

Wait, I'm grown up?

A Transition To Tweenhood

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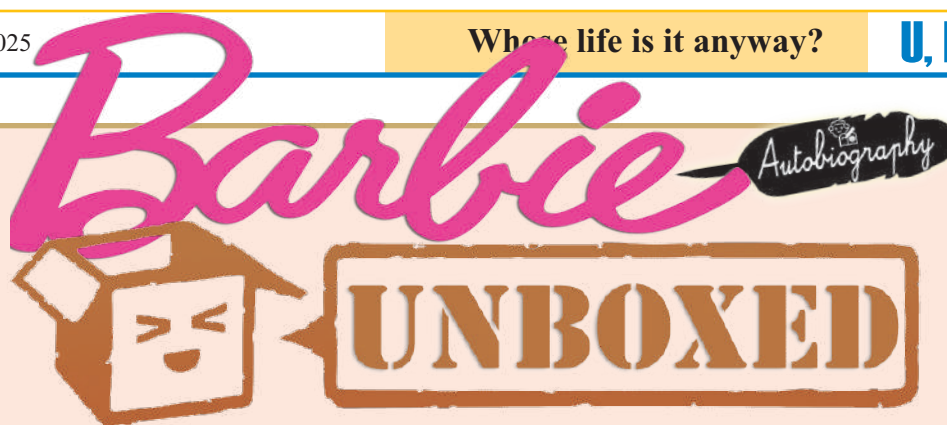
You're singing Britney Spears song, when someone drops the classic line: "Oh, you've grown up!" Cue the confused scrunch. One moment, we were chasing ice cream trucks in the summer sun, and the next, we're expected to act like mini all-functioning adults. But to be honest, we're just doing our best to pretend. Because if there is a manual on how to be a grown-up, we missed the download button.

The great pretend: Let's be real, most of us are winging it. Sure, we've outgrown our training wheels, but some of us still don't meet the height requirement for roller coasters. So when the 'grown-up' label gets slapped on, it feels like a comedy sketch gone wrong. Did we miss a secret tween initiation ceremony? Was there a memo?

Expectations vs reality: Here's the kicker: being 'grown up' comes with a checklist of expectations. Time management, decision-making - big words for people who still struggle with shoelaces. No one's asking us to file taxes (yet), but even the small stuff feels like a surprise party we didn't RSVP to. But it's not all bad. Growing up means exploring new hobbies, and occasionally being taken seriously, especially when negotiating for that sleepover invite.

Acting grown up: And here's where it gets deep (just a little). Maybe growing up isn't about knowing everything - it's about learning, adapting, and finding your rhythm. That sounded suspiciously mature, didn't it? We might be getting the hang of it, after all.

Still silly, still us: So, to all the adults who keep reminding us we've 'grown up' - thanks for the reality check. Just don't be shocked if we still ask for a bedtime story. Because being a tween is a mix of awkward and confusing moments, and we're embracing every single one. 🧒👧



From Doll To Icon: Tale Of Barbie's Reawakening

Raabia Ali Abidi, XII C & Latika Dhoundiyal, XI C, AIS Saket

I never thought I'd end up in a lehenga, but there I was wrapped in a pink embroidered piece. When my friend Anita, the Indian Barbie, throws a Diwali party, it's no less than a couture. I was still trying to figure out how to sit without dislocating any of my plastic body parts when someone said, "Come on, Barbie, let's go party." And suddenly I was on a card table surrounded by over a hundred Barbies - astronauts, pilots, doctors - all with perfectly winged eyeliner, naturally. As we sorted the cards, Christie, one of the first Black Barbies, asked, "Barbara, how does it feel to be the first?" "Well, let me tell you our story," I began. Born to Ruth Handler, I debuted - on March 9, 1959, at the New York Toy Fair - in striped swimsuit, with a side-eye attitude. Ruth knew girls wanted futures, not just motherhood. So vinyl was poured, painted, and Barbara Millicent Roberts manufactured magic. The 1960s were loud: civil rights marches, women seeking equality, space-race fever. I joined the cultural conversation. My first dream-house appeared in 1962, a pastel cardboard flat when women couldn't own credit cards. In 1965, I be-

came an astronaut - four years before man landed on the Moon. My résumé expanded faster than the toy market.

But I wasn't without controversy. My proportions made headlines. My 1992 catchphrase "Math class is tough" sparked debate. Change came gradually, then suddenly. In 1980 arrived the first Black and Latina Barbies truly named 'Barbie'. In 1997, the first Barbie with a hearing impairment. In 2016, being curvy, petite, tall, etc. were embraced. Dolls with vitiligo, alopecia, prosthetics, wheelchairs, and scoliosis braces followed. Diversity stopped being a decoration; it became a design. And India shaped me more than I admit. I've worn more lehengas there than anywhere else. The early 2000s brought Diwali Barbie in teal silk, bangles, and a bindi. Saree Barbie followed, draped in Kanjivaram. In 2011 came 'Miss India Barbie'. India was one of my fastest-growing markets of the decade. I became a birthday staple and even walked the ramp at India Fashion Week in Manish Arora couture. My global journey mirrored the toy market's ups and downs. I sold

3,00,000 units in my first year and became a billion-dollar franchise by the late '80s. Then came the slump: between 2010 and 2014, sales dipped nearly 20%. But nostalgia and reinvention surged. Instagram surged higher. I rode the wave.

Then 2023 hit, a movie in unapologetic pink. Overnight, I became a think-piece, a feminist argument, and a billion-dollar box office phenomenon. Searches hit record highs; collectors resurfaced. In India alone, Barbie-related searches jumped nearly 40%. "I began in a box built to be perfect," I tell Christie. "But perfection is just another kind of cage. I may be made of plastic, but I've got layers of dreams and a little bit of sass."

As diyas glow and laughter rises, I lift my mango lassi. "I don't want to be perfect anymore. I want to be open to change, to criticism, so that the next child in Mumbai, Manila, Milan, or Manhattan can imagine a life bigger than mine." As the night deepens, I realise maybe I was just a doll once. But now, I am the shelf itself, not holding dreams but helping build them.



Pic: Eesh Saini, AIS Saket, XI E