

The Life Between the Lines

Chapter: The Girl Who Was Still Becoming

When I look back at my childhood now, I sometimes feel like I am looking at someone else's life. The memories are mine, I know they are, but some of them ~~feels~~feel so distant that I have to think carefully before I can remember what actually happened. ~~There are~~Some memories ~~which~~ are very clear, ~~like~~as though they happened yesterday, ~~and then there are memories that is~~while others exist only ~~as~~ small ~~picture~~pictures in my mind, without ~~any~~a clear beginning or ending.

I was born into an ordinary family, and at that time, I didn't ~~thought~~think there was anything unusual about my life. We lived ~~a simple life where simply, with~~ everyone ~~had~~having their own responsibilities and ~~everyone was busy with something, things to take care of.~~ My parents worked hard, and as children, we mostly understood that our parents were tired, ~~but we didn't understand without understanding~~ why. I think children notice more than adults believe they do, even when they don't have the words to explain ~~it~~what they are noticing.

Our house was not very big, but it always felt full. ~~Fall—full~~ of people, voices, arguments, laughter, and sometimes silence. There was always something happening. Someone was asking where something was, someone was looking for their shoes, and someone was usually calling my name from another room. At some point, I started enjoying ~~the~~ quiet more than ~~the~~ noise, but I don't remember exactly when that happened.

As a child, I was quiet. People often thought I was shy, and maybe I was, but I didn't really think of myself that way. I could talk a lot when I was comfortable with someone. With my cousins, I could spend hours talking about things that didn't even ~~mattered~~matter. We would make plans about our ~~future~~futures, even though none of us ~~knew~~really understood what the future ~~really~~ meant.

Sometimes, I would sit by myself and make up stories. I had a habit of looking ~~outside~~out the window and imagining where the people on the road were going. I wondered if they were going to work, meeting someone, or ~~going~~heading somewhere that would change their ~~life~~lives. I don't know why I used to think like this at such a young age. Maybe I was simply curious, or ~~maybe~~perhaps some part of me already wanted a life that was bigger than the one I could see.

My mother was one of the most important people in my childhood. She had a way of knowing when something was wrong with me, even when I didn't say anything. There were times when I would come home from school upset, and she would ask me what had

happened. I would say nothing, because I didn't want to talk about it, but somehow, she would know.

She wasn't always ~~soft~~gentle with me. Sometimes she was strict, and at ~~that~~the time, I thought she was being unfair. There were moments when I would go to my room angry and promise myself that when I became an adult, I would never treat my children ~~like this~~that way. It makes me smile now because growing up taught me that parents are also just people ~~who are~~ trying to figure things out. They don't always know what ~~is~~ the right thing to do ~~is~~.

My father was different. He was quieter and didn't talk about his feelings very much. I learned to understand his moods through small things. ~~The~~the way he entered the house, the way he put his keys down, or how long he stayed quiet at dinner. Sometimes he didn't have to say anything for me to know that he had had a difficult day.

There were many ordinary evenings in our house. We ate dinner, watched television, talked about relatives, and discussed things that seemed very important at the time. Now, when I think about those evenings, I realize how precious they were. Nobody knew that these simple moments would one day become memories.

School was another important part of my childhood, although I didn't always ~~liked~~like going there. I liked some subjects and hated others. Mathematics was something I could never understand properly, especially when the questions became complicated. I would look at the numbers and feel ~~like~~as though everyone else understood something that I had somehow missed.

I was better with words. I liked reading, writing, and making up stories. Whenever our teacher asked us to write something creative, I would become excited. I could write pages without realizing how much time had passed. But when someone asked me to read my work in front of the class, I suddenly became nervous and forgot how to speak properly.

There was one particular incident that I still remember.

I had written a short story for a school assignment. I was proud of it because I had spent a lot of time writing it. The teacher read it in front of the class and then said that I had a good imagination. Everyone clapped, and I remember feeling embarrassed and happy at the same time. It was probably the first time someone outside my family told me that something I had created had value.

I think that moment stayed with me because I needed to hear it.

At that age, I didn't understand confidence. I thought confident people were ~~people~~those who never got scared or ~~never~~ made mistakes. I didn't realize that you could be afraid and

still do something. This was a lesson I would learn much later, and honestly, I wish I had learned it earlier.

My childhood was not ~~only~~made up entirely of happy memories. There were also moments that I don't like remembering. There were arguments in the family, misunderstandings, disappointments, and things that children are sometimes expected to ignore. I learned early that not every problem needs to be talked about. Sometimes, you ~~just~~simply stay quiet and wait for it to pass.

I don't know if that was a good lesson.

Maybe it made me stronger. Maybe it also made me someone who kept too much inside.

As I grew older, I started noticing myself changing. I became more aware of how people saw me. I cared about what others thought, even when I told myself that I didn't. A small comment from someone could stay in my mind for days. I would replay conversations and think about what I should have said instead.

There was a period when I wanted to be liked by everyone. I thought that if I was kind enough, helpful enough, and quiet enough, people would always treat me well. That ~~was~~ ~~not~~wasn't true, but I didn't know it then.

I started learning about disappointment through friendships. Some people ~~who~~whom I thought would remain in my life forever slowly disappeared. Sometimes there was an argument, and sometimes there wasn't. Sometimes people ~~just~~simply became distant, and neither of us asked why.

At first, I blamed myself.

I thought maybe I wasn't interesting enough. Maybe I had said something wrong. Maybe I wasn't the kind of person people wanted to stay friends with. These thoughts ~~sounds~~sound childish now, but they felt very real to me at the time.

The older I became, the more I understood that people leave for many reasons. Not every ending has someone to blame. Sometimes people simply grow in different directions.

Still, knowing this doesn't make every goodbye easier.

My teenage years were full of questions. What would I become? Where would I live? Would I be successful? Would I make my parents proud? Would I have the kind of life I imagined when I was sitting by the window as a child?

I didn't have answers to any of these questions.

I only had dreams.

Some of my dreams changed every few months. One month, I wanted to become a writer; another month, I wanted to do something completely different. I would become excited about an idea and then lose interest when something else came along. Looking back, I don't think I ~~wasn't~~was confused about my dreams. I was simply trying to understand myself.

There were also expectations from the people around me. Everyone had an opinion about what a successful life should look like. Study hard. Get a good job. Be responsible. Make the right choices. Don't disappoint anyone.

It sounded simple when people said it.