The Girl I Used To Be

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A poem about the hardships of becoming an adult.

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The Girl I Used To Be

In the eyes of children, the world is filled with magic, adventures, and love.

In their make-believe world, nothing can go wrong.

But as those children grow older, they are pulled into the real world,

a world filled with suffering, cruelty, and death.

The very idea of happiness seems to be

nothing more than a fading memory,

a word that has no true meaning.

Some are lucky that they are protected

by their parents from the pain of maturity.

Others, like me,

have responsibility thrust upon them at a young age.

In many ways, I was never given the chance to be a child.

I was always expected to act like an adult,

to accept the harsh reality of my life.

The little girl I once was died long ago.

At the age of five,

I was cruelly yanked out of my sheltered world

and thrust into the all too real world

when my father walked out of my life.

The very man who taught me how to dream

was the same person who crushed my them when he left,

never looking back.

I wanted to curl up into a ball and disappear,

anything to make the pain go away,

but I had no time to wallow in my misery.

I knew that my mom was suffering;

I could see it in her eyes.

Every night after she put my brother and me to bed,

she would wait until she thought we were asleep, and then she would cry.

I could hear her sob softly and watch through the cracked door

as she would hold her head between her knees

and wrap her arms around herself.

My beautiful Mama,

once strong and proud,

was broken and weak.

I knew that I had no time to wish

my father would return because I had to be strong

not only for myself, but for my mama and brother as well.

At the time, my baby brother was too little to understand

the betrayal of our father.

I protected him, and gave him the chance to be a carefree child,

a chance that I never had.

When parent day came around,

I was the only one who didn't have a parent come.

I couldn't blame my mom; she was in medical school

and working hard to keep food on the table.

Moving every three years made ruined

any chance at friends that I had previously had.

The one girl who I got close to was named Iliana.

We met at church and I looked up to her like an older sister.

The day she lost her battle with cancer was the day I lost everything.

That day, I lost a part of myself that I will never get back.

The part of me that still believed fairy tales and happy endings,

the part that believed my dad would come back and save the day,

the part that was waiting to be carried off into the sunset by a handsome prince,

was gone.

Eventually I lost my ability to see the world as a wonderland,

but instead saw it as a constant war zone,

where anything could go wrong.

My once trusting heart became suspicious and unforgiving.

The only person I could truly trust was myself, and for a while,

I wouldn't let anybody get close to me, for fear of being betrayed.

Once I was a childish little girl

who was innocently in love with the world.

Now I am a young woman

who no longer believes in "happily ever after's".

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