

From the time that we can walk, we think that the world is magnificent and the possibilities endless. Running through the yard, we feel the soft grass tickling our bare toes and cry out in surprise when we step on the remnants of the morning dew. We jump into the leaves that our parents had gathered up and chase the dandelion fluff drifting along the breeze. From those short little legs, everything seemed so grand, so full of wonder and beauty. The world was our playground, and we could make all of our dreams, no matter how big, a reality. Then, as we grow older, somehow, in some way those dreams begin to fade away. That yard, which had been the source of so many magical adventures, lost its magic. In its stead, it turns into just another chore- something that our parents made us mow and rake. One by one we began to realize that the beautiful world that we had spent countless hours playing in was also fleeting. Those dreams got pushed to the back of our minds as everyone around us told us to focus on more immediate concerns, things that had “tangible” value. Our focus was shifted to school because it would be the key to our future. We even found ourselves believing that our future depended on it, even though the future we were working towards was not the one that we had dreamt. And the sad part is that at the end of it all, *they were right*. Eventually we learn that there are limitations to what we can do. Although we are surrounded by so much, we realize that we live in a beautiful cruel world where childhood dreams will only ever be childish dreams.

Yet, does that mean that we should roll over and give up on those ideas? Do we accept complacency and stop trying to accomplish great things? Those childish dreams may be nothing but fantasy but that doesn't mean that we have to give up on reality. We must do everything reasonable and possible to push onward, even if it is only for the self satisfaction that comes with accomplishing our goals, whatever they may be. Even if our childhood dreams are gone, we will replace them with new ones grounded in reality. We should be thankful that we live in the current era where we have accomplished things that none would have even imagined possible just one hundred years ago. Humans have sent spacecraft beyond the edges of our solar system and that is physical proof that our dreams can pierce the heavens. We are here today to begin making small steps in our voyage to pursue those new hopes and aspirations.

Still, this world is unforgiving and even brilliant lights will cease to burn. We cannot afford to blindly charge forward to accomplish our goals. Passion alone is never enough. To make it in this world, we need skill and talent, not just hard work and determination. Life is full of disappointments, but we cannot afford to be ruled by them. Should we fail, we should at the very least go down in a blaze of glory to let all know that we were here and will not fall so easily. All things must come to an end, but we can make it end on our terms and only our terms. If above all else we are true to ourselves, then we will be able to find a place in this world.

Thank you.