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Creative Writing

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**Innocence**

 Red. Raw. The skin around my nose was on fire. The constant blowing of thick snot into rough tissues took the sensitive skin clean off. The worst part was how stuffed my nose was, mocking my severe discomfort. Ugh. I wanted to scream. I wanted to cry. I wanted my mom. *I want mommy, I want mommy, I want mommy.* I held back tears that were clouding my vision. No! I was not the crying type of girl. I was strong. For the first time though, I was conflicted. My dad sat talking to the air as we ate in the grand hospital food court. He went on and on, blabbering some nonsensical thing that caused my brother to scowl at his uneaten food. We weren’t stupid. We were being protected from the truth. Played. I just really needed my mom.

 But I’m getting ahead of myself…

I would have to say that I lost my innocence at a very young age because fate seemingly fed on the happiness of children: “Oh child, I know that you love your mom and would most likely die without her, but I’m going to give her Ovarian Cancer ‘cause I have nothing better to do.” Now as a seven year old in second grade I could barely write a complete sentence, let alone understand what cancer was. All I could comprehend was that everyone in my family was flustered all-the-freaking-time and my mom could die if her cancer grew worse. I didn’t actually want to be a kid and have my only worry be whether or not my hair was bump free, that would be ridiculous.

My mom’s home for the next couple of months was a sterile hospital room at U of M. Endless chemo treatments and threatening surgeries consumed all of our lives. The comforting part was that the hospital allowed my brother, my dad, and me to live in the family hotel that was attached to the hospital. We were just a floor away from my mom. Packing up the van for U of M, my brother moved in tight steps and had permanently scowling brows. He was such a party pooper, but now I know that he was in so much pain – 7th grade is a hard age to have your whole life flipped upside down. My poor dad had no idea how to handle the situation. He latched on to me because I was still easily persuaded and cheerful. But, my carefree personality also aggravated my dad and brother to the point of banging their heads against a wall.

After the excruciatingly long drive, we finally made it to the hospital. Parked in the cement parking garage, we unloaded all our junk and headed for the sliding glass doors. My brilliant turquoise teddy bear was suffocated against my chest while I beamed at my dad with excitement. I kept doing that weird squatting thing that kids do when they’re overjoyed. *Oh my gosh…this is so exciting! I can’t believe there’s a hotel in a hospital. This is the coolest thing ever.* Never mind that my mom was fighting for her life, the hospital was the closest thing to an amusement park for me.

Each day I explored a little more of the GIGANTIC hospital and I wasn’t disappointed. Wendy’s? Yes. Convenient store? Check. Escalators? Of course. Giant food court? Duh. I just couldn’t get enough of how amazing U of M hospital was. But – just my luck – I happened to catch one of the worst colds I had ever experienced. Liquid medicine did squat, but I was far to scared to try a pill – that was what big girls took. With my mom’s immune system being so weak, I couldn’t visit her at all and my nose was so miserable I didn’t want to do anything but throw a tantrum. I only wanted my mom. “Hey mom! Let me sneeze all over your face and touch you with my snot-covered hands. You won’t get sick.” Dumb doctors didn’t know anything.

After refusing to take the most enormous cold pill imaginable – a pill the size of a fruit fly – I immersed myself in delicious chocolate ice cream from the Wendy’s restaurant. Inexplicably, the cold never got any better and with the rising irritation from my brother and dad for my lack of corporation and whining, I had to suck it up and take the pill. We sat down in the huge food court to eat lunch and my dad talked me through how to swallow a pill. Naturally I cried and threw a fit – tears streaming down my flushed face, while I yelped a little too loud – just to smirk as my brother and dad squirmed and reddened from embarrassment.  *Ha! Serves them right.* Once I was finished toying with them, I tried to stop procrastinating.

Three hours later…

Beyond pissed, my dad – all six feet three inches of him – looked me square in the eyes with an extremely eerie sense of calm and threatened, “Take the pill when I count to three or I’m taking you home to stay with grandma.” *Jerk move dad!* It was like the MADtv skit where Dot didn’t want to go to sleep, but as soon as her head hit the pillow, she was out. “One. Two. Three,” my dad said and I immediately halted my resistance and swallowed the pill. Man was I mad. My dad never got angry, so I didn’t much care for being disciplined by him. Then it dawned on me, I had just taken my first pill. Never in my life had I ever been so proud of myself. The U of M food court became my favorite place in the world after my accomplishment.

After a quick recovery – thanks to the “big girl” pill – I was finally able to see my mom. I was so excited and rambunctious that I’m pretty sure my brother came up with at least a dozen ways to murder me. My innocence was plastered on my face as I sashayed into my mom’s hospital room. When I got inside I didn’t find my mom; I found a woman with no hair, pale as the bed sheets, and extremely fragile. My mom was strong and healthy. She wasn’t the person lying in that generic hospital bed. That was the moment my innocence slipped out of my hands as if I was trying to catch water.

I never should have taken that stupid pill.