

I used to think I could stay young forever. That I could live a childhood full of fantasy and dreams for as long as it took for Sleeping Beauty to be awoken with her kiss. Longer even. Longer than the hot summer nights filled with joy and laughter and the promise of a thousand happy years to come. Time was timeless.

I used to think I could never grow old. That I was born to be a happy, carefree child, and that was who I would remain. That the old men on the streets were born with their walking sticks and their gummy smiles. That grandmothers would only ever need to bake cookies to feed to their grandchildren and that chalk drawings on the pavement would forever remain, etched, as memories. Timeless and immortal.

Although I had everything, I used to wait for tomorrow. For the days when I could stay up until midnight, and for the endless chocolate cakes I could eat, without being watched by a parent's anxious eyes. I used to wait for a time when I could see my puzzle, complete and perfect. I thought it would be spun from golden threads, weaving my carefree, happy memories together, intertwined with the magic of a young, endless childhood.

I grew older, though, as humans surely do. And I found myself forgetting the childhood magic of melting ice-creams on sticky fingers, and of seeing the world on a father's tall shoulders. And I saw loved ones of loved ones pass away. With each fading memory, and each painful death, I came to realise that I was no longer living in my careless, brightly coloured childhood. It was never meant to be how I had once imagined. Slowly but surely, I too was growing older. I too would resemble an old white-haired grandmother, and I too, one day, would smile through the gummy smiles of the elderly. And I began to realise too, that they had once been a baby, a child, a teenager, and had once experienced the same vibrantly colourful timeless happiness of childhood.

Perhaps it is the way of people to expect, to wait for something in the future. Something special, something indefinable. But I now know that the past is where the magic lies, although I never appreciated it for what it was. And I know, now, that the present is the only time I am given to make magic, to create my own special memories to hold, and to cherish, to embrace and to remember.

Perhaps it was this, more than anything, that makes me now treasure every moment I am given, relish in every breath and every ring of laughter. Perhaps it was this that makes me value each and every piece of my puzzle now, more even, than the finished masterpiece.