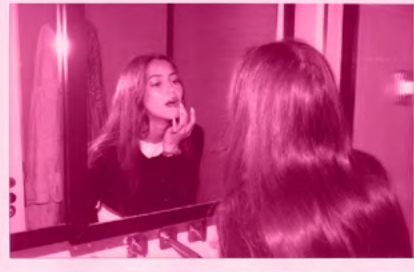


# Girlhood Diaries

BY DUDA ALBONICO





*Girlhood  
Diaries*  
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# A Note from the Creator.

Girlhood is not just a phase—it's a feeling, a memory, a presence that evolves with us. This zine was born out of a desire to explore that presence: how girlhood is lived, remembered, and reimagined by different women across time and place. Through photography, interviews, and archival imagery, I've tried to capture the emotional texture of girlhood in all its vulnerability, strength, softness, and complexity.

Much of the photography in this zine is my own, created in collaboration with the women who shared their stories with me. I'm deeply grateful to *Shannon, Rowena, Dasha, Gigi, and Shahd*—not only for allowing me into their personal spaces, but for opening up about their experiences and reflections so generously.


This project also includes archival imagery and memories from my family. I want to thank my mum, *Lola*, and my loved ones *Babu* and *Calu*, for their willingness to share stories from their lives and their girlhoods—across distance, generations, and cultures.

This zine is both a personal and collective exploration. It reflects my own journey in trying to understand girlhood as something that stays with us, transforms us, and connects us. I hope these pages offer you something to relate to, something to remember, or something to reimagine.

- Duda Albonico.


# Shannon.






How would you describe girlhood?

Girlhood to me is love, femininity & fun.



I always say the best part of my days is a drink & yap with the girls.



Also, the universal experience of connecting with women.



What are some things you think most girls go through growing up?



Identity crisis.

Growing up, I went to an all-girls school and watched way too much TV, constantly comparing myself to other girls and women -which was a big struggle for me.



I'm now 22 and have only just come to terms with my identity and how I portray myself. - Shannon <3

# Lola.



Do you feel that aspects of girlhood still remain with you, even beyond your 50s?

Yes, definitely. I still feel the essence of girlhood in my everyday life, and I believe I always will. The things I loved when I was younger—my favorite colors, style, and sense of joy—are still with me. Even my impulsive, curious nature hasn't changed. Now, with the perspective that comes with age, I look back and appreciate how full of possibility that time was. Girlhood continues to shape how I see and experience the world.



Looking back, what guidance would you offer to girls navigating life today?

My advice to girls today is to really take the time to understand and appreciate who they are. It's important to accept that they are perfect just as they are, without trying to fit into society's narrow beauty standards. True beauty is unique to every individual, and each person is beautiful in their own special way.

# Ravena.





What does girlhood  
mean to you?  
Trying to figure out the  
kind of woman you want  
to become...



Girlhood shapes your future  
as an adult. It also means  
trying to break out of the  
standards society sets for  
women.



Having your girls around  
you, learning to feel  
uplifted by friends, while  
also learning to enjoy  
your own company—  
that's part of the  
journey too.

How did your culture or community shape your experience of girlhood?



Growing up in a South Asian household made the possibilities of girlhood feel limited. At the time, it felt awful not being able to do the same things as my peers (like going out clubbing before university), but as an adult, I now see the value in the way I was raised – even if I don't entirely agree with it.





Being on social media definitely influenced me and helped me during my formative years. I learned what I enjoyed and the type of community I wanted to be part of.



How would you explain  
girlhood to someone who's  
never experienced it?



It's very complicated – it's personal,  
and no girl has gone through the exact  
same experience. I think that's what  
makes girlhood unique.



# Babu.

If you could give a piece of advice to a young girl today, what would you tell her about growing up and embracing girlhood?

