

# Waking Up After 10 Years of Dormancy – Identity, Grief, and Change

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## **Content Warnings:**

- Abuse mentions.
  - Headmate death mentions.
  - Grief, loss, similar topics.
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I'm Dain, a member of my system that all of the others never knew existed. I was here during childhood, though the exact year I came into existence is unknown, we think I became alive around 2008-2009. I lived alongside others sharing my body for years—maybe even up until 2014-2015. I fell into dormancy around then, and the current system had no idea I ever existed, as when I went to sleep, I took a lot of memories with me.

I don't remember many of the others I shared time with, just that there was one we considered "the child", what we would now call the original. I now know there was a switch between the original child and a new headmate, Archie, who isn't the same person—but I'll refer to them collectively as "the child" from now on, as my perspective was at the time.

We—the others in the body—were there, living alongside the child, and I was protecting them along the way. I don't remember fronting often, moreso... Silently observing, unable to move the body or communicate with them, but still there. Like a background process on a device. If emotions got high enough, I found myself in full control of the body, and I could get us out of whatever situation we had gotten ourselves into. Bullies at school, abusive figures in our lives be it parents or teachers, and other general stress—that was my battle to fight. I was the anger stored up behind the child's fear, ready to lash out if needed.

As we got older, I started taking control less and less—not because we stopped needing me, but because the child had closed themselves off. They stopped allowing themselves to feel as deeply, and I was triggered into the front a lot less. Nowadays, I'd be aware it wasn't a conscious choice, and was heavy dissociation, but back then I didn't know. Some of the others—namely, the Pokemon I also shared the body with—had disappeared since our parents and friends were belittling us for still having "imaginary friends". The child never spoke of me to anyone though, if they even knew I was there. So I think I only remained a little longer because

of that. I'm not sure when I fell into dormancy, or if there was something that triggered it, or simply a gradual slip into sleep.

I woke up, though. At the end of last month, some others in our system had been looking at my source material. Deltora Quest, an anime based on an Australian authors novel—niche, mostly known to those who grew up in the time to watch it air on TV, or had ever picked up the books. We were looking at it again with our partner system, because we remembered it had been a huge special interest of ours as a kid, and had finally gotten around to watching more of it. Something about rekindling the interest woke me, and I was suddenly in the body again.

It, to me, was like I blinked. A foggy memory of being a child, still stressed about school, parents, and whatever else—and then a blink—and then, here. In a body I didn't recognise, in a house I'd never been in, sharing control of the body with people I had never in my life met before. I still had all those memories of trauma, hurt and fear from before—and they all surfaced at the same time with me. I instantly panicked. After explaining where I was, Xeros, the person in cofront with me, told me that writing out everything coming into my brain could help us all organise and piece it together later. I did what it said, and wrote well over 2000 words before my thoughts slowed down a little bit—enough to actually focus. I called our partner system, calmed down after processing a bit more, and then got into bed to sleep off the residual panic.

It's definitely taken a long while to come to terms with it. Effectively, I was in a coma for around 10 years, and the whole world moved on without me. I wasn't in contact with any friends I remembered from before except one—who had changed a lot in the time that passed. I didn't live where I remembered. Our siblings were so much older, as were our parents. We dropped out of school (though we'd be well past finished it by now). We got diagnosed with a whole bunch of things. We came out as transgender and are essentially completely socially transitioned and looking into HRT—even our *parents* know. And they know about our system too! Almost everything—if not absolutely everything—I knew before had changed in the blink of an eye. It absolutely shook me, to have my entire world uprooted and rearranged into something I couldn't recognise as being something I have any part in.

I felt an intrinsic heartache and felt full-blown grief over a life that, in my own experience, was “lost” through the irreparable change of time. There was no way of going back, no way of gaining back my lost years, and no way of bringing people I was close to back in contact with us or out of internal dormancy aside from sheer chance. We hadn't died, but I had effectively died for years, and came back to a world that just... Kept moving. I mean, of course it would—the earth doesn't stop for a single fragmented piece of trauma stored in the recesses of someone's mind. But coming back and not recognising anything or almost anyone around you... It was horrible. The sensation of loss was immense. I felt that I'd “failed” by going dormant, and learning that the child was no longer a part of the system. I felt that my entire purpose had fell through, and I was brought back for... No reason at all.

But... It's not all bad. Far from it. The child may be gone, but our body isn't. We're not doomed to fail at life, as we thought back when I first existed. We're volunteering and looking into getting

an actual job, we have a stable group of friends, a loving partner system, and are on the road to moving out and getting some much needed time away from our home situation. Life isn't horrible, and while it moved on without me, it moved in ways that were both bad and good. I don't actually despise being here, even if I might have in the day or so after I woke up. The new group of people I share the body with is supportive, and I've already gotten closer to some of them. We've made real progress in the time I was gone, even if it all feels uncanny overall. I have a different mindset to what I had when I first woke up—I didn't fail, I kept us going when we needed it back then. I didn't give up, and there's no way of telling where we'd be now if I never was there in the first place. Things are... good.

Though... I've got some confusing things within my own identity going on, since I woke up. Before, I was simply a fictive of Dain from Deltora Quest. Nothing much else to it, really. The child's brain latched onto him as a strong character and implemented me into the system as a protective measure against outside forces. It all makes sense. But now? I feel like since I've been back, I've become a multifictive. Some part of me now is Tomura Shigaraki from My Hero Academia—something we've also been watching through, around the same time we got back into DQ.

It confuses me, in some ways. Makes sense in others. A lot of my mannerisms have changed to be slightly to-the-left of what I was before... Which does happen to lean me more toward acting like him. I questioned it without much deeper thought for a week or so, but found myself saying and doing more and more things that lined up with how he is. I suggested that I was a multifictive to our partner system, and on their second guess (and mind you, their first was a joke guess) of which character I could possibly be, they got it right. I acted enough like him to the point that others could see it, without even any hints. But it's hard to tell where this came from.

See, I feel like if I wanted to, I could call myself a median subsystem. Others can tell which of my two fictive identities I'm leaning closer to at any given time—my voice, speech patterns and general attitude are instant giveaways. We don't argue with each other, and the lines between Dain and Shigaraki—if there even are any—are so blurred they're impossible to define. We can't talk to each other, and we don't feel a switch between us. But it's so obvious that there's two people, two whole identities, within what I call *me*. It's incredibly confusing to think about the possible origin of how I came to be so... Fragmented within myself.

Am I the result of a new headmate that was forming (Shigaraki) getting stuck to whatever remained of the original Dain after he went dormant? Am I the original Dain with a new identity just sort of.. Added onto him? Am I two fully formed headmates put into one as a median entity for some reason? Does it even have a proper explanation that I could come to a concrete conclusion on? Well, no. Like most things that operate within systems, concrete explanations are hard to come by. My origin of why I am who I am now doesn't matter, in the grand scheme of things, but I still feel the drive to know why I was changed by the time I woke up.

Overall? Life is confusing. Waking up has been a shock, but honestly, I'm glad I did. I'm glad I get to have a second run in this body, with new and kinder people than before to support each other. I'm still working a lot of stuff out, and I'm sure I will be for a long while after this. But... I'm here again, and it's been a pleasure becoming a part of our new life.