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Growing up. What is that? The passage of time? Or is it something more complicated than that? When does it end? Well, looking back to only twenty one years, I have been on this ever rotating sphere of gas, dust and other matter, I can divide my life into two parts – before Cass, and after. Although one time frame is significantly longer than the other, it is not the quantity, but the quality that is meaningful.

In a few weeks after finishing school, I moved to London. A thousand miles away from my home town, which is nothing compared to the size of Europe's Financial capital, a mere ant against a foot of a man. I was like a baby, thrown into water, with no experience of living alone, I was expected to navigate the complex tunnels of the underground. Rest assured, I was not alone in there. I had a few aids, helping me swim to shore – my roommates. People with whom I was brought up - my friends. But as with any friendship, there is so much they can do for me and for the rest, I had to paddle with my own strength.

I can clearly remember the first semester at Cass. How can I forget it – all assumptions I had about anyone or everything were scattered like ashes in the wind, revealing the different reality than of my own created little world, where I lived for the past nineteen years. I was never afraid of a challenge, I always welcomed it, but this was new. It was not cruel, it was not merciful, it was not anything I expected. It was fascinating. I was exposed to so much new opportunities, that it seemed unrealistic. Yet, I was still missing home. It was the first I would leave my home and know, that I am not coming for a while, as if never at all. At the time, I imagined myself as a patriot. I promised myself that, like Peter 1st of Russia I would come back home, bearing knowledge of the western world and fix everything that is wrong with my own country. I was looking forward to every lecture. It was the only escape from my crippled heart, part-time job and an apartment I did not want to come back to. Everything seemed distant, but not university. It was the only place that reminded me of the little world I knew before reality. The moment you would step into the building, everything would change. I was no longer the person I woke up as. I was someone that mattered. It was a mental heaven, a place where I can excel.

Second semester was not that much different. I was still miserable on the inside yet trying to shine on the outside. The only solution was to study, to prove myself somewhere where I knew I can make an impact. Summer came and went, taking its toll on me with countless parties and the feel of nostalgia – first summer after finishing school. Everything seemed so different, yet the same. I felt at home, but I could not recognise anyone. All my former peers moved on, whereas I, could not.

That morning was sunny. Middle of August, best time of the whole summer when all the sunsets are golden, and sky is as clear as the water of Baikal. The hangover was not helping to set the mood for the rest of the day. I gathered myself and sat on the trunk of my car. A four day music festival had just finished. I can clearly remember that I was at my lowest. The world was fun, I enjoyed it to the fullest what I could imagine, but it did not have any meaning. I was missing the learning, I was missing the everyday discovery. Right then and there I realised, I am no longer interesting to myself, which triggered the famous words of Admiral William H. McRaven "If you want to change the world, start off by making your bed".

That was what I wanted – to change the world. That was one of the first things I mentioned in my cover letter when applying to Cass. That was the only excuse to feel good that I was leaving home, leaving my country, friends and family. I buried it without even knowing. At last was able to remember what I had forgotten. University enabled me to fuel my ambition to improve and reach the goal I set out at start of it all - to change. To change my environment, my peers, my home and gradually – change the world.

What it means to grow up? To grow up is to realise that the more you learn, the more you do not know and that the further you explore the more you tend to go astray. That is why it is crucial to stay on course, remember where you came from, remember who you are and if all seems in doubt – reinvent yourself



