


INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES EXCLUSIVE

# every day



david levithan

Every day a different body.  
Every day a different life.  
Every day in love with the same girl.



From the co-author of  
*Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist* and *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*





## AUTHOR'S NOTE



Every morning, A wakes up in a different body and a different life. The novel *Every Day* starts on Day 5994 of A's life. For this story, I wanted to go back to a day in A's life before *Every Day*. Think of this as A recounting a few passing moments from his past.

# DAY 2919

As a child, I am baffled by inconsistency. Not my own inconsistency—I am used to waking up in a different body and a different life every morning. This makes sense to me. It is everyone else’s inconsistency that throws me.

It is a Saturday morning, and I am seven years old. I know it’s a Saturday from the quiet of the morning, from the fact that it’s nine in the morning and nobody is rushing me off to school or to church. I like Saturday mornings because that is when I am allowed to watch cartoons. Even in houses that don’t have all the channels, I can still find cartoons.

I stumble from room to room, looking for the TV. At this age, I don’t bother to access any memories of the house. I am happy to discover everything by wandering through. My mother is in the kitchen, talking on the phone. My father might be outside, or still asleep. The TV is in the den, which has a shaggy rug and wood walls. I am late for my nine o’clock show, but I can watch the end and then see the whole nine-thirty show. This is what I did last week, and the week before. I was in different houses, but once the TV was on, it was almost like they were the same place. Last week I had brothers and sisters, but this week I don’t think I do.

I switch on the TV and it’s too loud. I find the volume control and turn it down. It’s a commercial. I don’t really care about commercials, because even if I get things, I don’t have them for very long.

I sit on the shaggy rug and lean against the couch. This show has talking animals, and when it comes back on, the moose is arguing with the aardvark about the price of a ferry ride. The parrot keeps repeating the things they’re saying in

a really funny voice, and I laugh.

“What are you doing?”

I have only been watching for five minutes, but already I’m so absorbed in what’s happening that I don’t hear her at first. Then she grabs my arm and pulls me up, and I know right away I am in trouble, big trouble, and I don’t know what for. Was I laughing too loud? Was I not supposed to sit on the carpet?

Now that I’m up, she lets go and slaps the TV off. The room is suddenly silent, and there’s nowhere to hide in that silence.

“How many times have I told you not to touch that? Did I even say you could leave your room? You are not *allowed* to watch such *garbage*.”

I have so few words at age seven. I don’t know *stern* or *enraged* or *sanctimonious*. All I know is mad. My mother is mad at me. Her face is mad. Her posture is mad. The sound of her words is mad.

“Go back to your room.”

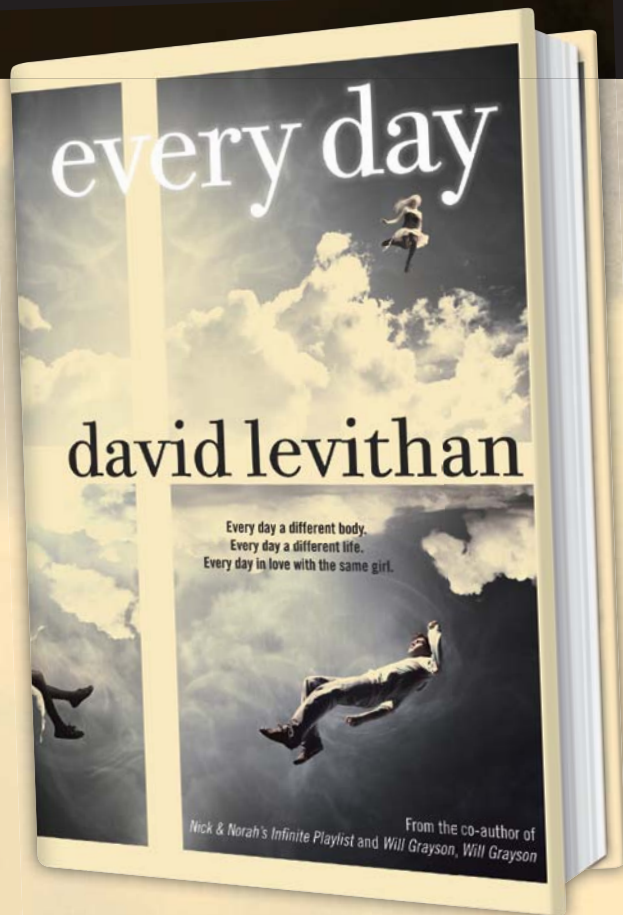
I don’t hesitate. I don’t want to be in the presence of her anger one moment longer. I go back to my room and sit on the bed, waiting for her to come by, to tell me what my punishment is. But all she does is come by and shut the door. There is enough light coming in through the window to make everything in the room seeable, but the air still seems tinged in shadow.

I sit there and sit there. Time feels horizonless.

Feeling someone else’s anger is bad; being left alone is worse.

At first I am too afraid to move. But eventually I have to. There are very few books in my room, and all of them are for little kids. So I pick up the dictionary, because it is the longest book in the room, and I know it’s going to be a long day.

I learn a few words. I would rather be outside the room, using them.



There's no reprieve until lunchtime. When my mother opens the door, she eyes the dictionary in my lap with suspicion. I've had time to close it, but not the time to put it on the shelf. At the very least, I don't look comfortable.

"Have you learned your lesson?" she asks.

I nod.

"Well," she says, "we'll see about that."

I don't know where my father is. His things are all around the house, so I know he has to be somewhere. He's just not here right now.

I don't feel I can ask where he is.

She gives me a chicken sandwich—leftovers from dinner last night, put between bread. I know to eat it all, and not to ask for more. Not because I access the thoughts of the life I'm in, but because my mother is so easy to read.

We don't talk. We stare at other parts of the kitchen. I try to find things to read. Buttons on the

microwave. The brand of the refrigerator.

I rarely feel like I'm a prisoner in a body, but I have felt like a prisoner in a house. I definitely feel like I'm a prisoner here. And I am a prisoner because, as my mother's expression makes clear, she feels she is a prisoner to me, too.

I am not allowed television. I am not allowed to go outside. I am not given conversation. Eventually I am given dinner, but that is silent, too. My father never comes home.

The only thing I am allowed, the only thing I am given, is myself. It is enough, but only barely.

Some days are like this. And the only way to get through them is to remember that they are only one day, and that every day ends.

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