

# GROWTH SPURT

Kae S. Kendal-Macleod

I never had growth spurts, only growing pains.

Classmates would show up, pant legs above their ankles, skirts an inch too short,  
smiling and apologizing to the teachers for their ill-fitting uniforms;

“Oh, I had a *growth spurt*.”

They’d receive a small laugh, a small smile, a small pat on the head,  
a gentle reminder not to  
worry about it – they understand.

But I never had a growth spurt, only growing pains.

Deep, bone-aching pain that never went away,  
pant legs always a centimetre too short, let out in increments so  
the hems were always crinkled.

At track meets I would stumble and groan over  
splints and stitches, pain shooting up my shins to  
make a new home between my ribs.

Meanwhile our parents would say,

“Did you see how gracefully Dylan ran today? Her legs are  
so long – must have had a *growth spurt*.”

During piano recitals, I would struggle to stretch my hand across the keys, an  
ache between my knuckles that refused to fade away.

Meanwhile our parents would say,

“Did you see how elegant Samantha’s fingerwork was? She could never  
play that part before – must have had a *growth spurt*.”

By thirteen, most other girls had done their growing in leaps and bounds, starting and stopping at regular intervals. But I hadn't quite stopped, always pushing through the ache, trying my best to find something that was just right for me as everyone else seemed to thrive overnight.

"What's wrong?" Lisa asked me. "You're crying."  
The cold water of the pool always soothed my aches. I sank a little deeper. "Just growing pains."

I found out the hard way that pushing through the ache wasn't quite the same thing. With a body always growing, pushing meant there was never a break. My muscles fell apart without time to heal, time to rest, time to *grow*, a hundred thousand threads coming apart at the seams.  
But how could I have known?  
They said it was only growing pains.