

To my baby cousin

By: Shannon Choi

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Dear Princess Ariel,

I'm starting a new diary, and I'm dedicating these first pages to you.

My mom just sent me photos of you with your legs crossed and your hands lifted, her wrist on top of one another. It's her 연어¹ pose. You keep telling your mom 'I'm Princess Ariel.'

Instead of Ariel, I would tell my mom, 'I'm Princess Cinderella.'

I see a lot of myself in you.

Do you know how similar we are?

Everyone tells us how we look so alike —
Same eyes, cheeks, smile, hair, nose.
My aunt, uncle, grandparents, mom, dad all see me in you,
But the more you grow up, the more I see you in myself.

Did you know I went to the American Girl Cafe for my 21st birthday?

My friends surprised me with a reservation because I said in passing how I've wanted to go so badly when I was just your age.
I spent my actual birthday snowed in, watching a show that featured a Korean Cinderella. I cried a little while watching it.
I celebrated my childhood with my grown-up friends.

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Will we ever grow out of these habits we've had from our childhood?

I wonder how you'll celebrate your 21st birthday, how you'll be at 21.
I'll be 39. The same age as your mom right now.

*Will you still be looking for your mom?
Will you still be dancing as you do with your brothers?
Will you still want to be Princess Ariel and make up stories about her?*

*Will I ever stop looking for my mom?
Will I still be dancing with my friends?
Will I ever stop wanting to be a princess and write my own fairytales?*

Will we ever grow out of these habits we've had from our childhood?

I hope you never do.
I grew out of them, but they came right back when I learned how to embrace them.
Like how I embrace the stuffed Build-A-Bear I got for my birthday, or my friends while watching a Cinderella retelling, or my mom when I saw her over break.
I hope you always embrace all that you love forever and ever.

I can't wait to embrace you soon.

All with love,
Princess Cinderella (Nanie)

¹ 연어 means mermaid in Korean

An illustration of two young women from the chest up, seen from behind. They are looking upwards towards a light purple sky filled with numerous red squares of various sizes, some of which are slightly blurred to suggest motion. The woman on the left has dark hair styled in two braids and is wearing a pink top. The woman on the right has dark hair in a high ponytail and is wearing a teal top with white sleeves. A large white quotation mark is positioned to the right of the text.

I see a lot of myself in you.

Shannon Choi is a third-year student at Steinhardt studying Media, Culture, and Communication on the Pre-Law track. Shannon is a big sister and older cousin to her three baby cousins. Shannon loves writing stories, watching fairy tales in theater, and making playlists about those shows and movies.

Jenny is a senior studying biochemistry at CAS. She enjoys creating digital and pixel art. Her hobbies include playing guitar and video games.