

# I Grew Up

By Sophia Dukhota

‘You really are such a responsible person! An adult for sure!’

Words that were praise sounded like a dull reminder of reality. My critical family had said them to me, and so I offered a small smile in response that their expectations of me had been met.

Adult huh. People say that like one day you are an adult, and the day before you are a child. But it isn’t like that. It’s a process, I came to that conclusion. If so, where along in that process can you say you are an ‘adult’?

I remembered when I parted with my first friend in my first school. Back then I had never experienced loss and I cried and cried for the friend I would never see again. Now, I do not have any particular feelings towards them. Maybe a small hint of what used to be happy memories, but I do not miss them any longer. It was a truth to learn, friends come and go just like that seasons change. And just like the seasons people change too. For better, or worse.

By my teenage years I had grown to befriend this truth. And every friend I lost because of something that wasn’t petty or anger I mourned. Sometimes I mourned the friends I did lose to teenage anger and the regret that came along with not doing something differently. I still have friends from my teenage years that I occasionally keep in contact with, maybe a few times a year. Before that used to seem like nothing. Now it seems like a feat worthy of Hercules himself.

Even so there is a tinge of melancholic nostalgia when I talk to them. A memory of a different time, almost a different world to the one I find myself living in currently. How things used to be, before the amount we talked seemed to lessen and lessen, our distance ever growing. Sometimes our paths would divulge, and we stayed with each other only as memories, an end we both silently agreed to. For a select few, the most precious - or the most convenient - I would ring up a few times a year. ‘How are you?’ I ask, knowing that their life has changed so much... without me.

Maybe it’s when I realised that I am not a superhero. I am not someone special like I was always told in my childhood; the memories of which become fuzzier and hazier with each passing year. I used to believe I could be anything, *do anything*, but the experience I gained told me otherwise. When I was a child, I believed that earnest effort and desire would lead me to become good at anything, and that being good at something could make the world a better place. And there was so much wrong with the world, that even a child could tell. But it seemed so easy to fix it! Why do these adults just not fix the problem they created? It would make everyone happier! Why don’t they end that war, why do they not feed that person? I asked my mum to which she replied, ‘you’ll understand when you are older’. And understand I did.

No longer was the goal of life to be happy, to work for a better future. It was always for the benefit of someone, or a group of someones. Almost always being the rich, something I nor the people I pass on the street on the way to my office job most likely will never be. To do something you have to have power, influence. The layers of bureaucracy laid bare. To change one single, insignificant, minute thing you’d have to go through so many levels of bullshit that almost no man, woman or other gender would take it upon themselves when so many of them have to *survive*.

‘They are not rich because they are kind, they are kind because they are rich’. I do not agree wholly with the statement but when you are not scared to look at your bank account after paying your rent and bills, and thinking how to budget for food it would be a lot easier to be kind. Money may not buy happiness, but a stable life would make me happy.

Yet what is there? I keep thinking of when I became an adult yet I long for those hazy days where everything was new, I was excited to wake up to say hello to the sun again, and a year was oh such a long time. The memories may be fuzzy but the feelings I have are anything but. A warmth, and at the same time a deep pain. I will never again be a child, and see the world through eyes unclouded with excuses, cynicism, and an acceptance that this is just how things are. I have my happy days, but none of them resound as bright as the joy of my child self-looking up at the bright and expansive sky and wondering what could be beyond, in the unknown.

Then I realised. It was not when I became responsible. When I took the trash out on the days I was supposed to. Changed the bedding every week. Got a job. Always ate dinner on time. Paid the bills... Fell in love...

‘It is how it is, and I can’t change that.’

My family believed I was an adult when I had surrendered myself to become like everyone else. When I gave up my belief that I could change something.

And I believe it too.