

When I grow up



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Adam lay back on the bedroom rug, staring up at the glow-in-the-dark stars stuck to the ceiling, and thought about one very big question: what would Adam be when Adam grew up? There were so many wonderful possibilities that it made Adam's head spin. Maybe something up among those stars. Maybe something with animals, or airplanes, or paint, or bubbling test tubes. With a grin and a deep breath, Adam closed both eyes tight and began to imagine every single one.



First, Adam rocketed into space as a brave astronaut. Zipped snugly into a puffy white spacesuit, Adam floated weightless inside the shuttle, tumbling in slow, giggling somersaults past floating pencils and drifting droplets of water. Through the little round window, Earth hung below like a great blue-and-green marble, glowing softly against the endless black. Out among the silent stars, Adam planted a flag on the powdery grey Moon and bounced high with every step, feeling small and enormous all at once.



Next, Adam became a caring vet, looking after animals big and small. In a bright clinic full of gentle patients, Adam pulled on a clean white coat and listened carefully to a puppy's heartbeat through a shiny stethoscope. There was a fluffy kitten with a bandaged paw, a rabbit with a twitchy nose, and a very patient old dog who thumped his tail with gratitude. Speaking softly and moving slowly, Adam helped each frightened creature feel safe again, and every happy wag and purr felt like the best thank-you in the world.



Then Adam soared into the clouds as a confident pilot. High in the cockpit, surrounded by a dazzling wall of switches and glowing dials, Adam gripped the controls and guided the great silver airplane smoothly through the sky. Fluffy white clouds parted like curtains, and far below, tiny towns and winding rivers looked like a toy map spread out across the land. With a steady hand and a proud smile beneath the peaked cap, Adam announced to imaginary passengers that the skies were perfectly clear and the view was absolutely spectacular.



After that, Adam splashed into a world of colour as a joyful artist. Standing before a tall easel with a smudged apron and a brush in hand, Adam mixed swirling blues and sunny yellows into brand-new greens that had never existed before. Paint dotted Adam's cheeks and freckled the floor, and every bold stroke made the canvas come more alive. There were no mistakes here—only happy surprises—and when the painting was finally finished, it burst with so much colour that it seemed to glow from the inside out.



Then Adam became a curious scientist, eager to discover how everything works. In a laboratory full of bubbling beakers and blinking gadgets, Adam slipped on a pair of safety goggles and a crisp white lab coat and carefully mixed two potions together. With a fizz and a puff of harmless purple smoke, the liquid changed colour, and Adam gasped with delight and scribbled the results into a notebook. Every experiment answered one question and sparked ten more, and Adam realised that the best part of science is never, ever running out of things to wonder about.



With a whoosh and a clang, Adam became a fearless firefighter. Sliding down the shiny pole and pulling on heavy boots and a bright red helmet, Adam climbed aboard the great red fire engine as its lights flashed and its siren sang. At the scene, Adam gripped the hose as it bucked and hissed, sending a powerful arc of water high into the air. Braver than brave and strong as could be, Adam even helped a frightened kitten down from a tall tree, and the whole crew cheered for a job well done.



Next, Adam tied on an apron and became a talented chef. In a warm, busy kitchen that smelled of fresh bread and sizzling butter, Adam cracked eggs with a flick of the wrist, stirred a bubbling pot, and gave the pan a daring little flip. Flour dusted the counter like snow, and a tall white chef's hat wobbled with every proud nod. When the meal was finally ready—plated up neat and sprinkled with a flourish—it looked so delicious that Adam could hardly wait to serve it to a table full of hungry, smiling faces.



Then Adam stood tall at the front of a classroom as a kind and patient teacher. With a marker in hand and a colourful chart on the wall, Adam explained how numbers add up and why the sky turns blue, and a room full of eager faces hung on every word. When a hand shot up with a tricky question, Adam knelt down to help until the puzzle finally clicked and a bright "oh, I get it!" lit up the whole room. Helping others learn, Adam discovered, felt every bit as good as learning something new.



After that, Adam stepped into the spotlight as a dazzling musician. On a great stage bathed in glowing light, Adam lifted a shiny guitar, tapped one foot to keep the beat, and let the very first chord ring out into the hush. The music swelled and soared, and soon the whole crowd was clapping and swaying along, a sea of happy faces glowing in the dark. As the final note rang out and the applause thundered like rain, Adam took a deep bow, heart pounding with the pure joy of the song.



Finally, Adam dived deep beneath the waves as a wonder-filled marine biologist. Zipped into a snug wetsuit with a diving mask fogging at the edges, Adam sank down into a silent world of shimmering blue. A coral reef blazed with colour, and curious fish darted past in glittering schools while a gentle sea turtle glided by, flippers waving like slow-motion wings. Adam floated perfectly still, watching a playful dolphin loop and spin, and knew for certain that the ocean held more secrets than a hundred storybooks could ever hold.

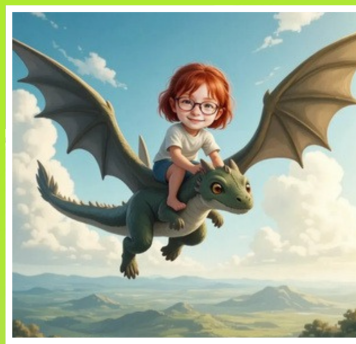


One by one, Adam slowly opened both eyes, back on the cosy bedroom rug beneath the glowing paper stars. Astronaut, vet, pilot, artist, scientist, firefighter, chef, teacher, musician, explorer—each dream had felt so real and so wonderful that it was impossible to choose just one. And that was perfectly alright, because there was still so much growing up left to do. Whatever Adam decided to become, one thing was absolutely certain: the future was as big and bright as the whole starry sky, and it was waiting just for Adam.

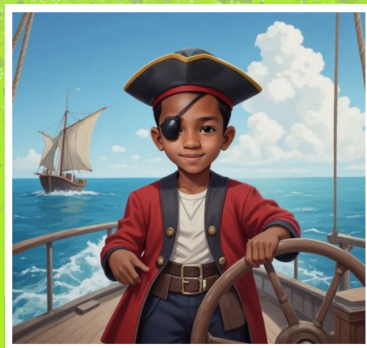


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