

I Thought University Would Make Me Someone.

IT DIDN'T.

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I came to university with the quiet expectation that something would happen to me. Not all at once, and not in some dramatic, cinematic way, but gradually, through lectures, readings, and late nights in the library, I thought I would become someone new. Someone sharper. More certain. Someone who knew how to speak without second-guessing every sentence halfway through.

I thought university would make me someone.

It didn't.

It just showed me who I already was.

That realization didn't arrive all at once. It came slowly, in fragments, in the moments after tutorials, when I replayed what I should have said. In the silence of lecture halls, where asking a question felt like stepping onto a stage I wasn't ready for. In the strange awareness that everyone else seemed to move with a kind of ease I couldn't quite replicate.

At first, I thought I was falling behind.

But if I'm honest, that feeling didn't start at university. It started earlier, growing up in a small town, where it often felt like I was slightly out of step with the people around me. Not in a dramatic way, just in the quiet sense that I didn't always think the same way, didn't always want the same things. I didn't have a large circle of friends, and for a long time, I thought that meant something was wrong with me. That I was missing something everyone else seemed to understand naturally.

University, I thought, would fix that. It would bring me into a space where ambition and curiosity were shared rather than questioned.

And in some ways, it did. But not instantly, and not effortlessly. University, I assumed, was designed to level the playing field, to take students from different backgrounds and reshape them into something more equal. But it doesn't quite work like that. Instead, it reveals things. It amplifies what is already there.

Confidence becomes more visible. So does hesitation.

Those who already know how to speak the language of academia, how to argue, how to question, how to sound certain even when they aren't, move through it differently. Not necessarily better, but more fluent. And the rest of us learn, slowly, how much of university is not just about learning, but about recognizing rules that were never explicitly taught.

And those rules aren't neutral. They reward the people who already know them.

I wish I had known that earlier. Not because I think I would have done anything differently, but because I would have understood myself with a little more generosity. I would have recognized that feeling out of place, whether in a small town or a lecture hall, wasn't a sign that I didn't belong. It was just a sign that I hadn't found my people yet.

And you do find them. Slowly, through shared conversations, late nights, mutual frustrations, and small moments of recognition where you realize: someone else sees the world the way you do.

What surprised me most is that the version of myself I kept expecting to "arrive" never really did. There was no moment where everything clicked into place, no clear before-and-after. Instead, there was continuity. The same habits followed me, overthinking, pushing too hard, caring more than I admitted.

University didn't erase those things. It exposed them. And then, unexpectedly, it forced me to make a choice.

Two years in, I realized I didn't want to pursue law anymore. For a long time, that felt like something I wasn't allowed to admit. Law had been part of the plan, the stable, impressive, sensible path. Letting go of it felt, at first, like failure. Like I had misunderstood something fundamental about myself. Like I was stepping away from something that made me legible to other people. But the more I sat with it, the clearer it became: I hadn't failed the path. The path just wasn't mine.

So I changed it. I turned my conjoint degree into a single degree, a decision that felt, at once, terrifying and strangely simple.

And something shifted. It wasn't just relief; it was lightness. A clarity I hadn't realized I was missing. In stepping away from what I thought I should do, I found myself returning to something I had quietly buried, an older passion, waiting underneath all the expectations I had layered on top of it.

That, more than anything, is what university gave me. Not a new identity, but the space, and sometimes the pressure, to confront the one I already had. I'm still young. I wish I could tell my younger self that she has time, so much more of it than she thinks. That she doesn't need to hold onto a plan just because it once made sense. That it's okay, she didn't have many friends in high school, it didn't mean she was behind, or doing something wrong. It just meant she hadn't found the right people yet.

And that it's okay if Plan A doesn't work out; because sometimes, it's only when it doesn't that you're forced to pay attention to what actually fits, to what feels like yours. University won't make you someone. But it will strip away enough of what isn't yours that, eventually, you're left with a choice. And that choice, quiet, uncomfortable, and entirely your own, is where becoming someone actually begins. ●