5. Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

The Gateway to Adulthood

Really, I’m just a kid. I have trouble waking up in the morning and have had teachers nudge me awake during class. I make mental notes, only to lose track of most of them. I say things without thinking and send emails without proofreading. Waiting in lines irritate me. I make excuses, justify my blunders, and blame supernatural forces for making life difficult. I don’t have a clue.

I have quite the assortment of flaws, larger than is desirable. However, there are times I suddenly become cool, composed, and calculating, displaying none of the naiveté that exists in such abundance. What initiates this unlikely transformation--a mental metamorphosis, if you will – is the rather simple act of donning a tuxedo.

I’ve been playing the violin ever since I was nine; playing in a professional environment, however, did not come until I was a teenager. The first job I ever had as a “professional” was at a wedding. I had been passing time after school climbing fences with some friends when my mother called for me in the parking lot. As I hopped in the car, the first thing that caught my attention was a sleek new tuxedo. It would be my attire for the job, my work uniform, she told me. She wasn’t about to let me wear my old suit, now covered in a generous serving of detritus. I struggled to put on my new clothes, and to breathe once I got it on – the tux was about as comfortable as a straitjacket. However, looking back at me now in the mirror was one of the commanding musicians I had always watched in revered silence. I was a shadow of my former self, a full-fledged adult, a professional.

Such feelings grew even more pronounced the day of the wedding when I saw numerous personnel – dressed similarly to me – running about, talking to each other in hushed voices, and working at a breakneck pace. I wanted to be part of that; I was certainly dressed for the occasion. That afternoon, I was a better me, actively communicating with the coordinators, going over procedures multiple times, and being completely un-fidgety throughout the whole ceremony. When the bride and groom approached our ensemble to thank us, I stood up straight, greeted them with a pleasant smile, and thanked them for the honor of performing on their special day. The usual me would’ve uttered an awkward grunt and darted away. I returned home that day with a professional-grade paycheck and jumped out of my tuxedo, forever changed.

Like a caped crusader, whenever I sport the dapper black and white, I take on an alter-ego more mature, thoughtful, and usually better liked by society at large. More importantly, though, as I spent more time in my tuxedo, I realized that it wouldn’t hurt to implement the positive changes into my daily life. There was no reason for my alter ego to receive all the glory. The magic cloak that once granted me momentary wisdom was now sweeping reforms across my life to the delight of me and also others around me. Of course, I still enjoy moments of mischievousness; only now, the once ‘better me’ has just become ‘me.’

And now I must confess: I haven’t been completely forthcoming. I am no longer the student falling asleep in class, but rather the one arriving well before the bell. “A terrible memory” is no longer my excuse, for I carry around a well-used planner filled with deadlines and my daily agenda. I am no longer the one hurting others in any way, because I think before talking and pause before acting. The biggest part of my transformation has been the actualization that just because things are doesn’t mean they have to be. So, I am no longer Seonggon, the boy – I have become Seonggon, the man…and this is only the first iteration.