

Turning Twenty

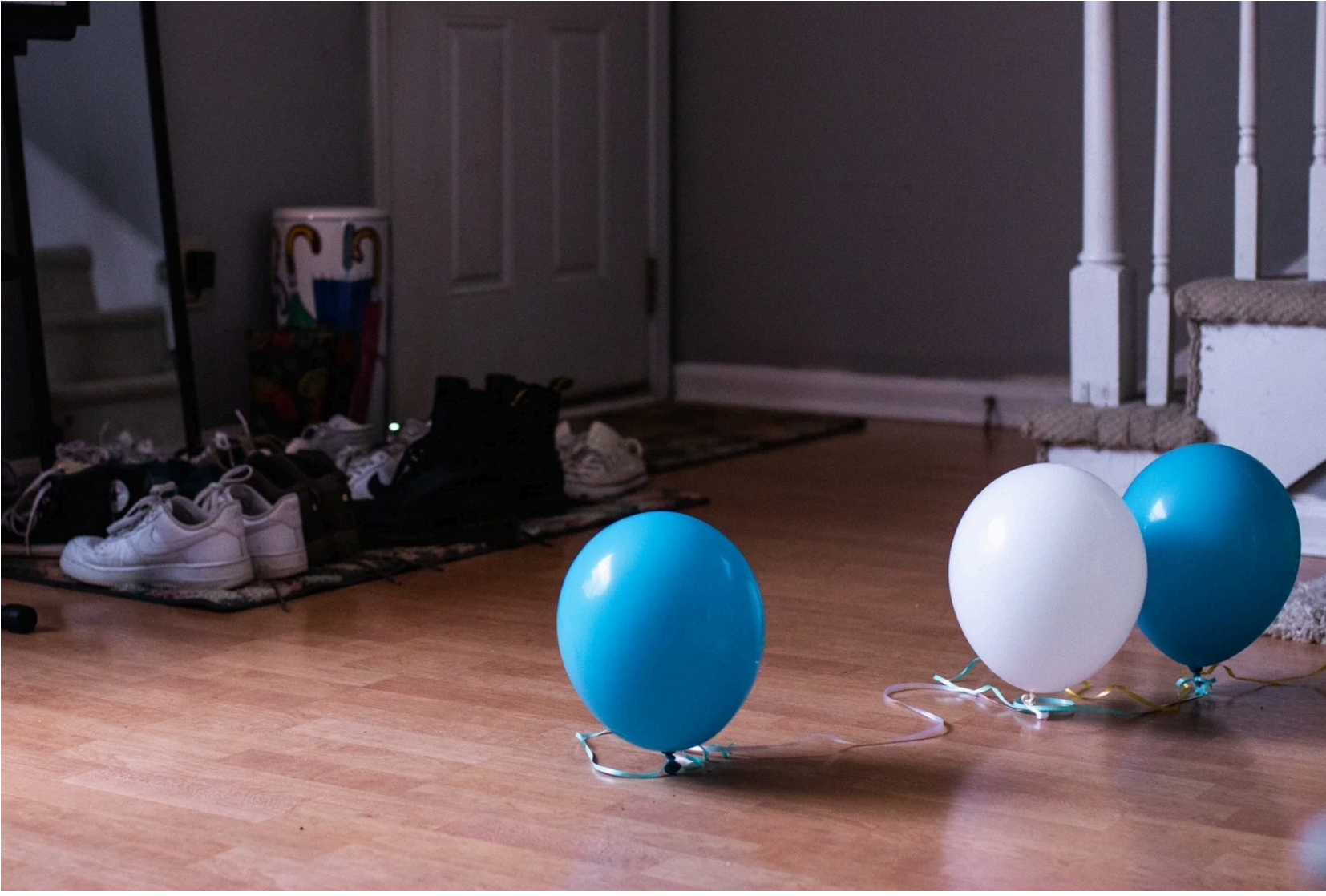


photo by lizzie rice

Turning Twenty

second year anna van ekeren

“They’re singing happy birthday; you just want to lay down and cry...

Tick. Tick. Boom.”

Jonathan Larson was right. And Bo Burnham. And a bunch of other struggling adults who never truly figured out their lives – does anyone, ever?

But I’m not even turning 30.

I’m turning 20, and I’m wavering between periods of intense existential dread and overwhelming nihilism to numbness and emptiness to nostalgia and yearning for my childhood to stirring exhilaration and anticipation that in one year, my friend and I can finally book cruises and hotels without age-restrictions and live our best lives, as much as two college students can.

Change is inevitable, and yet I have such a hard time adjusting to any shifts in life and processing experiences, much less the psychological and emotional onset of “true” adulthood – 18 feels so foreign and immature, a trial run, a glimpse of what’s to come, yet distinctly familiar and surreal at the same time, and I know 20 will too in the future, and then 25, 30, 40, 50..., and on and on and on until oblivion, if one even makes it that far; but that’s just life, I guess.

Perspective is crucial, reflection is paramount, and neither is cathartic enough.

Perhaps, it’s because I identify with the Enneagram Type 4 personality complex – i.e., per the Enneagram Institute, *“The Individualist: The sensitive, introspective, expressive, dramatic, self-absorbed, and temperamental type”* (I feel both attacked and justified) – that I consistently ruminate these cynical thoughts and engage in pessimistic choices, which isn’t an excuse but nonetheless insightful, and I honestly don’t know how to amend my outlook.

Still, I’d be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the personal growth, and society’s collective development, that I’ve undergone since the pandemic’s inception.

I didn’t produce any great works of art – no *Inside* or *Evermore* for me – or drastically improve myself, but I did work through some childhood trauma, embrace aspects of my sexuality and identity, and explore interests that I haven’t been able to before, and that’s plenty.

I think learning to let go and move on from situations, people, and places that no longer support you is one of the hardest experiences to endure but essential for becoming a better version of yourself. I keep comparing myself to my high school self, and as much as it pains me, I need to let her go. Because we’re different, and I can’t keep holding onto the past. I can’t keep reminiscing about these idolized memories and individuals, or nursing old wounds and indulging in cycles of self-pity and melancholy. I have to learn to move forwards.

(To paraphrase The Struts and Aldous Huxley),

I want love. I want truth. I want art. I want freedom. I want rawness and goodness and wickedness. I want soaring sunrises and plunging plights. I want a moment that’s real and things I can feel – the relationships that bleed in dying breaths, the places that teem with culture and history, the stories that swirl with desire and passion, the narratives captured in gleaming literature, in glinting devices that store civilization in giant clouds, in sentimental photographs imbued with fleeting adolescence and slipping vitality, in dreams and ambitions and powerful decisions and falling water that trickles between realities if you just listen.

Because we’re all searching, searching for things we can’t quite reach or describe. Chasing after ineffable sensations and things we can’t ever obtain. Grasping for what’s not there and overlooking what is, and isn’t that humanity in it itself?

Anyways...

I’m turning 20,

Maybe it won’t be that bad.



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