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Who knew I would one day testify about my experience of maturing? No one prepares you to be called “mature” or “grown.” It all just happens—sometimes suddenly, like once in a blue moon.

Growth is an adventure that comes with acceptance and wisdom, if you are willing to embrace its virtues. It is within anyone’s reach, especially when you remain open-minded. I gave it a try. Though painful at times and demanding most of the way, I persevered, because the journey itself was worth it.

My adventure of maturity felt like climbing a mountain. At seventeen, I stood in a strange place, no longer a child, but not yet an adult. You turn sixteen, and suddenly adulthood is already waiting at the door. No one tells you what to expect or what challenges lie ahead, and that uncertainty can feel overwhelming.

As you venture onto the mountain, there is excitement, hope, and expectation of a great adventure. Yet along the path, loose rocks and thick bushes block your way, making the journey seem less promising. This is the moment you want to give up or return to the start. But if you choose to continue climbing toward the peak, the hope you carried at the beginning calls back to you, urging you forward.

At the summit, you see everything with conviction. Relief and joy wash over you like a cool breeze. I realized how leaving childhood behind while still waiting for adulthood felt overwhelming during my own peak moment, a leadership camp meant to prepare me when I felt like starting over. Looking down at the path I had taken, I grinned from ear to ear.

This adventure taught me to embrace opportunities with a positive mind. The first challenge I face should be met with my own strength.