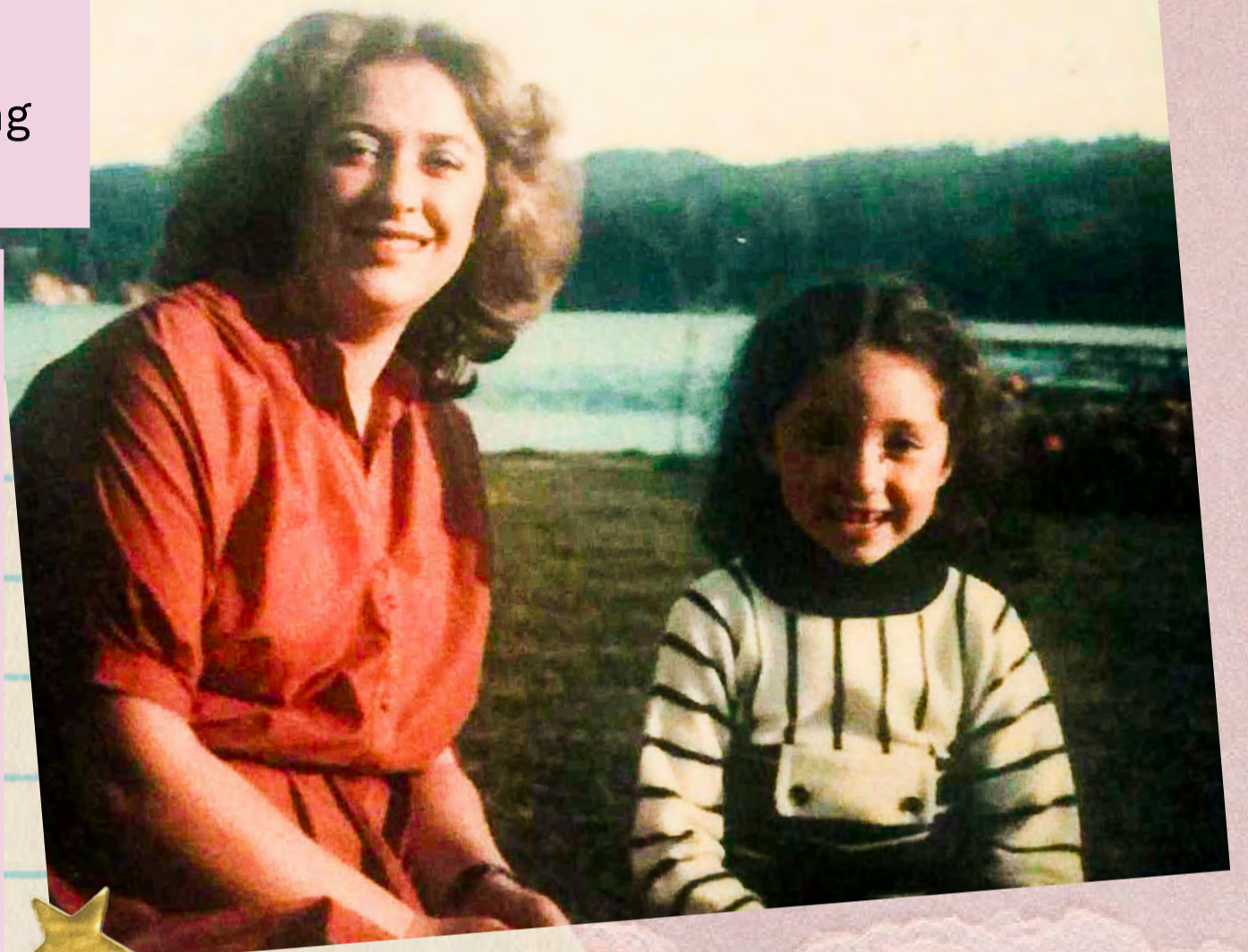
Girlhood is a beautiful stage of life that should be enjoyed fully and lived at its own pace—there's no need to rush into growing up.



Let yourself be cared for by your family—they want the best for you. Be kind and supportive to others, enjoy reading and learning, stay active through sports, and always show love for animals. Keep your heart open and curious.

How did your cultural or family traditions influence your experience of growing up as a girl?

When I was growing up, schools weren't co-ed, and we were always treated and educated specifically as girls. Gender roles were clearly defined, and certain behaviors were expected based on whether you were a boy or a girl.



