

## **Today is 30.**

Today I rub my bleary eyes, check my notifications, and scramble to make coffee.

Today I stare endlessly into my closet and come up with a decent outfit that I haven't already worn this week. Today is like yesterday— unavoidably buzzing by 6 a.m., and thanks to the time change, welcomed by a pitch-black haze only midnight should know. But today is different.

*Today I turn thirty.*

I stare out the window on my shadowy commute to school and begin my day like all others — hopeful but a little hesitant, quiet but a little caffeinated, and just because today, maybe a little unsure. Today I turn my music a little louder, type a little quicker and think a little deeper.

And, well, because *today*.

And maybe I'm just trying on my 30-year-old perception like a pair of frames I'll grow tired of in a month, but today, on this dark birthday morning, everything looks fine.

It looks *better* than fine.

Unlike yesterday, today I rid myself of uncertainty as I celebrate opportunity and growth. With my twenties in my rearview, I don't look back and scoff at the mistakes, but I look fondly to tomorrow. Today I say goodbye to insecurities, bad relationships and the suffocating unknowns that only the twenties can know. Looking back on this chapter is like watching a highlight reel of search and exploration — a trip I'm glad I didn't rush. I look back to a time when my friends and I thought hairstyles and weekend plans were the meaning of life, and see that our almost cult-like friendship had more layers than we led on. We had matching blonde hair and one wardrobe to speak of, but we were together. We liked what we decided we liked, and we did what we decided we'd do. The early twenties were a party. They were a blur of borrowed clothes, traded secrets and shared views. I look back at our communal backbone and see now that aside from clothes, I borrowed views and thoughts.

As I entered my quarter life, our group stayed tight but our interests branched. I cruised through university as free and easy as the borrowed party dress that hung off my body. My degree hung on the wall like it was supposed to, but I still didn't quite know where *my* place was. Something else happened here, though. This is when I tapped into something that would later propel me into uncharted waters.

I dove into the world of fitness modeling and I didn't

come up for air. I tapped into the feeling of strength, control, and infinite mounds of passion. Health and fitness took over my life and I became nothing short of obsessed with it. I lived it, I researched it, I wrote it. Soon, fitness and health became a part of my identity, and it wasn't long before I *was* it. Here, I left my borrowed voice in the closet and traded it in for something louder than lecture halls or party music: my work ethic.

My obsession with fitness not only taught me health-related knowledge that will benefit me well into later life, but it opened my eyes. It opened them like shutters to the amount of sacrifice and discipline I could withstand. And for that, it gave me *confidence*. Confidence to make bold moves, and the confidence to know I have the power to control them. Fitness gave me confidence to know my own strength, and how to know what I do and don't deserve. This chapter paved the way and propelled me into the waters I was supposed to tread today. I held my breath, went back to school, and entered another life to study everything writing, digital and communications.

Today, with the same friends in tow and a new crew I have nearly drowned with, I'm a 30-year-old me, and I still haven't come up for air.

Here, with my eyes focused on the horizon of graduation, I enter 30 as a friend, an ambassador of risk

and reward, and a writer who's found her own voice. Today, I say goodbye to yo-yo diets, conformity, and shackles of doubt.

Today, I move into a new era without remnants of "I'll do it tomorrow," and "I can't."

Today I notice a high school girl on the bus sitting next to a friend with a matching laugh. She fixes her hair and adjusts an oversized sweater that hangs off her petite frame. She looks as comfortable in it as she does in her own skin and I wonder if it's borrowed, and what else is.