

I Met My Younger Self for Coffee

“You’re late,” my younger self said, frowning.

“By only two minutes,” I replied, smiling. “There’s no need to rush, is there? Not unless you got a hot date after this.” I winked at her.

“Stop, no. It’s just that I thought getting older would mean being more timely, but I guess not.”

I dismissed her sass and offered, “What do you want to drink? It’s on me.”

“An iced americano, please.”

“Ah, yes. An iced americano. Are you sure you don’t want a frappuccino?”

“I don’t drink frappuccinos. You do.”

I smirked and went to order our drinks. *At least I tried.* She had the sweetest tooth ever—americano, my butt.

As I waited for our drinks, I couldn’t help but look over at my younger self, unintentionally staring as I took a *real* good look at her. While I had my short, black hair down, she had her long, black hair up in a ponytail. While I wore thin, silver metal-like glasses, she wore thick, clear ones. While I wore pearl stud earrings, she wore small silver hoops.

The differences did not end there. She wore a light blue hoodie with embroidered daisies, black leggings that were too long on her, and light blue Converse shoes with numerous scuffs. I wore a pair of high waisted straight jeans, a white merino wool turtleneck, and navy blue loafers.

Despite these differences, there were some things that stayed the same: the monolids, the flat nose, the thick calves, and of course, the short stature. These features that my younger self hated were ones I came to love—okay, not *love*. But anything I didn’t love I learned to accept, or at least be kind to myself about it. Plus, it really helped my confidence once I figured out what

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clothes worked best with my body. If only my younger self knew how beautiful she already was. She just needed to find what suits her best.

I sighed and brought over our drinks.

“You’re really pretty, you know that?” I said, placing our drinks down on the round table and taking a seat.

“Stop,” she gasped, blushing. “You’re just saying that because you’re old now.”

I sighed again. What did I say? My younger self was completely oblivious to her beauty, and only with time she would come to realize and appreciate it.

“So, how are you? How’s college treating you?” I asked.

“Why are you asking as if you don’t know?” she shot back, narrowing her eyes.

“Sorry. I think I remembered for the most part, but it’s been awhile. Remind me of the details again, please?” Of course, I remembered. I remembered every single detail, but I wanted to give her the chance to vent, to complain, to not bottle up her emotions.

“Well,” she began, grimly. “After deciding not to be pre-med anymore, I went to the career center on campus and they suggested that I try...other things. You know, to find what I actually like doing. So, I volunteered at the animal shelter. But that was too sad. I didn’t last a week. Then I took up tutoring, but man, teaching is not one of my strengths. Now I’m working in a lab, but I don’t know...I can’t see myself doing research for the rest of my life.” She sighed. “I feel so lost, and I just want it all figured out already.”

“And you will figure it out.” I gently placed my hands on hers and held them there. “It might take a while and you might have to try a few more things, but you’re so smart and talented. It’ll all work out. I mean, look at me! And *you* are a part of me.” I gave her a quick wink.

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“You’re just trying to compliment yourself.” She grinned.

“Am I?” I laughed. “Well, just remember that you don’t have to love whatever job you end up doing. If you love your job, great! If you don’t, that’s okay too! Just as long as the job doesn’t stress you out, then you’re good. Any decent paying job with health benefits will do because all your free time and money will be spent on things you actually want anyways—like traveling and shoes...and more shoes!”

“Noted. I’ll try to keep that in mind.” She giggled. “Let’s talk about something else. Tell me about yourself. Do you have a boyfriend now?”

“Noooo,” I laughed. “I’ve been on a couple of dates recently, but I haven’t found *the one* just yet. But that’s not important. As long as I have my girlfriends, I’m content. We’re having a galentine’s party next week and a concert the week after that.”

“A party? A concert? When did you start going to those things?”

“As soon as I could. And you should too! You can start now.”

“What? No. Making friends in college is already hard as it is. How would I even get invited to those things? Plus, it’s not like I have anyone to go with even if I were invited.”

“Don’t be silly! You don’t need to be invited to go to a concert. You just need money, which we have. Oh, and a ride! That’s important, but don’t worry, that’s why they created Lyft and—.”

“No. I don’t like doing those things. And even if I did, I don’t like going out by myself.”

“What? How would you know you don’t like concerts or parties? Have you gone to one yet? Besides, you can’t always wait around for someone to do something with you. I know it’s scary, but you miss out on so much just waiting around for someone. It’s okay to enjoy things by yourself sometimes.”

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“No, absolutely not.”

“Why not? You’re missing out on potential fun.”

“No.”

“Yes!”

“No.”

“Yes!”

“M-mom, stop! I’m not you. I don’t feel comfortable spontaneously doing whatever and whenever by myself.”

“I know that!” I looked tenderly at my daughter. “But I see my younger self in you, and I don’t want you to waste your youth worrying and hiding and missing out on things like I did. I want you to enjoy college, have fun, and live life.”

“But I’m scared,” she whispered. “I worked so hard to get here. Now nothing is the way it should be. I’m not pre-med. I’m struggling to make friends. I’m stressed all the time. I don’t have a plan anymore. I don’t know what I’m doing with my life. I don’t know anything.”

“That’s why I’m here. I’m your safety net. You don’t have to have it all figured out. You can figure it out as you go, but have fun in the process. I want you to be happy. I want you to be happy *now*. Not when you finally have your “dream” job or when you’re old and ready to retire. So, explore your career options, try new things—*try new things by yourself*—and take those chances while you’re still young because I am here to catch you *every time you fall*.”

I hugged my daughter as she cried on my shoulders. I don’t know how long we were like that until she softly said, “The RAs in my building are hosting an early Valentine's Day party on the first floor tomorrow night. I guess I could go to that.”

“That’s my girl,” I said warmly, patting her back.

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“B-but maybe I’ll see if my roommate wants to go too.” She sighed. “But if she doesn’t, I’ll still go.”

“That sounds like a great plan. I’m proud of you, you know that?” I hugged her tighter. “Let’s meet for coffee more often.”