

Junior Division, Prose

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Growing Up (an excerpt)

Being grown up isn't as fun as the idea of growing up. For as long as I can remember, I wanted to be older. When I was eight, I wanted to be ten. When I was ten, I wanted to be fifteen. Now I don't want to grow up at all. I've always had this wild fantasy that I would be a professional adult who drinks coffee, drives a fancy car, and has a briefcase, but as the days grow longer and the years get shorter, I have been wistfully longing for my childhood.

I miss the days when I had no responsibility. All my time consisted of sweet nothingness. I would create magical stories, act them out with my toys, and be entertained for hours. I would sit and stare at the glowing television screen and watch my favorite show. I would be force-fed macaroni and cheese, and chicken nuggets by my mother. All of those memories have begun to blur like a water-damaged polaroid. The days when mom would do my hair into a quick braid as I requested, and I would work tirelessly alongside dad with my miniature toolbox are long gone. I knew I was growing up when adults no longer hid the ugly truth about things because we both knew growing up is hard and that you fail to realize it until it's over. Before you know it, you have already outgrown your favorite t-shirt you would parade around in all year. Suddenly the toys you never went without are being tucked away in a small box collecting dust, and you can no longer dream of crazy aspirations because they are unrealistic. I knew I was grown-up when I jumped with joy when I received my paycheck every Thursday. When I was legally able to operate a vehicle, and when I began using all of my free time to look at University applications. Yet despite all of this, here I am, itching to keep my childhood alive just a little longer. Thinking maybe looking through old photo albums and watching my favorite animated movies from years ago would take me back to the beginning again. I would say my childhood is like the flowers in my garden. The flowers have long since lost their color and sweet scent, and I know they have died, but here I am, still trying to keep them alive a little bit longer. Adding more water onto them as if a little bit of love can save them, but in all actuality, my childhood is long gone, and there is nothing I can do to get it back.

So no, I'm not a professional adult who drinks endless amounts of coffee, carries a briefcase, or drives a fancy car. I have no idea what I'm doing. One thing I do know for sure is that being grown up isn't as fun as the idea of growing up.