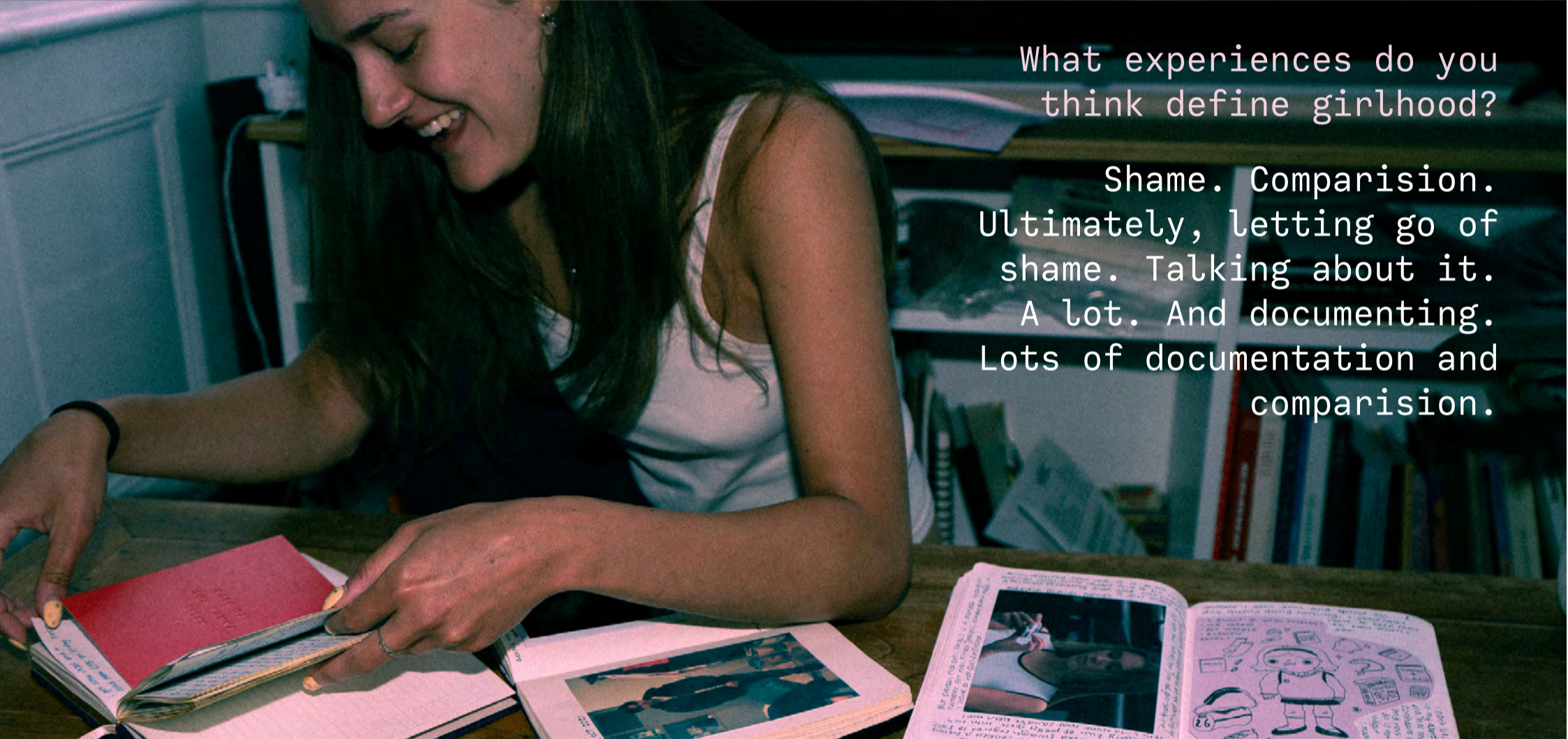
My parents were strong role models—they taught us how to behave at the dinner table, during play, at family gatherings, and in social settings.

I felt happy being a girl. I wore beautiful clothes that were custom-made to my taste—there were no imposed colors or styles.

I had lots of close friends, and we celebrated birthdays at home with very simple, joyful games.

*Dasha.*





What experiences do you think define girlhood?

Shame. Comparison. Ultimately, letting go of shame. Talking about it. A lot. And documenting. Lots of documentation and comparison.





Is girlhood more about feelings,  
moments, or something else?



I think it's about experiencing things as if  
you're the only person on Earth it's ever  
happened to – and then sharing it, and rea-  
lizing you're not, in a comforting way.

★ *Pigi.* ★



Do you think girlhood looks  
the same for everyone?  
Why or why not?



What experiences do you think  
define girlhood?



For me, my most “girlhood” moments were often related to—or maybe even ignited by—boy drama (ironically). It’s when you talk through a breakup scenario with your best friend before she’s ready to have that talk with her partner.



It's when a relationship leaves you crying, running out of a club in Brixton, and your friend chases after you and sits with you for the rest of the night in her room with a cup of hot chocolate. It's whenever romance disappoints you, and your girls come running to remind you that love is always with you.



I think the love and loyalty are what define girlhood—with a little flair and drama to make it more fun.

