This time it decided that it was my left eye that had to go. I never really liked that eye, it was on the bad side of my face, and I think it was a little smaller than my right eye. I got a prosthetic eye as well. To be fair my new eye was incredible, it worked like a cannon g6, I could even program it to have funny filters. People could have big huge faces, little tiny thin faces, upside down faces, anything I wanted.

I guess my body was starting to like these new developments, because soon it started dropping body parts left, right and center. One day a tooth, one day a nail, one day a tongue, the next day a leg. By time I was 13 I had a completely different body. I didn't even recognize myself in pictures. Everything about me had been swapped out and replaced by new upgraded body parts.

One day I tried asking my mom what she thought of my changed body. I wondered if she in fact preferred me this way.

“Well honey”, she paused and looked me up and down, “I think you’re beautiful.”

She kissed my head and her lipstick smeared on my forehead. I wiped it off.

“Do you think I look different then…*before*?”

I asked cautiously, I was nervous she would realize that I looked *completely* different from the girl she gave birth to.

“Baby”, her white veneers flashed as she smiled, “You’ll always be my little girl.”

She pulled me in for a hug, and pressed me up against her chest. Two solid lumps pressed into my body. I wondered if she had had my disease too, and if she had gotten her breasts replaced because her other ones had fallen off.

Well the disease now had a little break from attacking me. It was probably because there was barely anything left that it hadn’t affected already. So far the only thing that hadn't been swapped out was my brain and my heart. I guess the disease realized how important those organs are. But soon enough it forgot.

When I was sixteen I woke up one day and my heart was completely gone. It was the strangest feeling, I felt so empty inside. This was more serious than any of the other changes.

“Mom!”

I ran to her room and yelled her name. The door was open and the pink room smelled like nail polish. When I went in to find her she was in her bathroom painting her toe nails.

“Mommy…I don’t feel so good.”

Tears started slipping out of my prosthetic eyes, they were programed to do that when my brain computed emotional overload. The tears dripped down my plastic face and onto the floor, mixing with the shower-water that was already splattered on the tiles.

“What’s wrong?”

She put down the nail polish and got off her stool. Without makeup her face looked more expressive. I could tell that she was worried.

“My heart… I think it’s *gone*.”

She took me to the doctor immediately. He gave me a prescription for medication that was supposed to help with the weird empty feelings.

I didn’t want to have to take pills, I wanted to be fixed right away, like all the times before. The emptiness was unbearable.

“Can’t I just get a new heart?”

“I’m sorry, no, it’s not that simple”, he said, “in this case I can’t just send you to get a heart replacement. I’m afraid there is quite a long waiting list, and it will take some time for me to get you a new one.”

His little office seemed to be constricting my breathing, I was getting an anxiety attack. The thought of having to survive without a heart, with all the emptiness… that thought was just unbearable.

I gripped the leather of the office chair, the walls were closing in. Again my brain processed the emotion and my eyes on cue produced their tears. Dr. Toupee (as I unfortunately called him) got nervous when he saw me cry.

“Ms. Rose there is nothing we can do. It takes the lab a long time to make the hearts, and there are many others like you who require new ones.”

He passed me a tissue from his Kleenex box. I wiped my eyes.

“Just take the medication I prescribed”, he said it softly, attempting to be compassionate, “I promise you’ll feel better.”

I did as the doctor said. While waiting for my new heart I took as many of the pills as I could. They helped a bit but I still spent a lot of my time sleeping, because, surprisingly, you can't really do that much without a heart. Finally, they gave me a new one. I can't say that it was an upgrade though, sometimes it gives me a little pain. I guess my body still misses the old heart.

Well you may be thinking that this was the end of my disease, there was nothing else to switch out. But you're wrong. When I was around 18 I started noticing pieces of my brain slipping out of my ears. My body was slowly rejecting my brain as well! This did not affect me as much as my heart did, in fact since losing my old heart a lot of things do not affect me that much.

Of course I had each piece replaced, and honestly I have no regrets. With each new piece I gained new ideas and I learned new things. My whole outlook on life began to change. I started to analyze things more, and I began to question things I had always taken for granted. I don’t think my parents were that comfortable with these new changes though.

One time when we were talking in the kitchen I asked my dad why he still read Freud, even though there was no scientific basis for his teachings.

“You know that Freud is just a hoax right? No one listens to that old phony anymore.”

I smiled smugly as my dad’s face froze mid bite of pizza. The water dripping into the sink was the only sound for a few frozen seconds. My dad was one of those guys who never missed an opportunity to psychoanalyze you, so I knew this news would shock him. He put his pizza back on his plate, interwove his fingers and scrutinized me from across the table.

“Honey, have you been having some trouble with school lately? I’m sensing some projection.”

Well I guess my new knowledge did not impress my parents, but I still continued to question everything that they had taught me. Each new piece of brain that I received taught me new things and changed me. Currently I still have around half my brain left but hopefully this last stage of my disorder progresses fast because I’m excited to receive each new bit of knowledge that comes with the brain replacements.

At this point in my life I’ve not only learned to accept my disease, I’ve learned to love the fact that I can upgrade myself, and become better. The only problem is that I’m left staring at my pictures from when I was six and wondering to myself how it’s even possible that I can say that that is me when there is nothing of her left.