

Paying a Visit to 1992

It's dark out, and cold. Really cold. The snow crunches under my feet like Alaskan driveways have a tendency to do this time of year. The campervan sits in the driveway. In three more years it'll burn down. We'll be sad, but everyone will be in a different house then.

I raise my hand to knock, but I stop. I'm not sure what the protocol is here.

But the door opens, and there she is. Wearing a green sweatshirt she'll eventually give to me because I love it's eighties-ness, and rocking a perm she'll give up in another year for her naturally straight hair, stands a woman whose face I know as well as my own.

"Hi Mom," I say, not sure how she'll take it.

"You're so tall," she says. And then she's hugging me. For a second I worry this is against the rules, that it might break the spell sooner than it inevitably will. But it doesn't. "Come in," she says.

I follow her inside a house I only know from videos. And then someone small is standing at my knees.

"Woah."

There I am. Little toddler me with big eyes, wondering who this new person is. Wearing a pink tutu and a fanny pack, and sporting curly red hair that will eventually grow blonde and straight.

"I forgot I was such a fashionista." I say, trying to hide how creeped out I am.

"You don't like pajamas. Or anything to do with going to bed," my mom yawns.

"I suppose that doesn't change."

I sit down on the couch. It's soft and blue. Little Me goes back to playing, digging through a box of toys, completely oblivious that some of us in the room are casually breaking the space-time continuum. I watch her, so content, so pleased with herself. Something about it makes my chest tighten.

And then the years start rushing at me.

Kindergarten. Third grade. Middle school. How I'm never going to let this little girl forget about that 2nd grade remedial reading class. How I'm going to be so disappointed in her for not getting into the "gifted and talented" program in fifth

grade with all her friends. How I'll watch her turn herself into a perfectionist and do nothing to stop it. How I'll encourage it. How I'll pressure her to get straight As, to get into a top school. And how even then she'll do it, it'll never feel like enough — because that's how I'll teach her to think.

“What's wrong?” my mom asks.

I don't want to cry. This isn't her problem, or at least, not now it isn't. Plus, she has enough on her plate right now, what with the divorce and everything. But I suppose I want to tell her. I look at the toddler.

“Sometimes I'm mean to her,” I hear myself say.

Little Me rummages through Legos, not caring that it's loud. Not caring that others are sleeping. Not caring about anything.

“It's okay,” my mom says in a voice covered with whatever sweet stuff it is moms coat their words in.

I hear the old fashioned clock chime, and I can feel the subtle shift — the one that will pull me back to my proper time in another minute.

“Are you happy?” my mom asks.

“Mostly,” I say. “It's a process.”

She nods, understanding.

“Can I ask...” she begins, feeling guilty for the rule-bending question she's about to pose. “Can I ask what it is you do?”

I like this question.

“I'm a writer,” I say.

She smiles.

“And a blogger actually,” I add.

“A what?”

“Oh. You'll find out pretty soon.”

Then Little Me presses a button on a toy that spins and spins and everything goes dark. I wake up to a double-size bed and a box fan blasting air on me, because it's hot in LA this time of year. It's really hot.