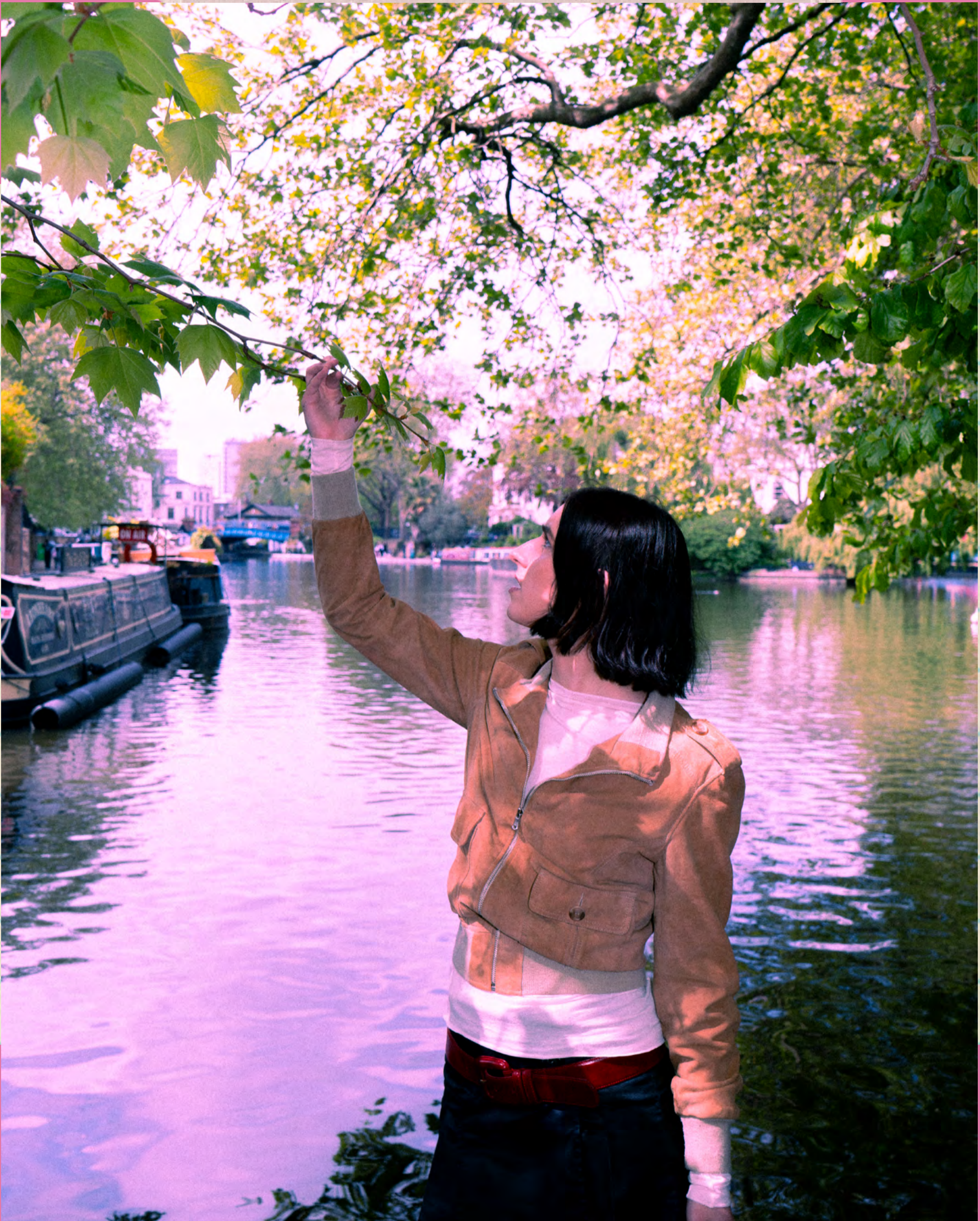


What makes girlhood different from just  
“being young”?



The friendships.

Everything seems so big and meaningful, and yet you'll always find another girl who understands exactly what you mean.



Girlhood is softer, more loving than just *being young*.

# Callu.

What do you miss most about your girlhood, and what do you think is better today for younger girls?

I miss the sense of safety and innocence that defined my girlhood—knowing I was protected with my parents and enjoying the freedom to play outside, something I haven't felt able to offer my own children today.



But I think girls today are growing up more empowered and aware of their value, with greater opportunities and visibility than we had back then.

In your experience, how has the concept of girlhood evolved over the years, and how do you think it is different today?

Girlhood in my time was centered around being cared for, but we weren't really seen as individuals with rights or a voice. While we were treated with affection, our opinions weren't always taken seriously. Today, I see that girlhood has evolved—girls are more empowered, their voices are heard, and they grow up with a stronger sense of their rights.



However, they also face new challenges. Technology and social media have brought constant exposure and pressure to seek approval from strangers, creating a culture of immediacy that sometimes overshadows the value of patience and effort.



# Shabd!





How did girlhood make  
you feel about yourself?



It makes me feel joy and  
confidence in myself.



It helps me understand how I can  
navigate the world and be happy.





What did you learn about girlhood from TV, books, or movies?



I learned from *Clueless* that being overly feminine or girly doesn't mean you're incapable of doing what men are allowed to do.

You can still be whoever you want to be  
and work extremely hard.



In general, from the media I consume, I've  
learned about the importance of uplifting  
other women and how powerful that can be.

*What is girlhood  
for you?*



A large rectangular area of cream-colored paper with horizontal blue lines, intended for writing an answer to the question above.



