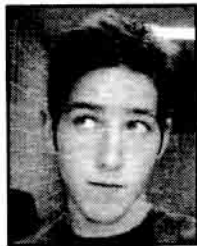


Prayer for the Un-Adulterated

by Chris Ladd
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The seniors are restless; you can see it in the way they walk. They are finishing theses, getting their resumes in order, and filing applications. They are graduating, and they are scared.



WHERE THE
HELL IS
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Graduation is one step closer to adulthood, and being an adult is, to say the least, unfortunate. Let's face it: being an adult is among the most boring avocations around. Adults have mortgages and utility bills and 401k plans. Adults make important decisions, and eat sensible breakfast cereals, like Special K or Post Raisin Bran. Adults drive tan cars that hide dirt, and rise early on Saturday mornings to mow their lawns before it gets too hot. Nobody wants to be an adult.

That is why school was invented: to put off adulthood. School is a vaccine, a supplement to delay its onset. It must be working; it has to be working, because we seem to be getting better at it.

In ancient times, in the Jewish tradition, boys became men at 13. In colonial America, many dropped out of school early to work beside their parents. Over the years, we learned to use education to avoid maturation. Secondary schools became standard, and kids stayed there sometimes until the ages of 18 or 19. Later, in the 1960s and 70s, college went mainstream, and it wasn't at all unusual for children to make it to 21 or 22 without ever stepping into the monotony of the 'real world'.

Now, in the twenty-first century, graduate school is tacking on three to five more years, and it's not entirely uncommon to meet undergrads who plan to seek their doc-

torate. Rumor has it the freshman class is full of them. It's almost possible to hit thirty before ever searching out a job.

What it all really comes down to, what it all really means, is that we are trying to prolong our youth as long as possible. Part of the reason many of us despised our teenage years and wished for adulthood, longed for it then, was that we were forced to be home at a reasonable hour, rise early, perform



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mundane tasks six to eight hours a day, and live mired in sexual frustration. We were forced to lead the boring lives of our parents.

Teenagers are 16 year-olds stuck in 47-year-old lifestyles.

Which is interesting, fitting even, because 47 year olds frequently trap themselves in 19 year-old lifestyles. If school is the vaccination for adulthood, the midlife crisis is chemotherapy.

And I'm very nearly ready for one myself, frantically running around from one place to another for this professor or that professor. Late nights and long hours hunched over keyboards under fluorescent lights. At this point in my academic career, I'd like to fast forward through college for a few moments, fast forward through all the exam periods and ten to 12 page papers, through graduation, through the networking and job applications, through all the promotions and disappointments, through the failed relationships, and the occasional spotty marriage, through the minivans to the two door sports-car I bought on a whim. I'd like to fast forward to the

nineteen-year-old waitress. I'd like to see myself in baggy clothes with a comb-over and a big fat stupid grin. I'd like to live my midlife crisis, right now, for about twenty minutes.

I think once I did, I would realize that these are the good years. This is it. And this is why the senior class is uneasy. They've thought about all of this.

They know we will likely never again live and work in a place

communes in the sixties and seventies, and there was Tom Cruise, who, in films from "Risky Business" to "Top Gun" to "Cocktail," is ever-adolescent, fresh faced, and self absorbed. But none of these really worked. The Nasdaq tanked a few years back, most of those hippies are driving sport utopian vehicles now, and Tom Cruise abandoned his youthful rebellion for weighty think pieces like "Magnolia" and "Eyes Wide Shut." There is no escape. Adults are everywhere.

There are even adults here who sit in our classes, who eat in

our dining hall, who sit beside us in Psychology class. Adulthood can happen to anybody.

I'm worried for my friends poised to leap from this extension of childhood. I worry about what they'll do, and if they'll be happy. I wonder if they'll write. Hopefully I won't lose all my friends to the wilds of maturity, surely some of them will stay at least in spirit with myself and the lost boys of Skidmore. I've heard some of them even have applications in to grad school. I do hope that they are accepted.